



# *Accreditation Handbook*

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Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools

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*The mission of the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools is to lead, to nurture, and to unify Episcopal schools in order to advance educational excellence within the faith community of the Episcopal Church.*

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This *Accreditation Handbook*, the self-study documents, and all related materials and policies will be reviewed annually by the SAES Standards Committee and updated as necessary. SAES expects schools to abide by the *Principles of Good Practice* set forth by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), [www.nais.org](http://www.nais.org), and the National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES), [www.naes.org](http://www.naes.org).

## ***I. Understanding Accreditation and Self-Evaluation***

### **Rationale for Accreditation**

Accreditation blends *external quality control* (compliance with standards and best practices) with an assessment of the *degree of adherence* to a school's mission.

- 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 provable and respected standards of quality.
- Accreditation creates a process for school improvement. To be designated as "accredited" means a school must voluntarily participate in the evaluation of its governance, operations, and program using the SAES *Standards of the Association* as its measure of effectiveness.
- Accreditation designates the status of students with other institutions.
- Accreditation employs a process of evaluation that combines internal self-scrutiny with an external review by a team of professional 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 mission and objectives; and, 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 helps refine school goals, and to provide direction and focus for future planning.
- Accreditation strengthens the voice of all schools in SAES by speaking collectively for the interests of Episcopal schools.
- Accreditation is an essential credential for some foundation fundraising, SEVIS certification, some Episcopal dioceses, and other state and federal programs.

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 the on-going organization and management of Episcopal schools. The process provides a framework for open inquiry into the school's 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. This 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 in which the school resides. The school includes in its curriculum the liturgy of The Episcopal Church 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 parishes, 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 reinforce our commitment as school leaders to provide the best education possible to our students in a unique environment. The potential of Episcopal schools is its ability to do this with the encouragement and support of Episcopal parishes 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 parishes and dioceses which support the initiation and continuation of schools accept a significant commitment as a host institution. All Episcopal schools must work with their host parish (parish day schools) and dioceses 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.

### **Recognition of Accredited Status**

SAES serves Episcopal schools, richly diverse in location, size and scope, throughout the states of Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. SAES is the only Episcopal accrediting association in the United States. This factor, and the fact that it is the only denominational accrediting association recognized by the National Association of Independent Schools (see below), places SAES in a unique position to serve Episcopal schools both inside and outside its current six-state boundary.

SAES is a member in good standing of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Commission on Accreditation. It has voluntarily agreed to abide by the Commission's *Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices*, and to submit to a thorough review and evaluation of its accreditation standards, criteria, and procedures.

SAES is recognized by state agencies and by eleven Episcopal dioceses within the six states served by SAES. Accreditation with SAES is recognized by the state education agencies in Texas – Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC), [www.tepsac.org](http://www.tepsac.org); Oklahoma - Oklahoma Private School Accreditation Commissions, [www.opsac.org](http://www.opsac.org) (OPSAC); and New Mexico, <http://www.ped.state.nm.us>.

## II. Affiliation Types & Criteria for Membership

**Accredited Schools** are schools that have met the SAES *Standards* as determined by the SAES Standards Committee and the SAES Board of Directors. Accreditation is maintained through the successful completion of all aspects of the 10-year accreditation cycle and requirements, and the regular submission of requested data. The school shall

- Be affiliated with the The Episcopal Church (TEC) that is part of the Anglican Communion. The school shall be a parish day school, a school owned or administered by a diocese or religious order or group of parishes, or an independent school which espouses the faith and worship of the TEC as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and operates with the knowledge and consent of the Bishop of the diocese.
- Be a non-profit institution 501(c)(3) or part of a non-profit institution.
- Implement employment and admissions policies, in keeping with its mission and culture, and employ practices that reflect the Episcopal tradition of respect for the dignity of every human being. The school promotes an equitable, just, and inclusive community, and its policies and practices shall reflect accordingly. Unlawful discrimination has no place in SAES schools. A school is expected to abide by a non-discrimination policy that complies with IRS regulations.
- Be in, at least, its third year of operation.
- Retain its membership in the association.
- Meet its SAES financial (membership & accreditation dues and fees) and data reporting obligations.
- Demonstrate commitment to ongoing school improvement and shall fulfill the requirements of the SAES accreditation process.
- Complete an *Annual Report* and participate in *Data Analysis for School Leadership (DASL)* as directed by SAES.

**Applicant Schools** are schools that have been in existence for at least three years, are a member of SAES, and have been approved by the SAES Standards Committee and Board of Directors as being able to work towards meeting the SAES *Standards* within a three-year period. Applicant Schools must submit requested data and the SAES *Documents in Adherence to Standards*. In addition, they must complete a self-study report and host an on-site accreditation visiting team within three years of joining the Association.

**Member Schools** are schools that are not accredited by SAES but are interested in raising the visibility of their school and benefiting from services and events that SAES has to offer its schools.

Episcopal schools in the dioceses in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, New Mexico, and Arizona shall be eligible for full membership if they meet the following criteria. SAES membership year begins on July 1st and ends on June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year. Membership dues are based on a school's "hard" income, which is the total of tuition and tuition-based fees. For boarding schools, this is exclusive of boarding fees.

- The school shall be affiliated with the Episcopal Church that is part of the Anglican Communion. The school shall be a parish day school, a school owned or administered by a diocese or religious order or group of parishes, or 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 shall be a nonprofit institution 501(c)(3) or part of a non-profit institution.
- In keeping with its mission and culture, the school's employment and admissions policies and practices shall reflect the Episcopal tradition of respect for the dignity of every human being. The school shall promote an equitable, just, and inclusive community, and its policies and practices shall reflect accordingly. Unlawful discrimination has no place in SAES schools. A school is expected to abide by a non-discrimination policy that complies with IRS regulations.
- The school shall be in, at least, its third consecutive year of operation.
- The school shall meet its SAES financial (membership dues and fees) and data reporting obligations through the SAES *Annual Report* and *Data Analysis for School Leadership (DASL)* as directed by SAES.

### **III. SAES Accreditation Requirements**

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. SAES accredits all school sponsored grades and programs. SAES will not accredit non-school sponsored programs. Schools must check with the state licensing office regarding program licensing requirements.

#### ***Standards of the Association***

The *Standards* of SAES reflect the Association's commitment to promoting high expectations of education, developing programs that improve knowledge and skills in leadership, governance, administration, teaching and learning, and spiritual formation. 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.

*Standards* are arranged in these sections:

- A. Mission
- B. Episcopal Identity, School Climate & Culture
- C. Governance
- D. Organization and Administration
- E. Teaching and Learning
- F. Fiscal Responsibility
- G. Facilities and Safety

To view the most current *Standards*, please go to [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org), *Accreditation Resources*.

#### ***Documents in Adherence to Standards [DAS]***

SAES requires accredited schools to have *Documents in Adherence to Standards*, which are evidence of the school's compliance with SAES *Standards* and of the school's demonstration that it is employing best practices in its policies and operations.

This list of documents includes (a) documents that are submitted before the school begins its *Self-Study* (Applicant School) as evidence that it has policies and procedures in place, thus demonstrating its readiness to begin *Self-Study*, and (b) documents that are submitted as part of the school's *Self-Study* and On-Site Visit.

To view the most current *Documents*, please go to [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org), *Accreditation Resources*.

#### ***School Safety Checklist***

This checklist is a compilation of documents, actions and policies that SAES believes are important to the

safety and security of its member schools and constituents and serves as a comprehensive list of best practices. This checklist is not an exhaustive list, but serves as a foundation for school planning. It is important to consult with municipality, state, diocese, and federal authorities for definitive information regarding school health, safety, and security.

To view the most current *School Safety Checklist*, please go to [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org), *Accreditation Resources*.

## **Process for Applicant School**

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

Schools that are members of SAES and have been operating for three years may seek initial SAES accreditation by submitting a letter of application to the SAES Executive Director. An application fee must accompany this letter of application. See the SAES website, [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org), for information and application.

The letter should include the school's mission statement, the year the school began its operations, the current enrollment, the grades or age levels served, and a description of the school's governance structure. Both the Head of School and President/Chair 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.

### ***Initial Accreditation Steps***

Each step requires review by the SAES Standards Committee and approval by the SAES Board of Directors.

1. Become a member of SAES and apply for admission to the accreditation process.
2. Complete the *Documents in Adherence to Standards [DAS]* for Applicant School. The school shall have one year from the approval of the accreditation application in which to complete this requirement.
3. Upon *DAS* approval, begin the self-study, and an on-site visit date will be confirmed.
4. Complete the SAES *Self-Study 1*, allowing approximately six to twelve months for this stage of the process. The school shall have one year from the approval of its *DAS* in which to complete this phase.
5. Host an on-site visit team for a three-day visit to the school (Sunday afternoon to Wednesday afternoon). The team will create a *Report of the Visiting Team*. The Standards Committee will review the report and recommend an accreditation status to the SAES Board of Directors for approval.

## **Process for School Seeking Re-accreditation**

The self-study process is repeated during the ninth year following the most recent on-site site visit, with a subsequent on-site visit scheduled during the tenth year. These are the steps a school must follow in the

re-accreditation process:

1. Having been a SAES member in good standing and upon approval of all SAES *interim reports* and submission of all *annual reports*, a school will be allowed to begin a self-study process in the ninth year of its ten-year accreditation. The Director of Accreditation Services will contact the school to instruct the school to begin its self-study and then to set the date for an on-site accreditation visit in year ten.
2. SAES offers a school seeking re-accreditation the choice of two self-study models, *Self-Study 1* or *Self-Study 2*. There is an application process for *Self-Study 2*, and the SAES Standards Committee will determine if the school may use this model.
3. The school completes the self-study, allowing approximately six to twelve months for completion of this stage of the process.
4. The school assembles the *Documents in Adherence to Standards*.
5. The school hosts an on-Site visiting team of peer school educators who will make a three-day visit to the school (Sunday afternoon to Wednesday afternoon) and create an *Report of the Visiting Team* for the Standards Committee approval and accreditation determination. The Standards Committee will submit an accreditation status recommendation to the SAES Board of Directors for approval of accreditation for up to 10 years.
6. Accreditation is maintained with submission of the school's *Annual Reports* and *Interim Reports*. The Standards Committee may request a *Special Interim Report* at any time. See *Maintaining Accreditation* section of this document.

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

In support of the efforts of schools to become accredited and maintain their accreditation status, the SAES staff will consult with a school seeking information. An SAES Staff Representative will assist during the *On-Site Visit*.

### **Dual Accreditation with Other Accrediting Associations**

#### ***Process for Schools Seeking Dual Accreditation:***

1. For initial dual accreditation, schools must
  - a. Be located within the SAES region and meet the criteria of both associations.
  - b. Apply for membership in SAES, which involves
    - i. Providing written notification of the school's interest in dual accreditation and indicate the other association that accredits the school.
    - ii. Submit the application and fee accompanied by verification of the other association's accreditation of the school.
    - iii. Submit SAES *Documents in Adherence to Standards* (version for Applicant Schools)

- prior to being approved to begin the *Self-Study*.
2. SAES will work with the school and the other association to coordinate a joint self-study, visiting team, pre-visit, and on-site visit. The self-study to be used by the school usually will determine which association serves as the lead association.
  3. One *Report of the Visiting Team*, representing both associations, will be created for the Standards Committees of both associations.
  4. Each association independently will make its determination on accreditation.
  5. After the visit:
    - a. If SAES is the lead association, all SAES accreditation requirements, including submission of annual and interim reports, must be fulfilled.
    - b. If SAES is not the lead association, SAES will accept interim reports required by the other association as acceptable substitutes for the SAES interim reports with the inclusion of the Episcopal Identity recommendations and additional documents.
    - c. Schools that add grades or programs (such as extended day, summer, residential, homestay) after the on-site visit must comply with the SAES process for *Added Grades/Programs*.

### **Accreditation of Added Grade/Program**

Schools are accredited only for the grades and programs in place at the time of the on-site visit. Accreditation of additional grades/programs has the following requirements:

1. A grade must constitute a complete full-time, comprehensive grade level program. (Early Childhood classes may meet part-time.) Each new program must serve a significant role in the overall school program, such as extended day, summer school, residential, homestay, etc.
2. Prior to August of the year in which the grade/program is added, the school must notify the Director of Accreditation Services to request a review of the addition.
3. The Director of Accreditation Services will designate a representative to visit the school once the grade/program is in operation. The school will assume all costs associated with the visit.
4. The *Added Grade/Program Report* must include
  - a. A rationale for the addition of the grade. The grade or program must be in operation.
  - b. The number of students involved.
  - c. A description of the facilities in which the grade/program will be housed, including a copy of the architectural floor plan for new facilities.
  - d. A description of the impact of the grade/program on the budget and a copy of the budget.
  - e. A list of the faculty and staff associated with the grade/program, including their

- qualifications.
- f. A description of the curriculum for the grade/program and its alignment with the existing curriculum.
  - g. A copy of the school's crisis response plan that incorporates the grade/program.
  - h. Copy(ies) of Certificate(s) of Occupancy for any new facilities associated with the grade/program, if applicable.

*Report Presentation:* A digital version of the report, including a signed *Cover Sheet for Reports Submitted to Standards Committee* and found at [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org), should be emailed as one document to [pblevins@swaes.org](mailto:pblevins@swaes.org), [skirkpatrick@swaes.org](mailto:skirkpatrick@swaes.org), and the designated visitor no later than two (2) weeks prior to the visit. Contact the Director of Accreditation Services with questions.

- 5. The Standards Committee will review the *Added Grade/Program Report* and will submit a recommendation to the Board of Directors. The school will be notified of the Board of Directors' decision.
- 6. Accreditation will be retroactive for the school year during which the decision is made. Failure to complete the added grade/program process by February 15<sup>th</sup> of the school year in which the grade/program is added may therein jeopardize the school's accreditation.
- 7. The school must notify the Director of Accreditation Services any time a grade or program is added and report the change in the schools *Annual Report* to SAES. If grades are added one year at a time, the same procedure must be completed each year until the school's terminal grade is reached.
- 8. In the event that changes in enrollment 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(s) is/are closed for longer than two years, the school must submit the required paperwork noted above for re-approval of accreditation.

#### **IV. The Self-Study**

The most comprehensive step of the accreditation process is the school's self-study, an opportunity for self-evaluation. The school should allow six to twelve months to complete this stage of the process. *Documents in Adherence to Standards* that includes the *School Safety Checklist* and a complete, well-articulated curriculum with scope and sequence are also required as part of this self-assessment. The self-study is closely linked to the *Standards of the Association* and asks the school to assess its compliance to *Standards* and describe, evaluate, and reflect on the school's mission, Episcopal identity, governance, organization and administration, teaching and learning, fiscal responsibility, and facilities and safety.

SAES offers three models of self-study: *Self-Study 1*, *Self-Study 1 for Stand-Alone Preschools*, and *Self-Study 2*. For specific details of each model, please see the self-study templates. *Self-Study 1*, *Self-Study 2*, *Standards*, *Documents in Adherence to Standards*, *School Safety Checklist*, and self-study *addenda* may be downloaded from [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org) under *Accreditation Resources*. Brief descriptions of the two self-study models are below.

##### **Self-Study 1:**

This model of self-study offers a school a traditional approach to self-reflection and planning, whereby the school responds to standards-based questions, and in doing so demonstrates compliance and current practice. Applicant Schools must do this version of self-study.

This model of self-study requires a school to

- Answer *School Response* questions
- Provide evidence of compliance to *Standards*
- Describe how completion of the self-study identifies strengths and areas in need of improvement to help establish key strategic initiatives
- Submit *Documents in Adherence to Standards*

The *On-Site Visit Team's* responsibility is to answer the questions:

- "Is the school doing what it says it's doing?"; and
- "Are the school's policies and procedures in compliance with best practices and *Standards*?"

**Stand-Alone Preschools:** SAES recognizes the unique nature of a stand-alone preschool. While its general governance and operational functions are similar to a school with higher grades and divisions, some of the programs that apply to these other schools, such as residential, homestay, or international student programs, will not apply to a stand-alone preschool. Therefore, if the school is a stand-alone preschool, either housed in or outside its sponsoring church, there is a separate self-study report template and *Documents in Adherence to Standards* on the SAES website, [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org) under *Accreditation Resources*.

**Self-Study 2:** [This model is not available to Applicant Schools.]

This model of self-study asks the school to take a strategic look at school governance and leadership, operations, and school life and develop a *School Plan* to address 2-4 key areas of focus. The model offers a customized approach to self-study that will help a school improve its practices, and plan and implement initiatives for the next ten years. This model allows flexibility in the methods and structure of self-reflection, as long as the basic goals of a SAES self-study are met in that the self-study. A school seeking to use this model must begin with a petition for approval by the SAES Standards Committee.

This model of self-study requires a school to

- Examine each standard and describe in narrative form the school’s compliance with it (*Compliance to SAES Standards*). Include evidence and relevant documents (*Documents in Adherence to Standards*);
- Develop a *School Plan*, strategic in scope, engage in reflective, analytic thinking about each area of the SAES standards (Mission; Episcopal Identity, School Climate & Culture; Governance; Organization & Administration; Teaching & Learning [Program & Professional Staff]; Fiscal Responsibility; Facilities & Safety) as it relates to the school, and use strategic thinking to develop a *School Plan* in two (2) to four (4) of these areas for how the school intends to approach the growth and development of these selected areas.
- This plan must identify short-term and long-term goals. In creating the *School Plan*, the school may draw upon various methods, such as but not limited to, strategic visioning/planning; strategic or multi-year financial planning; school-wide analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; data collection and analysis; benchmarking and environmental scanning [i.e. identification of trends likely to affect the school]; a strategic system of planning created by the school; or any combination of these methods.

The *On-Site Visit Team’s* responsibility is to answer the questions:

- “Is the school on target about its strategic vision and does it have the human and financial resources to achieve its goals?”; and
- “Are the school’s policies and procedures in compliance with best practices and *Standards*?”

**Where to Begin**

If the human resources of the school allow, the Head of School is encouraged to delegate the tasks of the self-study process to a Steering Committee. While the Head of School should be a member of this committee and ultimately has responsibility for the entire accreditation process, s/he is encouraged to delegate tasks.

A key element in the completion of the self-study is engaging constituents from all areas of the school

community. Administrators, faculty, staff, trustees, clergy, vestry, parents, students (if age-appropriate and applicable) and alumni should have representation.

### **Instructions for the Head of School**

1. Upon receiving the approval to begin self-study from the Director of Accreditation Services, agree upon a date for the three-day on-site visit. The date for the visit is usually set 12 – 18 months ahead of time, allowing the school adequate time to organize and prepare for the team, including securing the budget for the visit.
2. Inform and orient the school community (faculty, staff, students, parents, trustees, church representatives and alumni) about the process.
3. In consultation with the Board and key administrative personnel, decide which version of self-study is best for the school, and take the necessary steps to initiate that process.
4. Structure, organize, and oversee the self-study process and the on-site visit of the accreditation team. 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, s/he may form a Steering Committee and delegate some of the tasks.
5. With the help of the Steering Committee Chair create sub-committees and assign self-study writing responsibilities.
6. Appoint a staff member to serve as the logistics coordinator, so many of the tasks relating to accommodations, meals, and transportation for the visiting team may be handled by that person.
7. Approve a budget for the self-study/on-site visit. See the *Sample Budget* section.
8. The Steering Committee Chair oversees completion of specific sections of the self-study; however, the Head of School is the final editor of the entire report.
9. Make sure the entire Board reviews and signs-off on the completed self-study prior to sending it to the visiting team.
10. Discuss during the Team Leader's pre-visit (2-3 months prior to the on-site visit date), areas of non-compliance with any document(s) in the *Documents in Adherence to Standards* or *Standards of the Association*. Additionally, the Head of School should inform the Team Leader of any special circumstances or situations that might exist. It is also a good time to point out programs or accomplishments of which the school is particularly proud.
11. The Head of School should meet with the Team Leader at regular intervals throughout the on-site visit to share information regarding the visit and to ensure that team requests are being fulfilled.
12. 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. Ask faculty to avoid giving tests or scheduling field trips during visit days.
13. After receiving the final draft of the *Report of the Visiting Team*, read it carefully and note any

factual errors.

14. Upon receipt of the final *Report of the Visiting Team* and decision of the Standards Committee and Board of Directors, develop a process to share the information with the school community.

**Sample Budget**

All expenses listed are estimates and vary by the size of the team, accommodations provided, and the location of the school.

Travel expenses for Team Leader’s pre-visit (airfare/car mileage, hotel)	150 – 600
Costs of “publishing” the self-study	25 - 75
Team member travel, accommodations, and food expenses (hotel and airport parking, airfare, local transportation, driving mileage reimbursement)	~\$1200 per team member
Reception for Visiting Team - Sunday afternoon	100-500
Materials and supplies for Team workroom	25 - 100
Technology costs	100
Cost of the school’s annual audit/review	varies
Stipends (optional)	varies

**Steering Committee Responsibilities & Preparations for the On-Site Visit**

A Steering Committee appointed by the Head of School, chaired by a member of the committee (preferably not the Head of School) and comprised of faculty, trustees, administration, clergy, alumni/ae, students, and parents, should be matched to sections of the self-study for which the school will create responses. Small sub-committees (each in charge of one section of the Self-Study) work best, and each is encouraged to collect input from additional members of the school community, if necessary. Each sub-committee may choose to form a focus group to gather feedback from various school constituents, or the school may choose to conduct a constituent survey prior to beginning the *Self-Study*. The Steering Committee sub-committees work best with a clear timeline of assignments and deadlines for their work.

The below planning structure is recommended.

**Tasks:**

1. Determine the timeline for tasks related to the self-study process. The self-study usually takes

- six to twelve months to complete.
2. Download the necessary documents from [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org). The self-study templates and related documents are downloadable in *Word*, so responses for elements of the report may be entered directly into the documents. Creating a *GoogleDoc* for the school's working self-study document is advisable.
  3. Conduct constituent surveys prior to starting the self-study.
  4. Review the list of documents required in *Documents in Adherence to Standards*. Since it might take some time to create or update documents, it is advisable to begin this task early in the self-study process.
  5. Complete *Self-Study 1* or *Self-Study 2* as directed by the document template.
  6. Meet regularly. Consider scheduling in-service days for collaborative work to be done.
  7. Conduct focus groups to gather additional information to be used in accurately completing the school responses.
  8. Identify the school's strengths and needs that must be addressed by the visiting team.
  9. Develop an editorial process for the *Self-Study*.
  10. Assemble the report:
    - a. The final report must include all elements of the self-study template. All pages must be numbered. The names of those who contributed to each section must be included.
      - i. The *Cover Page for Self-Study* must be signed by the Head of School and Board President/Chair.
      - ii. The *School Safety Checklist* must be signed by the Head of School.
      - iii. The school's *Annual Report* must be inserted in the *Self-Study*. Contact the SAES Office for assistance in obtaining an insertable copy.
  11. Disseminate the report:
    - a. The Board and Head of School should receive a copy of the final report before it is sent to the visiting team.
    - b. The completed document is sent no later than one month prior to the On-Site Visit.
 

*Self-Study Presentation:* A digital version (PDF) of the completed *Self-Study* should be emailed as one document to [pblevins@swaes.org](mailto:pblevins@swaes.org), [skirkpatrick@swaes.org](mailto:skirkpatrick@swaes.org), and [sschotz@swaes.org](mailto:sschotz@swaes.org).
    - c. A printed copy of the report should be available for the visiting team at the time of the on-site visit.
  13. Assemble the *Documents in Adherence to Standards*:
    - a. It is suggested that a *GoogleDocs* folder be created for the documents. Each document must be labeled with the *Standards* section letter and document number. Upon completion, this *GoogleDocs* folder should be shared with each member of the visiting team, the SAES Staff Representative on the team, and the Director of Accreditation Services.
    - b. Additionally, the school must have a printed copy of each document available for

- review at the time of the on-site visit. Each document should be labeled with the *Standards* section letter and document number, placed in a file folder, and assembled in a document “box.”
- c. If a school is not in compliance with any document(s) in the *Documents in Adherence to Standards* or the *Standards of the Association*, the Head of School must discuss the matter with the Team Leader during the Team Leader’s pre-visit.
14. With input from the SAES Staff Representative and Team Leader, make decisions about the schedule of the team’s visit,
- a. Be certain that there will be no special events, such as concerts, field trips, or major fundraising events, during the time of the visit. If at all possible, faculty and staff members should avoid being away at conferences or other off-campus meetings during the visit. Faculty should not give tests during these days.
  - b. Arrange for part-time faculty and staff members to be present sometime during the team’s visit.
  - c. Make sure that a typical chapel/worship service is scheduled when the team is present.
  - d. Schedule a fire drill.
  - e. Arrange for representatives of the following individuals and groups to meet with team members at various times during the visit. The Team Leader may request more group meetings.
    - i. Head of School (daily meeting)
    - ii. Steering Committee
    - iii. Administrative team
    - iv. Support staff members
    - v. Rector and/or Bishop, if applicable
    - vi. Board of Trustees
    - vii. Board President
    - viii. Board Finance Committee & Business Manager
    - ix. Parent representatives
    - x. Faculty (before or after school)
    - xi. Representatives for different age groups of students (if age-appropriate)
    - xii. Alumni (if age-appropriate)
    - xiii. Vestry/church representatives (if applicable)
    - xiv. Head of School, Board President, Rector (if applicable) - Wednesday morning
    - xv. Head of School, Board, Faculty, Staff - Wednesday morning/afternoon
  - f. A typical schedule contains:

Sunday—Team members will arrive at the hotel in time to meet the Team Leader and SAES Staff Representative for a team orientation at 2 p.m. Specific team assignments and the visit schedule will be discussed. Later that afternoon, a tour of the school is followed by a short, pre-dinner reception to allow team members to meet

administrators, faculty, staff, Board members, the Rector (if applicable) and/or chaplain, parent representatives, and others in the school/church family. Arrangements should be made for team members only to have dinner and an evening meeting.

Monday—The team will spend a full day at the school, visiting classrooms and in meetings.

Tuesday— The team will spend a full day at the school, visiting classrooms and in meetings.

Wednesday— The team will spend the morning at the school and will depart at noon. The Team Leader and SAES Staff Representative meet with the Head of School, Board President, and the Rector (if applicable) to review the contents of the report. At the conclusion of the visit, the Team Leader and SAES Staff Representative will conduct an exit meeting.

15. Create a folder for each Team member that includes but is not limited to the following
  - a. Names and contact information, including cell phones numbers of a person or persons at the school who can inform or provide assistance, as necessary, preceding and during the visit
  - b. Contact information for IT person
  - c. Printed copies of the on-site visit schedule
  - d. Name tag to wear during the visit
  - e. Key to team workroom
  - f. School travel reimbursement form
  - g. School schedule and map
16. Oversee the logistics/hospitality of the on-site visit. Some schools form a Logistics or Hospitality Committee as a sub-committee of the Steering Committee. One person may be appointed to oversee it.
  - a. The school will secure lodging for team members at a nearby hotel. Room doors should open to a central hallway, not the outside. Each person should have a separate room. Team members should be informed well in advance of the visit of the name, address, and phone number of the team hotel. It is a good idea to make a visit to the hotel to inspect the rooms and hotel layout prior to booking the rooms. Arrange for team member's rooms to have free *Wifi*. The Team will use a hotel meeting room Sunday afternoon and each evening. Materials will be removed from the room each evening when team member meetings end. This space at the hotel should provide an opportunity for all team members to meet, discuss, and work on the report after school hours. The meeting room must have good *Wifi*. For small teams, the Team Leader's room could be a suite with a work table in lieu of a separate workroom for

the team. Discuss this with the Team Leader during the Pre-Visit.

- i. Verify hotel arrangements two weeks prior to the visit to ensure that all preparations are in order.
  - ii. Payment arrangements must be made by the school, so that team members are not responsible for payment upon checking out. All room costs shall be borne by the school. Team members are responsible for incidental items, special services, and room service and will be asked to supply a personal credit card to cover these costs.
- b. Arrange for the team to have a private workroom at the school. This will be the team's headquarters, and must be a lockable, dedicated space, not used by any other group during the time the team is there. This space must be large enough to allow team members to spread out the various materials and laptop computers that they will use to create the *Report of the Visiting Team*. The room must have good *Wifi*.
  - c. Make sure that the school facilities are prepared (i.e., tidied up, student work displayed, cleaning done, etc.) for the team's visit. Signs outside classrooms and on a classroom map identifying the teacher, subject, and grade are helpful.
  - d. The school will communicate with team members regarding travel arrangements. Collect team members' transportation information, and arrange for transportation between the airport and school/hotel and the school and hotel. Team members will be responsible for making their own travel arrangements, but as a courtesy to the school, they are expected to arrange cost-saving travel. The school will be responsible for all ground transportation to and from the airport, as well as between the hotel and school during the visit. Team members who drive to the school should have a dedicated parking space on campus. Provide team members with the name(s) and cell phone number(s) of the person or persons who will pick them up at the airport. Team member cell phone numbers are provided on the Team Roster to use in the event that their travel does not go as planned.
  - e. The school bears the cost of all accommodations, travel, and food expenses for each visiting team member. Should a team member need to arrive on Saturday or depart after Wednesday because of flight schedules, he/she should first contact the Associate Director of Accreditation Services prior to making flight reservations. If flight schedules necessitate an extra night, on either side of the on-site visit, the school bears the cost. Personal expenses and costs of extending one's visit for personal reasons are the responsibility of the team member.
  - f. 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 laptop available for their use during the visit. A printer is helpful in the school workroom.
  - g. Provide name tags for all school employees, Board members, and participating members of on-site visit meetings. Include division, grade level, and subject, if

applicable. Job titles are also helpful.

- h. Plan and confirm meal and hospitality arrangements for the entire visit, at school and hotel.
  - i. Many schools find that parent volunteers are willing to help with light refreshments in the team's school workroom. Refreshments need not be extravagant; healthy choices are preferred.
  - ii. Coffee and non-alcoholic beverages in the hotel workroom are appreciated.
  - iii. The team will require the following meals:

Sunday	Reception refreshments Dinner (team only)
Monday & Tuesday	Breakfast, preferably at the hotel Lunch, at school (may be in conjunction with meetings) Dinner, may be in team meeting room at hotel (team only)
Wednesday	Breakfast, preferably at the hotel Boxed lunches for travel (optional)

17. Be available during the team visit, especially the Steering Committee Chair, in the event that there are questions.
18. Make arrangements to reimburse team members for travel expenses before their departure.
19. After the team's visit, breakdown the team workroom at school and the hotel, sort, store, destroy, and/or redistribute the materials used.
20. Any other thing that comes along!

### ***V. The On-Site Visit and the Report of the Visiting Team***

The next step in the SAES accreditation process is an on-site campus visit by a team of Episcopal school 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, SAES leadership is responsible for the identification and selection of all Team Leaders and team members. In accordance with best practices and SAES policies, all accreditation Team Leaders and team members must not accept an assignment if a conflict of interest exists. Common conflicts of interest include but are not limited to the following: team member is a current or former employee of the school; team member has a relative who is a current or former student, employee, or Board member of the school; team member's school is a direct competitor of the school; team member has been in communication with the Head regarding his/her career path; team member has a current or planned consulting or financial relationship with the school; team member has a special/personal interest in the school's accreditation. Do not assume that SAES is aware of any such conflicts of interest. If the school to be visited believes that there is a conflict of interest, the Head of School should discuss it with the SAES Director of Accreditation Services as soon as possible.

For purposes of planning, the size of the team for schools completing *Self-Study 1* or *Self-Study 2* will be determined on an individual basis, depending on the structure of the school and details of the self-study. Generally, teams will be configured as follows:

<b>School Enrollment</b>	<b>Team Size</b>
Up to 85	4
86-150	5
151-250	6
251-350	7
351-450	8
451-550	9
551-650	10
651+	11

### ***Report of the Visiting Team***

The Visiting Team will write a comprehensive report of its observations and conclusions. The report will be divided into sections that correspond to those in the school's *Self-Study*. The report shall include

**Overarching Commendations and Recommendations** - A context for the multiple recommendations presented in the report, these major areas of focus serve as a way of understanding the themes or trends that emerged over the course of the On-Site Visit. The overarching recommendations must be addressed by the Head of School in subsequent interim reports to the SAES Standards Committee and, therefore, are binding.

**Narratives** - A statement that summarizes the section of the self-study and describes what the team observed relative to that particular area of school operation.

**Commendations** - Those areas the team found particularly commendable, making reference to specific SAES Standards (\*).

**Suggestions** - Ideas that 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 (\*). Actions that the school must take to resolve areas non-compliance with SAES Standards. These include particular areas of concern and must be addressed by the school in subsequent interim reports to the SAES Standards Committee and, therefore, are binding.

The reference noted as (\*) denotes the specific Standard referred to in the Commendation or Recommendation and follows immediately after each commendation or recommendation, e.g. (F.1).

NOTE: SAES accredits school summer programs; however, since at the time of the on-site visit for accreditation summer programs are not observable, the *Report of the Visiting Team* will not comment on the quality of such programs; however, the report addresses the impact of these programs on school operations (income from revenue stream, additional insurance coverage, impact on facilities, etc.). At least one member of the Visiting Team and/or an SAES staff member or designee will make a return visit to the school during the summer immediately following the on-site visit in order to observe the summer program in operation.

Within two weeks following the conclusion of the On-Site Visit, the SAES Staff Representative will submit a final copy of the *Report of the Visiting Team* to the Head of School and the Team Leader. The Head of School is to respond as directed regarding factual errors and errors of omission in the report. At this time, the report remains confidential and is not to be circulated to any members of the school community.

Upon approval by the SAES Standards Committee and Board of Directors, the Director of Accreditation

Services will send a digital version of the final report to the Head of School and President/Chair of the Board. One printed, bound copy will be sent to the Head of School.

*Statement of Confidentiality & Disclaimer.* The *Report of the Visiting Team* is submitted to the SAES Standards Committee, the SAES Executive Director, the SAES Director of Accreditation Services, the SAES Associate Director of Accreditation Services, the Head of School, and the President of the Board of Trustees of the evaluated school. Copies are not sent to members of the Visiting Team. The report is a privileged document to be used only by the SAES Standards Committee and by the school's governing body, administration, and faculty/staff for internal purposes of the school. Therefore, confidentiality of information is of the utmost importance and expected. Report recipients are not authorized to release information contained in the report without the consent of the Head of School. The school may choose to release the report or excerpts of the report to the larger school community. The report in its final form is not shared with the school until the SAES Board of Directors approves the school's accreditation status.

The SAES *On-Site Visiting Team's* responsibility is to assess the school's program and operation in light of the school's mission as reflected in the *Self-Study Report* and not to evaluate the personnel of the school. Visiting Team members voluntarily express their individual and professional judgment in arriving at the commendations, observations, recommendations, suggestions, and conclusions in the report and are not to be held accountable individually or as a group for injudicious interpretation or unauthorized use of this report. The report is an objective description of the school's program and operation by trained and experience educators at the time of the on-site visit. Use of the report as an official assessment of any member of the administration, faculty, or staff would be a misuse of its intent and purpose.

Any recommendations on safety issues should be addressed as soon as is feasible. While the SAES Visiting Team may comment on conditions related to safety, this report is not to be construed as substituting for periodic inspections of the facilities as required by law and by principles of good practice in risk management gleaned from professional counsel to the school.

### **Instructions to the Visiting Team Leader & Visiting Team Members**

Details about the role and responsibilities of the Team Leader and Team Members may be found in the *Guide for Visiting Team Leader* and *Guide for Visiting Team Members* found at [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org) under *Accreditation Resources*.

## **VI. Notification of Accreditation**

The *Report of the Visiting Team* will be read by a team of readers consisting of SAES Standards Committee members, the Director of Accreditation Services, and the Associate Director of Accreditation Services. It will then be reviewed and discussed by the entire SAES Standards Committee. The Standards Committee will then make a recommendation regarding the school's accreditation status to the SAES Board of Directors. The recommendation must be approved by the Board of Directors before it is official.

### **Terms of Accreditation**

The SAES Director of Accreditation Services will notify the Head of School and Board President of the School, in writing, of the Board of Directors' decision which will be:

- Full Accreditation for ten years,
- Provisional or Probationary Accreditation for a specified lesser period of time, pending corrective action with *Special Interim Report(s)* due, and/or *Interim Visit(s)* made, or
- Denial of Accreditation.

The maximum term granted for accreditation is ten years. Schools may be granted accreditation for a shorter period of time if the Standards Committee determines that particular elements of the *Report of the Visiting Team* reveal areas that should be addressed within a shorter time frame. The *Standards* determined to be out of compliance will be specified in the correspondence with the school so these items may be addressed specifically. The school will be asked to submit *Special Interim Report(s)* 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 *Report of the Visiting Team*. The *Interim Report* will ask for an accounting of actions taken related to the specific issues and recommendations listed in that *Report of the Visiting Team*, with further focus on instructional quality, governance, financial management, and Episcopal Identity. This will be due five years following the On-Site Visit.

### **Accreditation Statuses – Provisional & Probationary**

A school found to be out of compliance with SAES Standards must correct the deficiencies or face the possibility of being placed on one of two accreditation statuses— *Provisional Accreditation* and *Probationary Accreditation*. These statuses are not necessarily sequential, and SAES may place a school on either of these statuses with or without reviewing an *Report of the Visiting Team* and with or without having previously

requested a *Special Interim Report*, depending on the seriousness and extent of noncompliance. In certain extreme circumstances, a school's accreditation may be revoked without having previously been placed on status. A school's revocation of accreditation is appealable to the SAES Board of Directors.

A school placed on status – *Provisional* or *Probationary Accreditation* – is expected to submit a *Special Interim Report* required either annually or at intervals prescribed by the Standards Committee. Schools on status are still expected to meet the full expectations of filing all regularly scheduled reports due in the 10-year accreditation cycle.

*Provisional Accreditation* – The less serious of the two statuses, *Provisional Accreditation*, is used when a school needs to address non-compliance with the SAES Standards. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Failure to demonstrate compliance with multiple standards
- Failure to make timely and significant progress toward correcting previously noted deficiencies
- Failing to address recommendations made in an *Report of the Visiting Team*
- Failure to provide any requested information in a timely manner including the SAES *Annual Report*
- Failure to submit dues and accreditation fees to the association

*Probationary Accreditation* – The more serious status is usually, but not necessarily, assigned as the last step before a school has its accreditation revoked. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Failure to correct previously noted deficiencies, failure to make satisfactory progress toward compliance with the SAES Standards, or failure to meet the deadline(s) for the requirements set by SAES, whether or not the institution is already on *Provisional Accreditation*
- Any issue that would warrant *Provisional Accreditation*, but due to the severity would warrant *Probationary Accreditation*
- Significant deficiencies relating to safety
- At the conclusion of the monitoring period, the SAES Standards Committee and Board of Directors will review the matter and either:
  - Continue accreditation if there is a justifiable cause. If accreditation is continued, the Standards Committee will determine if there is a change in accreditation status.
  - Revoke accreditation. In all cases, the school bears the burden of proof to provide evidence for the Association not to revoke accreditation and not to remove it from membership. This must be done within the time limit recommended by the Standards Committee and approved the Board of Directors.

### **Publicizing Accreditation**

Schools accredited by SAES are encouraged to use the following language on websites and in publications.

*The Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES) is a member in good standing of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Commission on Accreditation. It has voluntarily agreed to abide by the Commission's Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices and to submit to a thorough review and evaluation of its accreditation standards, criteria, and procedures. SAES is recognized by state agencies in Texas (TEPSAC) and Oklahoma (OPSAC) and by the eleven Episcopal dioceses within the six states served by SAES.*

### **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:

1. Failure to maintain membership in the Association,
2. Failure to demonstrate that the school is indeed an Episcopal school,
3. Failure to demonstrate adherence to SAES Standards of Accreditation,
4. The existence of a major deviation in observed practice from that which was outlined in the school's *Self-Study*,
5. Failure to satisfactorily address Recommendations in the most recent *Report of the Visiting Team*, or failure to submit satisfactory *Interim Reports*.
6. Failure to comply with annual reporting requirements or substantive change reporting requirements as promulgated by SAES.

### **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 SAES Standards Committee and the President of the Board of Directors of the appeal, and will arrange for a timely review. The On-Site Visit Team Leader, Standards Committee representative, and Director of Accreditation Services 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 Board of Directors for consideration.
3. It is the prerogative of the Board of Directors 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 Board of Directors would mutually agree upon the members for the special visit. At least one of the three members must be a member of the Board of

Directors. The visit should take place within three months from the denial of accreditation. All costs involved as part of the review including travel, lodging, and meals for the visiting team are borne by the appealing school.

4. A report will be submitted in a timely fashion to the Board of Directors for its final decision.
5. The school will be notified in writing of the final decision of the Board of Directors. The notice will include specific statements regarding accreditation or denial of accreditation.
6. The appropriate state agency and diocese will be notified.

### **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, although the complainant's 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 Services 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 non-compliance. The results will be recorded in Standards Committee minutes.
4. A recommendation will come from the Standards Committee to the Board of Directors 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

## VII. Maintaining Accreditation

All SAES schools are required to submit an *Annual Report* at the start of each school year. Additionally, schools are required to participate in the *Data Analysis for Leadership (DASL)* program.

SAES accredits schools on a 10-year cycle that includes a *One-Year Head of School Letter* and a *Five-Year Interim Report*.

There may be exceptions to the interim reporting timeline and requirements if a school is dually accredited by another accrediting association recognized by the NAIS Commission on Accreditation. For example, for a school that is dually accredited by SAES and ISAS, the school follows the ISAS reporting timeline and report requirements with an additional Episcopal Identity piece. A school dually accredited by SAES and SAIS is accredited for five years.

### *SAES One-Year Head of School Letter*

The ***One-Year Head of School Letter*** must be submitted in the first year following the *On-Site Visit*. The letter should include the manner in which the school plans to address the recommendations made by the visiting team and any planning that has resulted as a follow-up to the *Report of the Visiting Team*. [Please do not address the individual recommendations, as a status update for each recommendations will be required for the *Five-Year Interim Report*.

*Report Presentation:* A digital copy of the letter, including a signed *Cover Sheet to Accompany All Reports to Standards Committee* (found under Accreditation Resources at [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org)) and presented as one document, should be emailed to the SAES Office ([pblevins@swaes.org](mailto:pblevins@swaes.org)) and the Director of Accreditation Services ([skirkpatrick@swaes.org](mailto:skirkpatrick@swaes.org)) and received on or before (October 1, February 1, or April 1). Questions about the requirements should be directed to the Director of Accreditation Services.

### *SAES Five-Year Interim Report*

The ***Five-Year Interim Report*** must be submitted five years after the *On-Site Visit*. The emphasis in this report is the status of all Recommendations listed in the *Report of the Visiting Team*. The documents listed below may be found on the SAES website, [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org).

The report has the following items:

✓	Item
	1. <i>Cover Page</i> signed by both the Head of School and Board President
	2. <i>Checklist for SAES Five-Year Interim Report</i>
	3. <i>Table of Contents</i> page

	4. Current year SAES <i>Annual Report</i>
	5. A <i>Head of School letter</i> describing the major changes that have occurred since the <i>On-Site Visit</i> , such as but not limited to a new Head of School or Rector, bylaw changes, program modifications, grade levels added or removed, significant financial development/resolution, or major construction or land acquisition. In this letter, the Head of School should address the status of any overarching recommendations that were made in the <i>Visiting Team Report</i> .
	6. <i>Recommendations</i> – Each recommendation must be stated in full, followed by an explanation of how it has been addressed, how it is being addressed, or why it has not been addressed, along with copies of new policies or other evidence that demonstrate that the SAES recommendation has been met.
	7. <i>Episcopal Identity</i> questions [See below for questions.]
	8. <i>Governance and Financial Management</i> questions [See below for questions.]
	9. <i>Instructional Quality</i> questions [See below for questions.]
	10. By-laws and shared-use agreement (if applicable)
	11. Budget for the current fiscal year
	12. An <i>audit or financial review</i> by an <u>independent</u> CPA completed for the most recent fiscal year and accompanying management letter (if applicable). [See SAES <i>Standard F.3</i> for whether an audit or review is required.]
	13. A statement of whether or not the school has an <i>operating deficit or surplus</i> and plans for resolving the deficit or applying the surplus.
	14. An explanation of the school's <i>long-term debt</i> (if applicable), the terms of payment, and the percent of gross income this represents.
	15. The most recent <i>strategic plan</i> that includes vision, rationales, priorities/goals, and implementation plan with action steps, timeline, funding resources, and people responsible. [Note: SAES requests the <i>most recent</i> planning documents; i.e., if these plans are in progress, the school does not have to create new plans for the <i>Five-Year Interim Report</i> .]
	16. A <i>strategic financial plan</i> that accompanies the strategic plan and puts dollars/resources to the action steps. If this strategic financial plan is not available, a multi-year/long-range financial plan with projections over a period of years is needed.
	17. <i>Crisis response</i> (emergency) <i>plan</i> that includes action steps and policy
	18. Copies of <i>certificates of occupancy</i> for new construction since the <i>On-Site Visit</i> (if applicable)
	19. <i>Log</i> of school safety drills, including but not limited to fire, lock-down, and severe weather drills, for the <i>prior</i> school year.
	20. Copies of <i>safety inspection licenses and certificates</i>
	21. Copies of <i>daycare and program licensing</i> (if applicable)
	22. SAES <i>School Safety Checklist</i> , signed by the Head of School
	23. An explanation of ways that the <i>work on this report</i> has informed the school's understanding of issues addressed? Based on what has been learned, what suggestions does the school have for addressing these issues?

*Episcopal Identity* questions:

1. How are students intentionally introduced to the uniquely Episcopal qualities in the life of this school?
2. How have the school's religious goals and objectives been successfully integrated into the experience of individual students?
3. Obstacles and Solutions:
  - a. What needs to occur to solve the problems the school has encountered in achieving its

- goals in this area?
- b. How does the school plan to address these problems?
- c. How will the school measure the success/effectiveness of its efforts?

*Governance and Financial Management* questions:

1. How has collaborative work between the Board and the Head of School benefited this school?
2. If applicable, how has collaborative work between the School and the sponsoring parish or diocese benefited this school?
3. What challenges face the Board in providing all the resources necessary for the Head of School to implement the school's strategic plan?
4. What factors are prioritized in the development of the school's long range financial planning?
5. How proactive has the Board been in leading fundraising efforts at the school?
6. Obstacles and Solutions:
  - a. What needs to occur to solve the problems the school has encountered in achieving its goals in this area?
  - b. How does the school plan to address these problems?
  - c. How will the school measure the success/effectiveness of its efforts?

*Instructional Quality* questions:

1. Working with an updated, highly-effective, and well-articulated curriculum,
  - a. When and by what process was the most recent curricular review done to evaluate its thoroughness of content, its coordination between disciplines and divisions, and its relevance? Include the means by which relevant data was used to inform decision-making. Do NOT send the entire curriculum or scope and sequence.
  - b. How is the school's program/curriculum explained and shared with parents?
  - c. What forms of assessment measure student progress and teaching effectiveness at this school? Please include copies of standardized test scores (by grade level, not individual student scores) for the last two (2) years.
  - d. How does the program/curriculum prepare students for learning and experiences in the future?
2. Presenting an exemplary instructional experience for all students,
  - a. How is instruction differentiated to present the most effective learning environment for all students, including exceptional learners?
  - b. Describe recent professional development emphasis and the school's financial resources committed to this program during the last three (3) years.
  - c. Describe issues related to hiring the best-trained and experienced teachers for the school.
3. Recognizing Obstacles and Solutions,
  - a. What obstacles has the school encountered in the quest to achieve its instructional goals?
  - b. How does the school plan to address these issues?
  - c. How will the school measure the success/effectiveness of its efforts?

After review of the *Five-Year Interim Report*, the SAES Standards Committee may request additional information from the school.

SAES awards accreditation for a maximum of ten years following the *On-Site Visit*. Conditions may be placed upon a school if the Standards Committee has concerns regarding specific elements of the school's *Five-Year Interim Report*. In that case, a *Special Interim Report*, addressing the areas of concern specified by SAES, must be submitted to members of the Standards Committee by the date designated before the Committee allows the school to resume its regular accreditation cycle. All reports will be reviewed by the Standards Committee. The committee will make a recommendation to the SAES Board of Directors regarding the school's continuing accreditation status. The Board of Directors approves all accreditation decisions.

*Report Presentation:* A digital copy of the report, presented as one document, should be emailed to the SAES Office ([pblevins@swaes.org](mailto:pblevins@swaes.org)) and the Director of Accreditation Services ([skirkpatrick@swaes.org](mailto:skirkpatrick@swaes.org)) and received on or before (October 1, February 1, or April 1). Questions about the report presentation should be directed to the Director of Accreditation Services.

### ***Special Interim Report***

Occasionally, a school will be asked to submit a *Special Interim Report*. The details and due date of the report will be determined by the SAES Standards Committee and communicated to the school by the SAES Director of Accreditation Services.

*Report Presentation:* A digital copy of the report, including a signed *Cover Sheet to Accompany All Reports to Standards Committee* (found under Accreditation Resources at [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org)) and presented as one document, should be emailed to the SAES Office ([pblevins@swaes.org](mailto:pblevins@swaes.org)) and the Director of Accreditation Services ([skirkpatrick@swaes.org](mailto:skirkpatrick@swaes.org)) and received on or before (October 1, February 1, or April 1). Questions about the report presentation should be directed to the Director of Accreditation Services.

### ***Interim Report for SAES and ISAS or SAIS Dually-Accredited Schools***

A school may be accredited by both SAES and ISAS or SAIS. Though a determination of accreditation is made independently by each association, the associations collaborate on the submission of interim reports. In lieu of the SAES interim reports, SAES accepts, with some additional items specific to *Episcopal Identity*, the ISAS (*Five-Year*) or SAIS (*Two-Year*) interim reports on the timetable set by the other association. [NOTE: SAES and ISAS number the years of the accreditation timeline differently. SAES designates Year 1 as the first year following the On-Site Visit, while ISAS designates Year 1 as the year of the On-Site Visit. Therefore, a *Five-Year Interim Report* for ISAS will fall in SAES Year 6.] If a school has an ISAS or SAIS interim report due, SAES should receive the complete ISAS or SAIS report with the following additional items. If any items are required by the other association, duplication is not necessary.

✓	Item
	1. <i>Cover Sheet to Accompany Reports to the SAS Standards Committee</i> signed by both the Head of School and Board President
	2. <i>Checklist Five-Year (SAES/ISAS) or Two-Year (SAES/SAIS) Interim Report for Dual Schools</i>
	3. <i>Table of Contents</i>
	4. Current year SAES <i>Annual Report</i> [Contact SAES Office for an insertable version.]
	5. A <i>Head of School letter</i> describing the major changes that have occurred since the <i>On-Site Visit</i> , such as but not limited to a new Head of School or Rector, bylaw changes, program modifications, grade levels added or removed, significant financial development/resolution, or major construction or land acquisition. In this letter, the Head of School should address the status of any <i>Episcopal Identity</i> overarching (summary) recommendations that were made in the <i>Report of the Visiting Team</i> .
	6. Recommendations – Each <i>Episcopal Identity</i> , <i>School Climate and Culture</i> recommendation must be stated in full, followed by an explanation of how it has been addressed, how it is being addressed, or why it has not been addressed, along with copies of new policies or other evidence that demonstrate that the SAES recommendation has been met.
	7. <i>Episcopal Identity</i> documents: <i>By-laws</i> and <i>shared use agreement</i> (if applicable)
	8. <i>Episcopal Identity</i> questions [See <i>SAES Five-Year Interim Report</i> for questions.]
	9. Budget for the current fiscal year
	10. An <i>audit or financial review</i> by an independent CPA completed for the most recently completed fiscal year and accompanying management letter (if applicable). [See SAES <i>Standard F.3</i> for whether an audit or review is required.]
	11. A statement of whether or not the school has an <i>operating deficit or surplus</i> and plans for resolving the deficit or applying the surplus.
	12. An explanation of the school's <i>long-term debt</i> (if applicable), the terms of payment, and the percent of <i>gross income</i> this represents.
	13. Most recent <i>strategic plan</i> that includes vision, rationales, priorities/goals, and implementation plan with action steps, timeline, funding resources, and people responsible. [Note: SAES requests the <i>most recent</i> planning documents; i.e., if these plans are in progress, the school does not have to create new plans for the <i>Interim Report</i> .]
	14. A <i>strategic financial plan</i> that accompanies the strategic plan and puts dollars/resources to the action steps. If a strategic financial plan is not available, a multi-year/long-range financial plan with projections over a period of years is needed.
	15. <i>Crisis response</i> (emergency) <i>plan</i> that includes action steps and policy
	16. Copies of <i>certificates of occupancy</i> for new construction since the <i>On-Site Visit</i> (if applicable)
	17. <i>Log</i> of school safety drills, including but not limited to fire, lock-down, and severe weather drills
	18. Copies of <i>safety inspection licenses and certificates</i>
	19. Copies of <i>daycare and program licensing</i> (if applicable)
	20. SAES <i>School Safety Checklist</i> , signed by the Head of School
	21. An explanation of ways that the <i>work on this report</i> has informed the school's understanding of issues addressed? Based on what has been learned, what suggestions does the school have for addressing these issues?

*Report Presentation:* SAES must receive the ISAS/SAIS sections, as all sections are needed to present a complete picture of the school. The SAES section of the report and accompanying documents should be added to the ISAS/SAIS interim report sections and presented as one digital document. The report should be emailed on or before (October 1, February 1, or April 1) to the SAES Office (pblevins@swaes.org), the

SAES Director of Accreditation Services ([skirkpatrick@swaes.org](mailto:skirkpatrick@swaes.org)).

### **Interim Report for SAES and Other NAIS Commission on Accreditation Association Dually-Accredited Schools**

A school may be accredited by both SAES and another NAIS Commission on Accreditation recognized association. Though a determination of accreditation is made independently by each association, the two associations may collaborate on the submission of interim reports. The interim reporting timeline and requirements depend on which association has been the lead association for the On-Site Visit. Contact the SAES Director of Accreditation Services for details.

#### **Substantive Change in An Accredited School**

Occasionally in the life of an accredited school, events occur that result in a dramatic change for the school. These changes may be the result of circumstances beyond the control of the school, such as:

- A natural disaster causing significant damage to the school facility and/or local community
- Local economic change such as a major employer downsizing or closing its business, affecting a large number of school families

Other changes may be the result of actions taken within the school such as:

- The school's mission being redesigned to articulate new goals for its program
- An unanticipated/abrupt change in the school's administrative leadership
- A financial challenge requiring a significant change in the school's program
- Undertaking a capital campaign or assuming significant capital debt

In the event of a substantive change in the school, whether unexpected or anticipated, it must be reported at the beginning of the school year in the school's *Annual Report*. If that change occurs after the report has been submitted, it is the obligation of the President/Chair of the Board of Trustees, the Head of School, or the Rector, in the case of a parish day school, to immediately notify SAES of the situation. Embedded within the relationship between an accredited school and its accrediting association is a covenant of trust that each will be open, honest, and communicative concerning such changes. SAES can then continue to offer assurance to the school's constituents in a fully informed, professional manner during the period when changes are being implemented.

In the event of a planned substantive change, it is highly recommended that, prior to final action being taken, SAES is consulted to offer experienced counsel regarding options for achieving successful major changes, models for developing effective communications for the school community, and a timeline for implementing the changes.

It is the obligation of SAES as an accrediting association both to articulate standards of school excellence and work with school leaders to encourage effective means for achieving compliance with those Standards. Since

the school's most recent accreditation was based on previous goals or programming, SAES may require the school to enter a period of *Accreditation Substantiation* during which the school is re-assessed for accreditation purposes. If this is approved by SAES, the school will be allowed to retain its accredited status for a defined period upon fulfillment of the following requirements or risk losing its accreditation:

1. The school's board of trustees will notify SAES immediately when the decision is made to implement significant changes in its program. Included in that notification should be contact information for the current President/Chair of the Board of Trustees, the Head of School, and the Rector, in the case of a parish day school.
2. A comprehensive description of the circumstances that lead to the change and the initial plans for adjustment will be provided to SAES within 60 days\* of the board's notification. The report must include:
  - a. Signed *Cover Sheet to Accompany All Reports to Standards Committee* (found under Accreditation Resources at [www.swaes.org](http://www.swaes.org))
  - b. Narrative describing the events leading to the decision
  - c. How and when the decision was communicated to the school's administration, faculty and staff, parents and school community
  - d. Personnel, facility, program, and financial changes
  - e. Other major changes anticipated

[\*Note: in the event of changes because of a natural disaster, such as major hurricane damage, SAES will accept verbal reporting.]

3. The school will welcome an observer from SAES near the culmination of the *Accreditation Substantiation* process to assess the state of changes made and create a report for the SAES Standards Committee, evaluating the appropriateness of reinstating the school to active accredited status or recommending otherwise.

On the recommendation of the Standards Committee, the SAES Board of Directors retains the authority to reinstate the school to active accredited status or withdraw accreditation.

### **School in Crisis**

A school in crisis should contact the SAES Executive Director as soon as the crisis arises to discuss possible services, advice, and support that may be available to the school. In the rare case that the crisis facing a school may jeopardize the safety, health and welfare of its students and/or employees, the SAES Standards Committee and SAES Board of Directors will review the situation facing the school and make a determination about the school's continuing accreditation.

### **Postponement of Self-Study & On-Site Visit**

In an exceptional or crisis situation, a school may request a one-time, one-year postponement of its

Self-Study and/or On-Site Visit. It is only for the most unusual circumstances that a postponement will be considered by SAES. A Head of School change usually is not a reason for a postponement. Please notify the Director of Accreditation Services if a situation has arisen that would require the Standards Committee's consideration of a postponement. Should the request be granted, a change of accreditation status (provisional or probationary) is likely, and there will be a requirement of a *Special Interim Report* and interim visit.

### **Warnings, Denial of Initial or Re-Accreditation, Revoked Accreditation, Removal From Membership**

SAES requires that a member school be in compliance with SAES membership requirements and that SAES accredited schools be in compliance with the SAES *Standards*, adhere to the Association's policies and procedures, and provide information requested by the Association's Standards Committee and Board of Directors in order to maintain membership and accreditation. When a school fails to comply with these requirements, the Association may issue warnings, deny initial accreditation, deny re-accreditation, or revoke accreditation. If the Association determines that a school's progress is insufficient but not significant enough to impose a warning, the Association will advise the school that if progress or compliance is insufficient at the time of its next Interim Report or 10-year On-Site Visit, the school could be placed on a status or accreditation could be revoked. Failure to make adequate progress toward compliance at any time or failure to comply with the SAES *Standards* may result in the Association's action to revoke accreditation.

The Association's requirements, policies, processes, procedures and decisions are predicated on integrity. SAES expects integrity to govern the operation of schools. Therefore, evidence of withholding information, providing inaccurate information, or failing to provide timely information to the Association may be construed as an indication of the lack of a full commitment to integrity and may result in the imposition of warnings or revoked accreditation.

Should a school be placed on warning status, it will be required to submit regularly scheduled interim reports, as well as special interim reports. Interim site visits may be required, as well.

*Removal from Membership* - A school may be removed from SAES membership at any time, depending on the SAES Standards Committee's and Board of Directors' judgment of the seriousness of noncompliance with the *Standards* or with the Association's policies and procedures. Removal from membership, however, usually occurs after a school has been placed provisional/probationary status repeatedly and after persistent or significant noncompliance. Further, a serious instance of noncompliance or repeated instances of noncompliance may result in removal of membership without *Provisional or Probationary Accreditation* status.

### **Ten-Year Re-accreditation**

At the beginning of the ninth school year following the most recent On-Site Visit, the school will be notified that it is time to prepare a new *Self-Study*, including updated *Documents in Adherence to Standards*, and to schedule an On-Site Visit to take place during the following school year. An orientation/training will be

scheduled to answer any questions about the process. 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. Upon successful completion of all requirements, the Standards Committee will recommend to the Board of Directors a grant of re-accreditation to the school.

**VIII. SAES Contacts**

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