



# **Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools**

## **2008-09 Accreditation Handbook**

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# *I. Understanding Accreditation and Self-Evaluation*

## **Rationale for Accreditation**

Accreditation attests to a school's quality in universally understood terms. To say that a school is accredited is to say that it has met proven and respected standards of quality.

Accreditation is primarily a process for school improvement. To be designated as accredited means a school values ongoing self-evaluation and seeks an understanding of best practices in education.

Accreditation is a standard that affirms the status of students with other institutions.

Accreditation employs a process of evaluation that combines self-scrutiny with an external review by a committee of peers. Both the internal and external reviews bring helpful and accurate observations, comments, and suggestions for the purposes of validation and improvement.

Accreditation assists the school in better realizing its own objectives, with the help of a visiting team, supporting rather than merely inspecting, in order to enhance the school's unique character rather than to impose a mandatory design.

Accreditation can do much to refine school goals and to provide a sense of direction and focus.

Accreditation strengthens the voice of all schools in SAES by speaking collectively for the interests of Episcopal schools.

Accreditation is an essential credential for fundraising.

Accreditation is earned through a voluntary process that is greater than any one event. Standards have been developed carefully over time to indicate best practices in organizing and managing Episcopal schools. The process provides a framework for open inquiry into the school's own philosophy, policies, and procedures. It allows professional peers to make observations, suggestions, commendations and recommendations that will benefit the school in its continuing quest to improve. A quality evaluation process involves all constituent groups that form the school community.

## **Being An Accredited Episcopal School**

An Episcopal school is one which espouses the faith and worship of the Episcopal Church and operates with the knowledge and consent of the bishop of the diocese. The school includes in its curriculum the liturgy of the Episcopal Church of America as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. The school offers both worship opportunities and religious studies in support of the spiritual development of its students. Episcopal schools value learning that combines faith and reason, and teaching that allows real life application of this knowledge through outreach activities.

Just as there are many faces to Episcopal churches, there are many versions of Episcopal schools. Just as there are many forms of worship within the church, there are many methods for delivering education within schools. The connections we have in our common purposes in worship and our

common goals in education unite our commitment as school leaders to provide the best education possible to our students in a unique environment. The potential of Episcopal schools is their ability to do this with the encouragement and support of Episcopal churches and bishops.

Episcopal schools have an historic reputation for offering the finest liberal arts education in an environment that respects open inquiry and encourages lifelong learning. The leaders in these schools model a strong Christian faith, moral character and a sincere professional commitment to the best educational practices of the times. As educators they understand developmental issues in all children and value constructive relationships with their parents. Accreditation is, then, a natural commitment to ongoing school improvement.

Episcopal schools recognize that Episcopal churches which support the initiation and continuation of schools accept a substantial commitment as a host institution. Parish schools must work with their host churches to nurture this relationship.

It is not a primary goal of Episcopal schools to recruit children or their families into membership in the Episcopal church. However, the intimate relationship between the school, church, and families, recognized in the nurturing, enthusiastic, and faithful relationship modeled by all those who work with their children, will be treasured by the families served.

## *II. Criteria for Membership*

Episcopal schools in the dioceses in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, New Mexico, and Arizona shall be eligible for full membership by confirming the following:

The school shall be affiliated with the Episcopal Church which is part of the Anglican communion. It is a parish day school, a school owned or administered by a diocese or religious order or group of parishes, or is an independent school which espouses the faith and worship of the Episcopal Church in America as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and operates with the knowledge and consent of the bishop of the diocese.

The school is a nonprofit institution (501(c)(3) or part of a non-profit institution.

The school shall not exclude students because of race, creed, national origin, or, insofar as possible, economic status. The school shall make every effort to provide financial aid and shall publish these facts throughout the community.

The school must be in, at least, its third consecutive year of operation.

### ***III. Standards of the Association***

The Standards of SAES reflect the Association's commitment to promoting high standards of education, developing programs that improve knowledge and skills in leadership, governance, administration, teaching and learning, and building spiritual formation through study, fellowship, and celebration. Member schools seeking accreditation must be cognizant of the Standards of SAES and work to meet them. As a matter of both policy and principle, SAES is committed to the highest possible quality of school program and teaching.

***Key Standards*** appear below in italics and define the essence of each category. **Essential Criteria** are numbered below to specify focus areas that define each Key Standard.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| A. Mission                               | G. Administration                        |
| B. The Episcopal Character of the School | H. Finance                               |
| C. Students and Parents                  | I. Facility and Safety                   |
| D. Professional Staff                    | J. The Culture and Climate of the School |
| E. Program                               | K. Accreditation Accountability          |
| F. Governance                            |  |

#### **A. Mission**

***A.1. There shall be a high degree of congruence between the stated mission, the philosophy of the school as an educational institution, and its actual program.***

- a. The mission is clearly understood by the administration, professional staff, parents, students and those responsible for governance, and is used in planning and decision-making.
- b. The purposes and objectives for which the school exists shall include a clearly stated educational philosophy that addresses the needs of students and a commitment to creating an environment which encourages freedom of inquiry and the respectful exchange of diverse viewpoints.

#### **B. Episcopal Character of the School**

***B.1. The Episcopal identity of the school shall be expressed within its mission and governance structure and organization.***

- a. The mission of the school recognizes that the Episcopal ethos of the school makes a difference in the daily life of the school community.
- b. The school shall clearly define in its governing documents its relationship to the Episcopal Church and its sponsoring organization, if any, and the responsibilities of each. It will provide in its bylaws a clear statement about its church relationship to the vestry, in the case of a parish school, to the bishop in the case of a diocesan or mission school, or as an independent school.
- c. Board members shall participate in an orientation that includes information about what it means to be an Episcopal school, including governance practices and the role of all key leaders, intentional pluralism in admissions, religious programming and worship in the school, the philosophy of open inquiry in instruction, and support for service learning.

- d. Schools designated as parish day schools shall clearly define how shared space issues and joint financial obligations are handled (i.e., who pays whom, for what), as applicable.

***B.2 The school shall include both worship and religious studies in its program to reflect a balance of faith and reason in the Episcopal tradition and respect for individual beliefs.***

- a. Opportunities shall be provided for regular worship that is age appropriate and in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer, as well as the "Doctrine, Discipline and Worship of the Episcopal Church." There shall be opportunities for student participation in worship.
- b. Worship experiences shall be sensitive to the diversity of religious identity represented by students and faculty while remaining faithful to the Episcopal foundation, practices and traditions.
- c. The school shall incorporate religious education in its instructional program where both secular knowledge and Christian faith are lifted up, and proselytizing is avoided.
- d. Religious studies for older students shall be as rigorous as other academic courses and include Christian foundations, other world faith traditions, ethics and moral reasoning, and religion in American history and contemporary life. Religious studies for elementary programs shall be developmentally appropriate and stress commonalities rather than differences between individuals and cultures.
- e. The school shall show evidence of the utilization of its religious goals and objectives in meeting the needs of the school community and providing appropriate pastoral care when needed.

***B.3 The administration of the program reflects the Episcopal commitment to be inviting and welcoming toward students from varied religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds and family situations who would benefit from this program.***

- a. The head of school shall hold a personal faith commitment supportive of the spiritual mission and program of the school, shall understand the canonical structure of the Episcopal church, as well as the role and responsibility of the ecclesiastical head of the sponsoring body, and shall act as the primary ambassador and advocate for Episcopal identity.
- b. The school's key administrative leaders, including admissions officer, division heads, and development officers are responsible for understanding, communicating and supporting the school's Episcopal identity, especially when representing the school to prospective families.
- c. The school's teachers, assistants and extracurricular staff shall understand and support the school's spiritual mission and Episcopal identity. The school shall provide enlightened discourse about what it means to be an Episcopal school so all faculty and

staff can express with confidence the school's philosophy with parents, students, and each other.

d. Admission policies in the school shall include good faith efforts to invite inquiries from students of diverse backgrounds, who will benefit from the program. The school shall provide financial assistance to otherwise qualified students who are eligible to enroll, being intentional in its efforts to support this need in the budgeting process.

e. The head of school and rector, in a parish day school, shall seek ways to build a collegial, mutually supportive relationship.

***B.4 The school shall require high standards of professional educational excellence and celebrate the joy of discovery and new learning with the students.***

a. The culture of the classrooms values the search for knowledge, with the recognition that our understanding from the past may grow and change; the processes of open inquiry, with thoughtful consideration of the questions of others; and the imperative of personal accountability.

b. The school shall design a curriculum that provides both substantive foundational skills and challenging applications to teach students an appreciation of the common goal of contributing to the well-being of the world which the students will inherit.

c. The school shall continually encourage professional development in current best professional practices, comprehensive curriculum development, and graceful inclusivity in the relationships between students and faculty, all of which are hallmarks of Episcopal schools.

***B.5 The school shall provide opportunities for student participation in outreach projects.***

a. Experiences in service learning shall promote recognition that we are all God's children in need of compassion, embraced as brothers and sisters, seeking to be understood, respected, and encouraged.

b. The school shall explore ways to coordinate efforts with its parish or its diocese to support outreach projects.

**C. Students and Parents**

***C.1. Admission policies and procedures shall be clearly defined and consistent with the stated mission of the school and shall reflect the school's efforts to enroll students most likely to benefit from its program.***

- a. The school shall not exclude students because of race, creed, national origin, or insofar as possible, socio-economic status, in its admission process to the school, or in the administration of any of its educational, financial aid, scholarship, or student activity programs and shall make every good faith effort to encourage an inclusive student body. The school's non-discrimination policies will be published.

- b. There shall be full disclosure of the school's tuition, fees, tuition insurance, all financial obligations, and the policies related to financial aid.
- c. There shall be full disclosure of the school's mission, policies, programs, and practices published in all Handbooks, and these shall be available in the Parent Handbook prior to enrollment.
- d. There shall be a clearly defined process for addressing policies of attendance, grades, and credit for alternative or supplementary courses offered by another accredited institution to any student requiring such enrichment.
- e. The school shall publish its requirements for academic achievement, including all aspects of its grading system. The school shall also publish graduation requirements for high school programs.
- f. Student records shall be safeguarded from theft and fire and shared only with authorized persons. The school shall have a published policy about how long records are kept and the process for obtaining transcripts.

***C.2. The school shall provide effective means and appropriate channels of communicating with parents about all aspects of school life.***

- a. The school shall make a syllabus of the curriculum available to parents.
- b. Student progress shall be reported regularly to parents in an informative and clear manner.
- c. Parents shall be invited to participate in the life of the school through collaborative and supportive activities.
- d. The school shall develop an ongoing relationship with its alumni through regular communications, collection of data on their progress, and invitations to participate in the life of the school.
- e. The school shall encourage awareness of its work in the community through marketing and/or development efforts.

**D. Professional Staff**

***D.1. All faculty and staff shall be qualified for their positions and responsibilities by education and experience and shall engage in ongoing professional development.***

- a. Teachers of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers up to age 3 shall have no less than a Child Development Certificate (CDC or CDA) or an Associate's Degree (AAS) reflecting specialization in child development. Teachers of children age 4 and older shall have no less than an appropriate baccalaureate degree. Assistants and extended care staff are not required to have college degrees but may have other child-care related experience.

- b. The school shall utilize adequate procedures for recruiting, screening and interviewing prospective faculty and staff, and each shall have appropriate criminal background and reference checks. Recruitment shall also encourage good-faith efforts to encourage candidates representing diversity for the school to apply. The Staff Handbook should address school policies on conflict of interest in the hiring process.
- c. The school does not discriminate against any person in employment or otherwise because of race, color, national origin, gender, or age in violation of state or federal law or regulations.
- d. Faculty and staff shall receive an orientation that includes information about their roles and responsibilities, governance organization, school policies including confidentiality and professional conduct, and other information set forth in the Staff and Parent Handbooks.
- e. The school shall have a required program for on-going professional growth and development for faculty, staff, and administration which is related to improved instruction and increased learning.
- f. Each member of the faculty and the staff shall be clearly informed of his /her compensation, terms of employment and primary responsibilities. Every effort will be made to be equitable in terms of the total load of primary responsibilities and other assignments and in the development of fair personnel policies, salaries and benefits. Compensation packages shall be sufficient to attract and retain qualified teachers.
- g. There shall be an understood program of supervision and regular evaluation of individual faculty and staff performance, and understood procedures for non-renewal and/or termination of employment.
- h. Faculty and staff interaction with students shall be appropriate, encouraging, and constructive, and shall reflect the highest standard of professional conduct, recognizing the innate vulnerability of students of all ages.
- i. There shall be adequate procedures for identifying changing needs and priorities that determine faculty and staffing requirements.
- j. The professional staff shall be involved in the review, planning, development and evaluation of the school's programs. There shall be adequate opportunities for communication and focused professional conversations during faculty meetings to facilitate effective collaboration.
- k. All members of the faculty and staff, including extracurricular staff, shall receive training regarding sexual misconduct and child abuse.
- l. Classroom substitutes shall receive an orientation about the school's mission and philosophy, the scope of their responsibilities, and school policies relevant to their responsibilities.

## **E. Program**

***E.1. The academic program shall be developed from the school's stated mission, purposes, and objectives that reflect the educational goals for which the school exists. It shall promote student development in the major domains of human learning: cognitive, social, emotional, physical and spiritual, and shall seek to serve all students through an awareness of developmentally effective instruction.***

- a. The school shall stress the teaching of critical reasoning and independent thinking and shall offer higher level challenge through factual mastery, skill development, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- b. The program shall have sufficient instructional flexibility for the capabilities, learning styles, and interests of students enrolled in the school.
- c. The program shall include a reasonable balance of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, visual and performing arts, foreign language, physical education, computer science, religious studies, and community service. The school's curriculum shall define essential objectives for these and all courses of study.
- d. The school's curriculum shall reflect cognizance of the requirements for education as set forth by the state in which it is located. The school should be prepared to show cause why those which are not included in the curriculum are not applicable to the school.
- e. There shall be procedures for review, evaluation and development of the school's programs, including an assessment of the quality of its instruction methods and evidence of student learning. There shall be good faith efforts to follow up on program graduates to assess the effectiveness of the school's overall program.
- f. Schools that identify students with significant learning differences shall include faculty training, a clearly defined referral process, consultation with any resource staff assisting students, and reasonable modifications as necessary, to guide the students to a successful experience in school.
- g. The school shall have systems in place to assist new students to successfully integrate into the school's academic program.
- h. The school shall provide adequate library resources for the faculty and students, with reasonable time allotments for their use and with applicable curriculum and acceptable use policies in place.
- i. The school shall provide adequate technology resources for the faculty, students, and administration with reasonable time allotments for their use and with applicable training, curriculum, and acceptable use policies in place.
- j. The program shall include experiences that reflect an understanding of our multicultural and diverse society.

- k. The program shall include both instructional elements which address conservation efforts for our world and evidence of a school culture that models environmental stewardship in day to day activities and operations.
- l. The school with a physical education and/or sports program shall have an appropriate number of qualified faculty and staff trained to deal with medical emergencies. All schools shall have staff trained for CPR and minor injuries.
- m. The school shall determine the relevance of program enhancements, such as field trips and travel, and insure that these are planned with the safety of children and adults as a priority.
- n. If the school offers any special programs (summer programs, before or after school programs, sports, tutorials, etc.), these shall be compatible with the school's purpose or mission.
- o. The school shall publish developmentally appropriate behavioral expectations, its plans for corrective action that include communication with parents, consequences for misbehavior, and policies for addressing serious misconduct. The school shall publish policies related to conduct after school hours, if applicable.

***E.2. The program structure shall provide all organizational basics essential to the successful operation of the school.***

- a. The school day and year shall be sufficient for the total school program and in compliance with the laws of the state in which the school is located.
- b. The daily schedule shall provide adequate blocks of instructional and learning time, balanced against non-academic and transitional requirements. Teachers shall have adequate planning and preparation time.
- c. The school shall maintain, or have available for its use, physical facilities and plant adequate to support the program. This should include adequate storage for classroom and outdoor equipment, and safe placement for materials such as chemicals used in science or art for which specific safety guidelines are required.
- d. There shall be a sufficient number of students, faculty and staff for the stated mission and purpose of the school, and class ratios shall be in compliance with sound educational practice and SAES Standards.

***E.3. Program content, student placement, and instructional variations shall be considered in the design of programs for different ages.***

E.3.EC Early Childhood Programs

- a. An early childhood program shall create an environment that facilitates the growth of awareness, exploration, and inquiry, and shall encourage each child's eagerness to learn.

- b. An early childhood program shall include activities balanced between child- and teacher-directed, active/quiet, large group/small group, indoor/outdoor learning activities, and rest-time or naps where required.
- c. The early childhood program shall be based on a curriculum that identifies a reasonable balance of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, visual and performing arts, physical education, and religious studies. A balance of all disciplines shall be introduced through an integrated curriculum presented in learning centers, with manipulative materials, and by encouraging active participation by the children.
- d. There shall be adequate and safe play/recreation space for children.
- e. Programs shall meet or exceed local and state regulations and licensing requirements, as applicable.
- f. Adult interaction shall recognize the individual, developmental, and spiritual needs of very young children.
- g. Assessment of students in EC classrooms should be limited and administered by trained professionals. Assessment results used for placement or diagnostic purposes shall be kept in the office.
- h. The school shall encourage teachers to recognize the rich variability in maturity and learning styles of young children and use *developmentally responsive practices* with those children who exhibit individual differences from the group.
- i. Group size and staff:child ratios should adhere to the following guidelines.

<u>Age</u>	<u>Maximum Group Size</u>	<u>Staff:Child Ratio</u>
0-12 mo.	8	1:4
12-24 mo.	12	1:6
24-36 mo.	12	1:8
3 yr.	18	1:12
4 yr.	18	1:14
K	20	1:16

### E.3.LS Lower School (Elementary) Programs

- a. There shall be a balance of daily academic work and homework that reflects the academic goals of the school and sound educational practice.
- b. There shall be adequate play/recreation space for elementary children and a daily schedule of recess.
- c. The school shall conduct annual standardized testing, communicate the outcomes to parents, review and analyze the results, and address plans for improvements.

- d. Assessment methods of student progress may reflect developmental variances by grade level. Diagnostic testing for learning differences shall be limited to trained professionals, and assessment results used for placement or diagnostic purposes shall be kept in the office.

#### E.3.MS Middle School Programs

- a. There will be a balance of daily academic work and homework that reflects the academic goals of the school and good educational practice.
- b. There shall be adequate advisory and/or counseling programs for student needs.
- c. There shall be placement counseling for graduating students and their families at the terminal grade of the school.
- d. There shall be a variety of extracurricular activities that promote student leadership, talents, and interests.
- e. The school shall conduct annual standardized testing, communicate the outcomes to parents, review and analyze the results, and address plans for improvements.
- f. The middle school shall develop activities, events, or traditions which contribute to its identity and encourage student cohesiveness.

#### E.3.US Upper School (High School) Programs

- a. There will be a balance of daily academic work and homework that reflects the academic goals of the school and good educational practice.
- b. The school shall publish its graduation requirements, including non-academic obligations such as service work.
- c. There shall be adequate advisory and counseling programs for students.
- d. There shall be placement counseling for graduating students and their families.
- e. There shall be a variety of extracurricular activities that promote student leadership, talents, and interests.
- f. The school shall conduct annual standardized testing, communicate the outcomes to parents, review and analyze the results, and address plans for improvements.
- g. The school shall develop activities, events, or traditions which contribute to its identity and encourage student cohesiveness

### E.3.BSP Boarding School Programs

- a. Residential life shall be designed to be consistent with the school's philosophy, mission, and goals, and its policies and procedures are clearly defined.
- b. The school shall provide adequate dormitory facilities and supervision.
- c. Appropriate evening, weekend, and vacation activities shall be offered.
- d. Residential staff shall be qualified to meet the needs of students under their supervision.

### E.3.OSP Other School-Related Programs (Mothers' Day Out, Tutorials, etc.)

- a. Other programs that involve children, not enrolled in the programs listed above, shall meet SAES Standards.

## **F. Governance**

### ***F.1 There shall be provision in the school's bylaws for a board of trustees which shall be elected or appointed according to the clearly established guidelines therein.***

- a. The board shall define the role and responsibilities of its standing and ad hoc committees and assign board members to each. The head of school and board chairman should be members of each committee, ex-officio. Committees should be encouraged to recruit non-board individuals with specific expertise for the work of the Board.
- b. The board of trustees shall develop school policies, maintain financial stability, lead in fundraising, and participate in an annual self-evaluation of its work.
- c. The Board Handbook shall include bylaws and other institutional documents, a summary history of the school, a narrative explaining the role and responsibilities of trustees and their relationship with the head of school, approved policies, and procedures for conducting board business as a mission-driven institution.
- d. The board shall establish procedures for periodic review of its policies and procedures.
- e. The board shall implement a clearly stated decision-making process and define its communication processes outside board meetings.
- f. The board shall generate necessary resources for providing and maintaining safe and adequate physical facilities.
- g. The board shall have processes to provide for ongoing comprehensive strategic planning and an annual review of the status of the plans.

- h. The board should be effectively organized to carry out its fiduciary responsibility to ensure the financial stability of the school and to develop a long-range financial plan.

***F.2 The board shall employ the head of school as its sole employee, delegate the administrative functions of the school to the head of school, and shall respect the boundaries which separate board and administrative roles.***

- a. The board shall nurture and support the head of school with a process of regular communication and annual evaluation based on clearly established criteria and an understood procedure which is ethical and fair and provides for due process. The head of school shall have a written contract which addresses issues of evaluation, compensation, renewal, non-renewal, and termination.
- b. The board shall have a policy concerning protocols for addressing conflicts with the head of school before differences escalate to a crisis stage.
- c. The board shall work cooperatively and supportively with the head of school to encourage a well-planned and reassuring transition for the school during periods of administrative change in the school.

## **G. Administration**

***G.1 An administrative structure shall be developed and organized to effectively manage daily operations and carry out the policies of the board of trustees.***

- a. The head of school shall be qualified by education and experience, preferably with an advanced degree.
- b. The head of school shall employ all faculty, staff and support personnel, and shall be responsible for overseeing a regular evaluation process for all school personnel.
- c. The administration shall be responsible for school programs, personnel, facilities and resources.
- d. Education and experience shall qualify members of the administration for their assigned responsibilities.
- e. The administrative team shall initiate adequate procedures for the review of school organization, administration, instruction, and facilities, and for the determination of short- and long-range needs. The administration shall involve the faculty and staff when appropriate.
- f. The administration shall create an Administrative Handbook that describes roles, responsibilities, operational procedures, financial management systems, admission policies, and other administrative functions.

- g. Personnel records are secured against theft or fire with access limited to authorized individuals. The school shall include in the Administrative Handbook how long records are to be kept.

## **H. Finance**

### ***H.1 The school shall employ sound financial planning and management policies and procedures, including a formal budget-making process, along with appropriate board of trustees' oversight.***

- a. The school shall be a legal entity or part of a legal entity, which is in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws. It shall acquire and maintain 501(c)(3) non-profit status or be part of an institution that has that status by the Internal Revenue Service.
- b. The school shall employ sound accounting methods and practices as prescribed by GAAP, Generally Accepted Accounting Practices.
- c. All funds generated by any school activity or organization shall be recorded in the school's books of accounts and shall be under the direct control of the school.
- d. The school shall have a financial audit or review annually.
  - Schools with total budgetary revenues of \$500,000 or more shall have an annual, independent audit of the school's financial books by a CPA. Once the school has had an audit, schools may alternate audits and reviews, provided that there are no more than two reviews between audits.
  - Schools with total budgetary revenues of \$500,000 or less may instead have an annual review performed by an independent CPA (see the SAES Small School Financial Review Form.)
- e. The school shall seek to minimize the risk of injury to its students, staff and faculty and shall seek to minimize the risk of financial loss to the school by having a risk management program in place that includes purchasing adequate insurance coverage.
- f. All funds generated through the solicitation of donations or grants, stocks, gifts, or gifts in kind shall be managed according to current regulations, laws, or IRS requirements related to such gifts.
- g. The school shall have policies in place for its budgeting process, including the development of a contingency fund, issues of conflict of interest, delinquent accounts collection, financial aid, all fundraising efforts, and endowment fund investment philosophy and spending policies. All financial policies and procedures should be documented in the Administrative Handbook or Business Manual.
- h. The board shall create long-range financial projections based on items in the strategic plans that have potential financial impact.

- i. The school shall identify any ongoing deficit or long term debt and shall have a plan for addressing these obligations, including appropriate loan documentation, if applicable.

## **I. Facility and Safety**

***I.1 The school shall maintain facilities that meet applicable health, fire, emergency, safety and sanitary codes of the city, county and state in which the school is located.***

- a. Outside play areas shall be inspected regularly and their use supervised with a safe ratio of adults to children.
- b. The facility shall receive daily cleaning and maintenance for the health and well-being of the school community. There shall be adequate janitorial support and maintenance for repairs done in a timely manner. The school's campus shall be well maintained and inviting.
- c. The school shall assess the security of the facility and develop policies that address campus access, visitors, supervision, and student movement around campus.
- d. The school shall have crisis plans in place in the event of a serious injury, natural catastrophe, criminal activity, threats, or other significant emergency.
- e. The school shall have policies and procedures in place concerning the release of children to the correct legally designated adults.
- f. The school shall provide health facilities and support staff adequate for the school's programs and shall keep on file updated immunization records for all students. The school shall also have medication storage and dispensing policies.
- g. Food services, if available, shall be licensed and provide nutritionally adequate choices. Staff supervising lunch duty (or EC snacks) shall monitor food brought to school to insure appropriate nutritional standards. Policies for the staff handling, preparing, or distributing food shall reflect healthy practices.
- h. School vehicles, if applicable, shall comply with federal and state laws regulating licensing, registration, insurance, inspections, and capacity.
- i. The supervision of students is a priority in all settings including carpool, transition and break periods, and between classes.

## **J. Culture and Climate**

***J.1 The school shall be a lively center of learning and exploration, acceptance and friendship, reverence and celebration.***

- a. There shall be a strong correlation between the stated mission and/or purpose of the school and the culture/climate that actually exists in the school.

- b. Students shall participate in experiences to develop a social ethic that fosters mutual respect and concern for individual and community rights, regard for property and the environment, and personal integrity and responsibility.

## **K. Accreditation Accountability**

***K.1 The school shall fulfill the requirements of accreditation by providing current Documents of Adherence to Standards, all requested Supplementary Materials, a Self-Study, an on-site visit, and regular accreditation reports.***

- a. The school shall retain its membership in the Association.
- b. The school shall report progress on school improvements noted in the Recommendations of the On-site Visit Report and as required in regular interim accreditation reports.
- c. The school shall complete an updated yearly data form for the Association office.
- d. The school shall communicate any major changes in its program to the SAES office, including a change in head of school or rector of the church, in the case of a parish day school.

## ***IV. Introduction to SAES Accreditation***

### **The Schedule and Process**

The SAES *Accreditation Handbook* is designed to guide member schools through the SAES accreditation process, whether as first-time candidates or as candidates applying for re-accreditation.

Before embarking upon such an important endeavor, school leaders should be thoroughly familiar with the SAES *Criteria for Membership* and the SAES *Accreditation Standards*, both of which are provided in this handbook.

Listed below are a summary and a recommended timeline for the process. Each step requires review by the SAES Standards Committee, which meets three times per year, and approval by the SAES Executive Board.

1. Become a member of SAES and apply for admission to the accreditation process.
2. Complete the **Documents in Adherence to Standards** (see the Appendix) and submit a copy to designated members of the SAES Standards Committee, in addition to sending one copy to the SAES office. The school shall have one year from its admission into the accreditation process in which to complete this requirement. *[Note to schools seeking re-accreditation: The school must have updated Documents available during the on-site visit but does not need to submit them prior to the visit.]*
3. Once the Documents are approved by the Standards Committee, the Director of Accreditation will contact the school to set the date for an on-site visit by a team from SAES.
4. Appoint a committee representative of each facet of the community to complete the SAES **Self-Study**, allowing approximately six to twelve months for completion of this step of the process. A copy of the completed **Self-Study** should be sent to each member of the On-Site Visiting Team one month prior to the site visit. The school shall have one year from the approval of its Documents in Adherence to Standards in which to complete this requirement.
5. The On-Site Visiting Team will make a three day visit to the school (usually Sunday to Wednesday) and will create an **On-Site Visit Report** for SAES Standards Committee approval. After careful review of the report, the Standards Committee will submit an accreditation status recommendation to the SAES Executive Board for approval.
6. Ongoing accreditation is maintained with submission of the school's **Three, Five, and Seven Year Reports** following the site visit. The Standards Committee may request a **Special Interim Report** at an earlier interval.
7. The entire self-study process will be repeated during the ninth year following the most

recent site visit, with a subsequent site visit scheduled during the tenth year.

## **SAES Assistance with the Accreditation Process**

In support of the efforts of schools to become accredited and maintain their accreditation status, SAES will provide the Director of Accreditation and School Improvement to consult with a school seeking information or to visit the school for an orientation with the head of school, the board, the faculty and the steering committee. Assistance is available before the process is begun or during the period when the school is working on its Self-Study. The Director of Accreditation and School Improvement will also be on site during the Visiting Team's visit to campus.

## **Eligibility for Accreditation**

Episcopal schools wishing to participate in the SAES process for either accreditation or re-accreditation must affirm compliance with the SAES *Criteria for Membership* and pay association dues on an annual basis.

New schools that are members of SAES may seek admission to the accreditation process via written letter to the Executive Director during the school's third consecutive year of operation.

## **Letter of Application to Accreditation Process**

Established schools seeking SAES accreditation for the first time must submit a letter of application to the association's Executive Director. An application fee must accompany the letter of application (and will be assessed annually thereafter to accredited schools):

Early Childhood Programs up to 60 students	\$200
Early Childhood Programs of more than 60 students	\$250
All other schools	\$500
Dual Accreditation within the SAES region	\$500
Dual Accreditation outside the SAES region	\$1,000

The letter should include the year the school began its operations, the current enrollment and grades or age levels served. Both the head of school and chairman of the board should sign the letter of application. SAES will acknowledge receipt of the letter and fee, and will confirm the school's acceptance into the process.

## **Dual Accreditation with other Accrediting Associations**

SAES member schools may seek joint accreditation with other approved associations. A school wishing to meet the requirements of more than one agency should contact the SAES Executive Director or Director of Accreditation and inquire about efforts to coordinate for details and expectations of both agencies.

## Dual Accreditation Process:

1. Schools located within the SAES region must meet the criteria and must apply for membership in SAES. Schools located outside the SAES region must meet the membership criteria and must submit a \$1000 fee. Include a copy verifying the other association's accreditation of the school.
2. Notify the Director of Accreditation of your interest in dual accreditation and indicate the other agency with which the school is working. SAES will coordinate the effort with any National Association of Independent Schools recognized accrediting agency.
3. The Director of Accreditation will work with the head of school and the other association to coordinate the arrangements for a joint pre-visit to the school, the configuration of an on-site visiting team, the visit's schedule, and creation of a visit report for the respective Standards Committees of both associations.
4. If this request is for an initial accreditation with SAES, please submit the SAES Documents in Adherence to Standards to the SAES Standards Committee prior to the visit. If this is a reaccreditation for SAES, have the Documents available on-site during the on-site visit as well as the Supplementary Materials.
5. Each association will make its individual determination of an award of accreditation independently.
6. The following is a summary of requirements for schools requesting dual accreditation:

Step in Process ↓	<i>School seeking new SAES accreditation</i>	<i>New accreditation with SAES; re-accred. with NAIS association</i>	<i>Reaccred. with SAES</i>	<i>Reaccred. with both SAES and NAIS assoc.</i>
<i>Member of SAES</i>	yes	yes	yes	yes
<i>Present Documents.</i>	yes	yes	at on-site visit	at on-site visit
<i>Self Study</i>	SAES's	School's choice* + SAES Episcopal Identity**	SAES's	School's choice* + SAES Episcopal Identity**
<i>On-Site Visit Team</i>	All SAES members	½ team SAES members	all SAES members	½ team SAES members
<i>On-Site Visit Report</i>	yes	yes	yes	yes

\*The school may use the SAES Self-Study or the other association's self-study.

\*\*The school will complete questions related to the Episcopal Identity Standards of SAES.

7. The SAES representative(s) will write a report to be included with the site team's report; the completed on-site visit report will be sent to the SAES Director of Accreditation in a

timely manner who will then send it on to members of the Standards Committee for review at their next regular meeting.

8. After the visit:

- a. SAES may accept interim reports due to the other (primary) association on its timetable as acceptable substitutes for the SAES interim reports with the inclusion of the following:
  - The school's most recent budget
  - The school's most recent strategic or long-range plan
  - A narrative report indicating whether there is a deficit or surplus and plans for either
  - A list of major changes that may affect the operation of the school
- b. Schools which add grades after the visit must comply with the SAES process for Added Grades to include those new grades in their accreditation.

## **Recognition of Accredited Status**

Accreditation with SAES is recognized by the state education agencies in Texas (TEPSAC), Oklahoma (OPSAC), and New Mexico. It also is recognized by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). Additionally, SAES accreditation is recognized by eleven Episcopal dioceses within the six states served by SAES.

## **Addition of New Grades**

Schools are accredited only for the grades in place at the time of the On-Site Visit. Accreditation of additional grades includes the following requirements:

1. The new grade must constitute a complete full-time, comprehensive grade level program. (Early childhood classes may meet part-time.)
2. Prior to August of the year in which the new grade is added, the school will notify the SAES Director of Accreditation to request a review of the new program.
3. One person will be designated by the Director of Accreditation to visit the school once the program has begun, to evaluate the new program, and to submit a subsequent report for full Standards Committee review. The school will reimburse the observer for travel expenses.
4. At least two weeks prior to the scheduled visit, the school will provide the following documentation to the designated visitor. An additional copy of the documentation should be sent to the SAES Executive Director for inclusion in the school's accreditation file. The documentation must include:
  - A rationale for the addition of the new grade or grades (all requested grades must be in operation),

- The number of students admitted to that program, indicating how many are returning students and how many are new to the school,
- The description of the facilities in which the new program will be housed,
- A description of the new program's impact on the budget,
- A description of the faculty and staff associated with the new program, and their qualifications

While on campus, the designated visitor will ask to review:

- An overview of the curriculum for the new grade or grades, including evidence as to how the added grade's curriculum is aligned with that of existing grades.
5. The Standards Committee will review the *Addition of New Grade Report* at its next scheduled meeting, and will submit a recommendation to the Executive Board.
  6. Following the next Standards Committee meeting, the school will be notified of the board's decision.
  7. Accreditation will be retroactive for the school year during which the decision is made.
  8. If grades are added one year at a time, the same procedure must be carried out each year until the school's terminal grade is reached.
  9. In the event that enrollment changes require the school to close a grade for a year then reinstate it, a fluctuation of two years allows the school to retain accreditation of that temporarily closed grade. If a grade or grades are closed for longer than two years, the school must submit the required paperwork noted above.

## ***V. The Self-Study***

The most comprehensive step of the accreditation process is the school's Self-Study or self-evaluation. The school should allow six to twelve months to complete this stage of the process. The Self-Study is closely linked to the Standards of the Association and asks members of the community to describe, evaluate, and reflect on the quality of the school's character, program and effectiveness while noting areas that need attention to encourage improvement.

The SAES Self-Study may be downloaded from the SAES website ([www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org)) or obtained from the Director of Accreditation.

A key element in the completion of the Self-Study is engaging representatives from all areas of the school community. A Steering Committee should be formed at the school to facilitate the creation of the Self-Study Report and to assign responsibility for preparation of the various sections of the report. The number of members on this committee will depend upon the size and scope of the school. As the Self-Study is crafted, the names and responsibilities of those who had a part in creating each section of the report should be listed at the end of individual sections. Ultimately, administrators, faculty, staff, trustees, clergy, vestry, parents, students (if applicable) and alumni should have a role in the formation of the report.

The Head of School is encouraged to delegate the details of the process to the chairperson of the Steering Committee who should oversee the creation of the Self-Study Report and act as coordinator to make sure that the entire procedure moves on schedule, that various contributors complete their portions of the report, and that the format and style of the report are consistent.

The following areas of school life are examined in the SAES Self Study:

<b>Mission</b>	<b>Administration</b>
<b>Episcopal Character of the School</b>	<b>Finance</b>
<b>Students and Parents</b>	<b>Facility and Safety</b>
<b>Professional Staff</b>	<b>The Culture and Climate of the School</b>
<b>Program</b>	<b>Accreditation Accountability</b>
<b>Governance</b>	

SAES recognizes that there is wide variation in the type, size, and style of schools within the Association, and accordingly, no two *Self-Study Reports* are ever exactly the same, despite utilizing the same evaluation manual and process. Not all questions in the *Self Study* will apply to all schools, but in order for the process to have maximum value as a vehicle for school improvement, truthful examination of every aspect of the school and its community is required.

### **Suggestions for Creating the Self-Study**

- Acquire several copies of the most recent SAES Self-Study (available on the SAES website, [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org)).
- Form a campus Steering Committee, with broad-based representation from various representatives of the school community. The number of people involved will be determined by the size and scope of the school and may range up to 20 people.

- While the head of school should be a member of this committee and ultimately has responsibility for the entire accreditation process, she/he is encouraged to delegate detailed tasks to other members of the steering committee.
- Download and save the Self-Study from the SAES website. Prepare the report section by section, by retaining the format of the Self-Study with the Accreditation Standards in place for each section. Insert answers in the School's Response section after each question listed, then collate the entire report. Care in organization and preparation of the report will make it more useful, not only for the On-Site Visiting Team, but also for the entire school community.
- In crafting responses to each question in the manual, be mindful of the school's mission and the SAES Accreditation Standards. Continually ask how the school's performance corresponds with the principles in these documents.
- Respond as honestly and clearly as possible to the questions in the Self Study. The visiting team will be very interested in learning about areas of performance that the school deems particularly commendable, as well as areas where the school recognizes the need for modification or improvement. No one expects every area at the school to be perfect. Recognition and honest admission of what needs to be done will represent the school well.
- Although the document will contain the work of many different writers, good Self-Study Reports are concise and to the point. Be succinct in all answers.
- Agree on an editorial process that will help achieve one voice for your Self-Study. While it is neither advisable nor permissible to employ an outside consultant to do this work, it is helpful to designate one or two members of the Steering Committee as the "proofing editors" for the report. Some schools provide relief time or a stipend for faculty members who agree to take on this important responsibility.
- Have the whole board and head of school review the final document before it is mailed.
- Produce a sufficient number of copies of the Self-Study Report. Mail one to each member of the Visiting Team and one to the Executive Director, one month prior to the scheduled visit.
- At the same time, mail to the Director of Accreditation a list of all faculty and staff members, including a copy of each teacher's daily schedule, and other staff members' schedules if they are part-time, so the visitations may be organized.

## ***VI. The On-Site Visit and the Visiting Team's Report***

The next step in the SAES accreditation process is an on-site campus visit by a team of Episcopal educators from other SAES schools, a representative of the SAES Standards Committee and a representative of the Association. On-site visits typically begin on a Sunday afternoon of the first day and end by noon on the following Wednesday,

For reasons of objectivity and balance, the Director of Accreditation and/or Executive Director is responsible for the identification and selection of all team leaders and team members. The size of the team will vary according to the size and grade configuration of the school and may change based on special needs at the school. Generally, teams will be configured as follows:

School Enrollment	Team Size
Up to 85	5
86 – 150	6
151 - 250	7
251 – 350	8
351 – 450	9
451 – 550	10
551 – 650	11
651 +	12

### **Preparing for the On-Site Visit**

After the school's Documents in Adherence to Standards have been approved and the school has officially received direction to proceed with creation of the Self-Study Report, the school head and the Director of Accreditation will:

- Agree upon a date for the four-day On-Site Visit and the size of the team.
- Discuss areas of the school's program that might require special attention.

Inform and orient the school community (faculty, staff, students, parents, trustees, church representatives and alumni) regarding the process.

Approximately two months prior to the visit, the head of school and the team leader should schedule a "pre-visit" to the school in order for the team leader to become acquainted with the physical layout and general atmosphere of the school. The schedule for the actual on-site visit will be discussed. This is also a good time for the head of school to inform the team leader of any special circumstances or situations that might be in effect at the school. It is also a good time to point out programs or accomplishments of which the school is particularly proud.

Since the school will be responsible for all costs associated with the On-Site Visit, the head of school should include in the school's operating budget the projected expenses of the visit, including:

- Pre-visit by the Team Leader and the Director of Accreditation.
- Team members' travel, lodging, meals, refreshments, and ground transportation.
- Publication and mailing costs for the accreditation materials the *Self-Study*.

- Miscellaneous costs.

Team members will be responsible for making their own travel arrangements but are expected to arrange the least expensive travel, out of courtesy to the school. The school will be responsible for all ground transportation to and from the airport, as well as during the visit.

Secure lodging at a local hotel for the team members. Each member should have separate accommodations, and team members should be informed well in advance of the visit the name, address, and phone number of the place they will be staying.

Arrange for the team to have a private work room both at the school and the hotel (Note: the team leader's room could be a suite with a work table in lieu of a separate workroom for the team.). The work space at the school will be the team's headquarters, and the space at the hotel should provide an opportunity for all team members to meet, discuss, and work on the report after school hours. These spaces need to be large enough to allow team members to spread out the various materials and laptop computers which they will use to create the On-Site Visit Report.

Plan meals and snacks for the team during the visit. Many schools find that parent volunteers are glad to help with light refreshments in the team's workroom. The team will need the following meals:

Sunday.....	Light snacks at hotel for those who missed lunch during travel Dinner (team only)
Monday and Tuesday...	Breakfast, preferably at the hotel Lunch, at school (may be in conjunction with meetings, see below) Dinner (team only)
Wednesday.....	Breakfast, preferably at the hotel

Communicate with team members regarding travel arrangements. Unless team members are driving to the school, arrange for airport pickup and delivery. Provide team members with the cell phone number/s of the person or persons who will pick them up at the airport. Request that team members also provide cell phone numbers, in the event that their travel does not go as planned. Make sure that the team has transportation during the visit—to and from the airport, hotel, school and restaurants.

Arrange for a modest welcome gift of light snacks in each team members' hotel room. Since many team members will travel by air, large and/or expensive items are neither appropriate nor expected.

The visiting team is responsible for creating a comprehensive On-Site Report in basically three days, so it is crucial to communicate with team members regarding their technology needs. Some team members prefer to bring their own laptop computers, while others will need the school to make a computer available for their use during the visit. Laptops are preferable to desktop computers because laptops can be used during the day at school and at the hotel in the evenings. A printer is also essential in the school workroom for the team.

Test the technology systems prior to the team's arrival to be sure they are in good working order, and have technical support available for the duration of the visit.

Create and post in the team workroom a campus map, designating which classes and faculty members are in. Provide each team member with a smaller version of the map, as well as a detailed class schedule. Also, a poster with the pictures, names, and job assignments of all faculty and staff would be much appreciated.

Prepare nametags for team members, faculty and staff to wear during the entire visit. Signs outside classrooms and on a classroom map identifying the teacher, subject, and grade are also helpful.

Assemble the Supplementary Materials listed in the Appendix of this handbook and have them available for visiting team review during the visit. Have the materials listed and clearly labeled in the visiting team's workroom at the school.

## **During the On-Site Visit**

The school is responsible for providing transportation to and from the airport, and between the hotel and the school.

Insure that there will be no special events, such as concerts or major fundraising events, during the time of the visit. The team needs to see normal schools days in action, and should not be distracted from their class visits by other than routine activities. If at all possible, faculty and staff members should avoid being away at conferences or other off-campus meetings during the visit.

Arrange for part-time faculty and staff members to be present sometime during the team's visit so each person may be observed or interviewed by team members.

Make sure that a typical chapel/worship service is scheduled when the team is present.

Day 1 - Sunday—Team members will arrive at the designated hotel in time to meet with the team leader for an orientation and training meeting, at 2 p.m. Specific team assignments will be discussed, as will an outline of the schedule for the visit.

Later that evening, a tour of the school might be followed by a short, pre-dinner reception to enable team members to meet administrators, faculty, staff, board members, the rector and/or chaplain and possibly others in the school family. Following the reception, arrangements should be made for team members to have dinner (for the team only) before returning to the hotel for an evening meeting.

Day 2 - Monday—The visiting team will spend a full day at the school, visiting classrooms and meeting with either members of the board or representatives of the parents group. Individual team members will also meet with administrators, church representatives and staff members. Meetings with representative groups of students may be scheduled during the day, and meetings with faculty groups, usually by division, should be scheduled when teaching duties for each division are concluded.

Day 3 - Tuesday— On this day, team members will complete classroom visits and meetings with individuals and groups not covered during the prior day's visit. Additional meetings may be scheduled with either board members or parent group representatives. The team will begin writing subsections of the report, and will have a

long work session at the hotel that evening.

Day 4 - Wednesday— The visiting team will complete drafts of writing assignments, check the school's compliance with SAES Standards, and will agree upon the commendations and recommendations in the report. The team leader and Director of Accreditation will then meet with the head of school, chairman of the board, and the rector, if so desired, to review the contents of the report which will still be in draft form. The rest of the team may leave that morning, prior to lunch.

Make arrangements for travel expense reimbursement for visiting team members. Team members should be prepared to supply a complete Expense Reimbursement Form provided by the school, accompanied by appropriate receipts. It is courteous to reimburse team members prior to their departure, if possible.

### **After the On-Site Visit**

Within two weeks following the conclusion of the On-Site Visit, the SAES Director of Accreditation will submit a final draft copy of the team's **On-Site Visit Report** to the head of the visited school and the team leader. The head of school has one week to respond in writing regarding possible factual errors contained in the report. Such responses should be directed to the SAES Director of Accreditation who will make the corrections.

When the SAES Director of Accreditation has received final agreement from the head of school, he or she will forward copies of the final bound report to the head of school, chairman of the board, and rector, if applicable. Copies will be sent to the SAES Executive Director and to members of the SAES Standards Committee.

The report will be divided into sections that relate to those in the school's Self-Study. Each section will contain a narrative statement regarding what the team observed relative to that particular area of school life.

The report also shall include:

A **narrative** section summarizing the observations of the team.

**Commendations** - those areas the team found particularly commendable, making reference to specific SAES Standards.

**Suggestions** - ideas that visiting team members wish to share regarding ways to improve the program. Suggestions should be considered, but are not binding.

**Recommendations** - actions required that are intended to foster school growth and improvement, based on SAES Standards. These include particular areas of concern the school must address in subsequent reports to the SAES Standards Committee and are binding.

### **Special Instructions to the Head of School**

Although the head of school is ultimately responsible for preparation of the Self-Study and all other materials and events related to the On-Site Visit, he or she may delegate some of the following tasks to other members of the Steering Committee.

Mail the Self-Study and information regarding accommodations to all team members one month prior to the visit. Provide the names and contact information, including cell phones numbers of a person or persons at the school who can inform or provide assistance as necessary.

Verify hotel arrangements two weeks prior to the visit to ensure that all preparations are in order. Please provide individual rooms for each team member for each night of their stay.

Arrange for representatives of the following individuals and groups to meet with team members at various times during the visit:

- Administrative and support staff members
- The Rector, as applicable
- The Board
- Parent representatives
- The Faculty, after school
- Representatives for different age groups of students

Verify that the team's meeting room at the school is prepared and stocked with necessary supplies. Review hospitality arrangements for the duration of the visit.

Collect the required documentation for the Supplementary Materials, and have the materials clearly labeled and available for easy access in the team's meeting room at the school.

Ask faculty and staff members to be present during the time of the visit, and not away at conferences, workshops, etc. Arrange for part-time faculty and staff to be present at some point during the visit, so each person may be observed or interviewed.

Consult with the Team Leader at regular intervals throughout the visit to ensure that team requests are being fulfilled.

Be prepared to reimburse team members for travel expenses before their departure, and be prepared to reimburse the Director of Accreditation for printing and mailing costs associated with distribution of the final draft of the visiting team's report.

After receiving the final draft of the visiting team's report, read it carefully and note any factual errors for the Director of Accreditation.

## **Special Instructions to the Team Leader**

Contact the Head of School as soon as scheduled as the Team Leader. Offer assistance with questions related to the Self-Study and check in regularly to insure that the school is preparing the report and getting ready for the on-site visit.

Arrange a pre-visit with the Director of Accreditation to the school approximately two months prior to the scheduled visit to tour the school, review housing arrangements, and review the schedules and agendas for the visit with the Head of School. Share observations of pre-visit with team on first afternoon on the visit.

Discuss with the Head of School all materials that the visiting team will want to review, including the updated Documents in Adherence to Standards and Supplemental Materials Inventory, and discuss the place in the school where the team will work.

Thoroughly review the schedule and determine which team member will participate in the various group meetings.

Be prepared to greet the school community at a variety of occasions, particularly at the beginning of the visit, and to speak knowledgeably about the purpose and process of the visit.

Remind the school community and team members that the visiting team does not determine accreditation status, neither during nor after the visit. This is a function of the SAES Standards Committee and Executive Board.

During team meetings, be prepared to lead a discussion about the school's compliance to SAES Standards as the team participates in the review of documents, meetings, and observations.

Accompanied by the Director of Accreditation, meet with the head of school, board chairman, and rector, if available, at the end of the visit to discuss the contents of the team's report.

Ask each team member to complete evaluations regarding the visit. Collect the evaluations and return to the SAES office.

If a member of the Standards Committee, present the report for consideration at the next Standards meeting.

Work with the *SAES Director of Accreditation* who will:

- Assign team members in conversation with the Executive Director and Team Leader.
- Connect Team Leader and Head of School early in the process.
- Join the Team Leader at the pre-visit, if scheduling allows.
- Communicate with team members about specific responsibilities and encourage them to review the entire Self-Study carefully, with particular attention to their assigned areas.
- Meet with team members on the afternoon of the first day of the visit. Present an orientation and training session concerning visitation procedures and assignments; review specific writing assignments; discuss the tone and style of the report.
- Stress the importance of professionalism, confidentiality, communication and courtesy. Recognize that members of the faculty and staff may be apprehensive regarding the visit.

- Meet with the Head of School, Team Leader, Chairman of the Board, and Rector, if possible, for a final meeting on the last day of the on-site visit.
- Within two weeks following the visit, produce the final report and submit it to the Head of School and Team Leader for review. Once the head receives the report, he or she has one week to clarify factual content.
- Mail or email copies of the visiting team's report to members of the SAES Standards Committee.
- Email a copy of the report, to the SAES Executive Director at the SAES office.

### **Special Instructions to Team Members**

Those who serve on visiting teams find it to be a rewarding professional experience. Interchanges among visiting team members, and with colleagues in the school being visited, combine to make the visit a challenging and gratifying experience.

The purpose of the visit is to determine whether or not the school's actual program is as it has been described in the Self-Study, and to provide an On-Site Visit Report narrative description of the school and an assessment of the school's compliance with SAES Standards for the SAES Standards Committee.

Prior to arrival at the school, read carefully all documentation provided by either the school or the Director of Accreditation. Consult with the Team Leader regarding any uncertainty as to travel or orientation expectations.

Complete and return to the school all requested travel forms. Be sure to provide someone at the school with your cell phone number, and also be sure to make a note regarding the name and phone number of the school's designated contact person/s, in the event that your travel does not go as anticipated.

Acquire a thorough working knowledge of the school's Self-Study, especially the specific sections for which you will be responsible. Strive to be objective. Remember that the school's own mission statement, policies and procedures as well as the Association Standards are the benchmarks by which you will evaluate the school and its programs. There are many valid ways to operate a quality school.

Be aware of your specific areas of responsibility for observations, meetings and writing.

Review the SAES Standards. Note compliance with various standards whenever appropriate.

Remember that the visiting team does not evaluate individual teachers. Your purpose is to observe the entire program of the school as objectively as possible. Consult with the Team Leader if you observe faculty or staff performance that is of particular concern, especially in the areas of safety or sound teaching practices.

Present written reports on your assigned sections of the *Self-Study* to the designated person prior to departure on the final day of the visit. Using the SAES format, the Director of Accreditation will collate the sections into a final report for review by both the Team Leader and Head of School before presenting it to the SAES Standards Committee.

It is imperative to remember that all discussions of the visiting team are confidential, both during and after the visit.

## ***VII. Notification of Accreditation***

The On Site Visit Report will be reviewed and discussed by the SAES Standards Committee at its next scheduled meeting. The Standards Committee will then make a recommendation regarding the school's accreditation status to the SAES Executive Board. The recommendation must be formally approved by the Executive Board before it is official.

### **Terms of Accreditation**

The SAES Standards Committee usually meets an average of three times per year. The SAES Director of Accreditation will notify the head of school, in writing, of the Executive Board's decision:

- Accreditation for five years,
- Accreditation for a specified lesser period of time, pending corrective action with a special report due,
- Denial of Accreditation.

The maximum term granted for accreditation is five years. Schools may be granted accreditation for a shorter period of time if the Standards Committee determines that particular elements of the *On-Site Visit Report* reveal areas that should be addressed within a shorter time frame. The Key Standards and related Essential Criteria not determined to represent compliance will be specified in the correspondence with the school so these items may be addressed specifically. The school will be asked to submit a *Special Report* for Standards Committee approval by the date specified in the letter to the school.

Under pre-approved circumstances, the school may request retroactive accreditation to include the year of the on-site visit, rather than from the initial visit forward. In the State of Texas, schools must complete all phases of the process for their initial accreditation and receive approval from SAES prior to March 1 to have accreditation recognized by the State for that year.

SAES requires an update on progress addressing the Recommendations from the On-Site Report. The ***Three-Year Report*** will ask for an accounting of actions taken related to the specific issues mentioned in that On-Site Report and will be due three years following the On-site Visit.

To remain in full compliance with its accreditation Standards, SAES further requires a ***Five Year Report*** which focuses on instructional quality of the school and a ***Seven Year Report*** which focuses on governance issues at the school.

### **Denial of Accreditation**

In rare cases, schools may be denied accreditation, re-accreditation, or an extension of accreditation. The following issues could contribute to the denial of accreditation:

- Failure to maintain membership in the association,
- Failure to demonstrate that the school is indeed an Episcopal school,

Failure to demonstrate adherence to **SAES Standards of Accreditation**,  
 The existence of a major deviation in observed practice from that which was outlined in  
 the school's *Self- Study*,  
 Failure to satisfactorily address Recommendations in the most recent *On-Site Visit  
 Report*, or failure to submit satisfactory interim reports.

## Appeal of Denial

A school that is denied accreditation or re-accreditation may appeal that judgment in the following manner:

1. A letter of appeal should be addressed to the SAES Executive Director, who will notify the chairperson of the Standards Committee and the president of the Executive Board of the appeal, and will arrange for the soonest possible review. The on-site visiting Team Leader and Standards Committee representative also will be notified.
2. If a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached following discussion and informal review by the above listed individuals, the matter will be referred to the Executive Board for full consideration.
3. It is the prerogative of the Executive Board to convene a separate Review Committee if it so chooses. Either the Standards Committee or the Review Committee could call for another visit to the school by three members with experience related to the issue in question. The head of the host school and the Executive Board would mutually agree upon the members for the special visit. At least one of the three members must be a member of the Executive Board. The visit should take place within three months from the denial of accreditation. Any costs involved are borne by the appealing school.
4. A report will be submitted to the Executive Board for its final decision.
5. The school will be notified in writing of the final decision of the Executive Board. The notice will include specific statements regarding accreditation or denial of accreditation.
6. The appropriate state agency will be notified.
7. In the case of denial of initial accreditation, the denied school may resubmit its application for re-admission to the process one year from the time accreditation was denied.
8. A school accredited for fewer than five years that does not implement the requirements for continued accreditation in the time specified will lose its accreditation. To regain accredited status, the school must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the SAES Standards Committee that the recommendations have been met. If the school does not comply, and subsequently wishes to regain accreditation by SAES, it must begin the accreditation process anew.

## Grievances about Accredited Schools

In the event that the Association receives contact from a parent or other individual concerning a complaint about an SAES accredited school, the following steps will be taken:

1. The individual making the complaint will be asked to put this concern in writing and forward it to the Executive Director. The concerned individual will also be told that, in

order to investigate the complaint, officials at the school will be contacted, though the complainants name may be excluded.

2. Once the written concern has been received, the Executive Director may investigate or appoint a representative to investigate the complaint directly and prepare a written assessment of the situation.
3. The Executive Director will consult with the Director of Accreditation and if there is sufficient evidence to validate the complaint, will share the concern with the Standards Committee, in a meeting or conference call. The complaint will be evaluated against SAES Standards for any intentional noncompliance. The results will be recorded in Standards Committee minutes.
4. A recommendation will come from the Standards Committee to the Executive Board for action to be taken. Possible action:
  - a. The school will be asked to submit a written explanation and status report of the area of concern.
  - b. The Standards Committee may issue a letter of caution to the school of its urgent need to correct the situation within a reasonable time period.
  - c. The Standards Committee may recommend:
    - i. a delay in re-accreditation
    - ii. withdrawal of accreditation if the situation is not corrected in the time required.
    - iii. non-renewal of accreditation

## ***VIII. Maintaining Accreditation***

### ***The Three Year Report***

The ***Three Year Report*** must be submitted three years after the On-Site Visit. The emphasis in this report is the status of all Recommendations made by the visiting team in the *On-Site Visit Report*. Each Recommendation should be listed, followed by an explanation of how it has been addressed, or is being addressed, or the reason why it has not been addressed yet. A cover letter accompanying this report should be signed by both the head of school and chairman of the board. Copies of this Report are to be mailed to designated members of the Standards Committee on or before the date specified by the Director of Accreditation.

Additionally, the school must submit the following:

- the school's most recent audit or review
- the school's most current Strategic or Long-Range Plan
- an indication whether the school has a deficit or surplus and its plans for either
- an indication whether the school is carrying long-term debt, the terms of payment, and the percent of gross income this reflects
- a list of major changes that may affect the operation of the school such as a new head of school or rector, bylaw changes, program modifications, grade levels added or removed, or major construction.

The Standards Committee may request additional information from the school at this time.

### ***The Five Year Report***

The Five Year Report must be submitted five years after the *On-Site Visit*. The emphasis in this report is the instructional quality of the school. The report should address the following areas:

#### Working with an updated, highly effective curriculum

- When and how was the most recent curriculum review done to evaluate its thoroughness of content and its coordination between disciplines in this school?
- How is the school's curriculum explained and shared with parents?
- What forms of assessment measure student progress and teaching effectiveness at this school?

#### Presenting an exemplary instructional experience for all students

- How is instruction differentiated to present the most effective learning environment for all students, including exceptional learners?
- Describe recent professional development emphasis and the school's financial

- resources committed to this program during the last four years.
- Describe issues related to hiring the best trained and experienced teachers for the school

#### Obstacles and solutions

- What obstacles has the school encountered in the quest to achieve its instructional goals?  
How does the school plan to address these issues?
- How will the school measure the success/effectiveness of its efforts?

Additionally, the school must submit the following:

- a copy of the school's last two years of standardized test results, by grade level
- the school's most recent audit or review
- the school's most current Strategic or Long-Range Plan
- an indication whether the school has a deficit or surplus and its plans for either
- an indication whether the school is carrying long-term debt, the terms of payment, and the percent of gross income this reflects
- a list of major changes that may affect the operation of the school such as a new head of school or rector, bylaw changes, program modifications, grade levels added or removed, or major construction.

The Standards Committee may request additional information from the school at this time.

The Five-Year Report must be mailed to designated members the SAES Standards Committee on or before the date specified by the Director of Accreditation. The committee will review the report and make an appropriate recommendation to the Executive Board regarding the school's continuing accreditation status. Official Board approval is required before the term of accreditation can be extended.

The maximum term for extension of the school's accreditation is five years. The extension might be for a shorter period of time if the Standards Committee has particular concerns regarding specific elements of the school's *Three or Five-Year Reports*. In that case, a *Special Report*, addressing the specific areas of concern, must be submitted to designated members the Standards Committee by the date designated by the Director of Accreditation before the school resumes its regular accreditation cycle.

## ***The Seven Year Report***

The Seven Year Report must be submitted seven years after the on-site visit report. The emphasis in this report is the governance of the school. Copies of this Report are to be mailed to designated members of the Standards Committee on or before the date specified by the Director of Accreditation. The report should address the following areas:

#### Episcopal character of the school

- How are students intentionally introduced to the uniquely Episcopal qualities in the life of this school?
- How have the school's religious goals and objectives been successfully integrated into the experience of individual students?

Effective governance

- How has collaborative work between the board and the head of school benefited this school?
- What challenges face the board in providing all the resources necessary for the head of school to implement the school's Strategic Plan?

Effective financial management

- What factors are prioritized in the development of the school's long range financial planning?
- How pro-active has the board been in leading fundraising efforts at the school?

Obstacles and Solutions

- What needs to occur to solve the problems the school has encountered in achieving its goals in these areas? How does the school plan to address these problems?
- How will the school measure the success/effectiveness of its efforts?

Additionally, the school must submit the following:

- the school's most recent audit or review
- the school's most current Strategic or Long-Range Plan
- an indication whether the school has a deficit or surplus and its plans for either
- an indication whether the school is carrying long-term debt, the terms of payment, and the percent of gross income this reflects
- a list of major changes that may affect the operation of the school such as a new head of school or rector, bylaw changes, program modifications, grade levels added or removed, or major construction.

The Standards Committee may request additional information from the school at this time.

## ***IX. Ten-Year Re-accreditation***

At the beginning of the ninth school year following the most recent On-Site Visit, the Executive Director will notify the school that it is time to prepare a new Self-Study Report, and to schedule an On-Site Visit to take place during the following school year. During the visit the school will share its updated Documents in Adherence to Standards. The goal is for the new Self-Study to be completed and the On-Site Visit to take place before the end of the tenth year. At the time of the visit, all requirements for accreditation must be met again. The subsequent sequence of events are identical to those of the original visit. Upon successful completion of all requirements, the Standards Committee will recommend to the Executive Board an award of reaccreditation to the school.

## ***X. Review and Revision of Accreditation Process and Documents***

This Handbook, the Association's *Self Study Manual* and all related documents and policies will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary.

Revised and Approved 6-08

## Cover Sheet to Accompany All Reports to the Standards Committee of the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools

School:

Address:

City, County, State, Zip:

Website:

Founded: \_\_\_\_\_

Status: \_\_\_Parish School \_\_\_Diocesan School \_\_\_Independent \_\_\_Other:\_\_\_\_\_

Grades: (Circle)	Inf. _____ <small>specify age</small>	PK2's _____	PK3's _____	PK4's _____	K	1	2	3	4
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Other

Total Number of Students:

Head of School:

Year of Appointment:

Rector:

Year of Appointment:

Chaplain:

Diocese:

Please check type of Report::

- Documents in Adherence to Standards
- Self-Study
- Special Report
- Three Year Report
- Five Year Report
- Seven Year Report
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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 Head of School Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*The Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools*  
**Application for Membership**

This application expresses the school's interest in becoming a member of the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools. This application should be completed and returned to the SAES office with the correct fee.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Application

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ Website \_\_\_\_\_

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

Date of Appointment \_\_\_\_\_

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

The school is located in which Diocese? \_\_\_\_\_

The school began operations in (month, year) \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enrollment \_\_\_\_\_

Grades:	Inf. _____	PK2's	PK3's	PK4's	K	1	2				
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Other
			specify age								

Person responsible for governance along with Head of School (chairman of the board, rector, etc.):

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Accreditation Status**

The school is currently accredited by the following organization(s):

Organization \_\_\_\_\_ None at this time \_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria for Membership**

Yes No

\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ 1. The school is affiliated with the Episcopal Church which is part of the Anglican communion. It is a parish day school, a school owned or administered by a diocese or religious order of parishes, or is an independent school which espouses the faith and worship of the Episcopal Church in America as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and operates with the knowledge and consent of the bishop of the diocese.

The school is a \_\_\_\_ parish day school, \_\_\_\_ diocesan school, \_\_\_\_ independent school, other \_\_\_\_\_.

If a parish day school, note the name of the rector: \_\_\_\_\_.

Yes No

\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ 2. The school is a nonprofit institution (501(c)(3) or part of a non-profit institution.

Yes No

\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ 3. The school does not exclude students because of race, creed, national origin, or insofar as possible, economic status. The school makes every effort to provide financial aid and shall publish this information throughout the community.

I have reviewed the membership criteria and certify that

\_\_\_\_\_ meets all criteria for membership.  
(School Name, City and ST)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Head of School's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Documents in Adherence to Standards

Once a school has been accepted into the process, the school must provide the following materials to confirm that the school is eligible to continue in the accreditation process. The *Documents in Adherence to Standards* reflect evidence of the institutional structure of the school and validate the school as a viable Episcopal institution. The required documentation should be compiled in notebook form, in the order noted below, and mailed to each member of the SAES Standards Committee as well as to the Executive Director of SAES.

1. The published mission of the school
2. A description of the religion program in the school including how that program expresses the school's Episcopal character.
3. A description of the process for admission to the school. Include a sample student enrollment contract.
4. A statement regarding the school's non-discrimination policy and its plan for encouraging diversity in both the student body and among faculty and staff.
5. An accounting of student enrollment by grade or level: include enrollment figures for the past five years.
6. A copy of the parent organization by-laws.
7. Data explaining the status of the faculty and staff:
  - A. A description of the school's administrative organizational chart (head of school, assistant head, division heads, etc.) and designations for academic levels (EC, LS, MS, US, etc.).
  - B. The number of teachers, assistants, and other instructional faculty. Indicate the number of full-time and part-time and the number of each who have left the school during the previous three years and their reasons for leaving.
  - C. The titles of all non-instructional administrators (business manager, development director, bookkeeper, secretary, nurse, facilities manager, maintenance staff, etc.) and an indication of how long each has held his/her position.
  - D. Include a job description and qualifications required for each position at the school.
8. A sample employment contract or letter of agreement.
9. A description of the evaluation process for teachers, administrators, and the board of trustees.
10. A description of the school's professional development program for faculty and staff

including:

- A. Recent curriculum or instructional emphasis in faculty development
  - B. Child abuse and sexual misconduct training
  - C. CPR and other safety training required of faculty and staff
11. A copy of published procedures regarding conflict resolution in adversarial situations (between adults, not with students).
  12. An overview of the curriculum (one page summary for each grade level or subject area), including a description of the school's assumptions about learning. Include:
    - A. The school's policies for addressing the learning needs of exceptional students (learning disabled, gifted, etc.) Include faculty or contract professionals who offer supportive services (counselors, tutors, etc.)
    - B. A list of faculty positions for teaching specialized subjects (advanced placement, fine arts, technology, etc.)
  13. A copy of the school's current calendar.
  14. Evidence of the school's charter, constitution, bylaws, articles of incorporation (if applicable), and non-profit status.
  15. Handbooks/manuals that state policies and procedures affecting students, families, faculty, and board members.
  16. A copy of the board's current calendar, including committee meetings, board development retreats, and involvement in the life of the school.
  17. The school's strategic/long-range plan.
  - \*18. A summary of any legal action involving the school currently pending or previously in place in the last ten years.
  - \*19. The current budget with narrative regarding operational surpluses or deficits. In the case of deficit, explain how the deficit was incurred and how it will be remedied.
  20. A copy of fundraising/development policies.
  21. The statement of policy delineating that separate and independent financial books are kept for the school and the church, if the school is aligned with the church.
  - \*22. A copy of the most recent audit. This must be a certified audit of the school's books for the year immediately prior to the submission of the documents that should have been conducted by a certified public accountant. Schools with total budgetary revenues of \$500,000 or less may present an annual review performed by an independent CPA (see the SAES Small School Financial Review Form).
  23. The school's policy of financial aid and the percentage of the budget committed to student financial aid.

24. A description of the location of the school in the community and its physical plant, including facilities that are loaned or leased to the school: include a map of the campus.
25. Evidence that the school meets all applicable fire, safety, and health requirements for the city and state in which it is located.
26. Evidence of insurance coverage, including property, general liability, fire and theft, directors & officers liability, errors and omissions or professional liability, workers' compensation, special event coverage, and student insurance.

\*These items will be reviewed only by the Standards Committee of SAES and on the site visit, by the Team Leader, SAES Representative, and the Executive Director.

## **Supplementary Materials**

### **Required at the Time of the Accreditation Visit:**

1. Documents in Adherence to Standards (see Appendix in *SAES Self-Study Manual*)
2. Bylaws, charter, articles of incorporation
3. Bylaws of endowment or investment funds established separate from the school
4. Chapel service booklets
5. Prospective parent view book, school brochure, catalogs, etc.
6. Admission procedures information, tuition, tuition insurance, financial aid information
7. Sample student contract package
8. Complete school curriculum with scope and sequence
9. A syllabus of curriculum that is available for parent information
10. Sample report cards, interim reports, conference forms
11. Sample newsletters, publications, communications to parents
12. Sample communications from the Parent Association
13. Parent, Faculty, and Alumni surveys with results (see Appendix of *SAES Self-Study Manual*)
14. Sample Alumni communications
15. Faculty salary scale and benefit options
16. Publications about the boarding program, if applicable
17. A copy of the school's most recent standardized test results for the two previous years
18. Copy of (blank) head of school's evaluation form
19. Copy of head of school's contract with remuneration excluded
20. The school's strategic or long range plan, including its current status)
21. A copy of the board resolution affirming the school's status
22. Board of Trustees handbook of policies and procedures
23. Completed Financial Checklist (see Appendix of *SAES Self-Study Manual*)
24. Safety inspection licenses or certificates
25. The school's crisis/emergency plans
26. Day care and program licensing
27. Enrollment Profile (see Appendix)

28. Faculty/Staff Profile (see Appendix)
29. Weekly/daily schedules for all faculty and staff
30. Copy of previous On-Site Visiting Team Report
31. Copy of previous Interim Report (5 or 7 Year Report or Special Reports)
32. Staff Information Forms for each faculty and staff person (see Appendix of *SAES Self-Study Manual*)
33. Most recent Technology Plan and Acceptable Use Policies
34. A complete list of all faculty and staff and their titles
35. A poster board containing a picture of each faculty and staff member, including names and titles

