



ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT
SCHOOLS IN NEW ENGLAND

September 9, 2024

Jennifer Samuelson, Board Chair
Vermont Agency of Education
1 National Life Drive, Davis 5, Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

To whom it may concern,

The [Association of Independent Schools in New England](#) (AISNE) is a membership association of 270+ independent schools across New England and an accrediting organization for Kindergarten - Grade 12 independent schools. AISNE would like to make an application to continue serving as a recognized accrediting agency of private schools in the state of Vermont, as it has since July 1, 2023.

For more than 75 years, AISNE has accredited independent elementary, middle, and high schools in New England, and currently has more than 90 accredited schools across the region. A list of AISNE's member schools can be found [here](#), which includes 20 member schools (of which 2 are AISNE-accredited) in the state. We enjoy a collegial partnership with NEASC and other accrediting bodies, including formal relationships with both the American Montessori Society (AMS) and the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA).

AISNE school accreditation is a multi-year, standards-based process that involves rigorous self-study and a multi-day peer-review onsite visit. The integrity of AISNE's accreditation process is evidenced by our association's membership in the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA), formerly the Commission on Accreditation of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). ICAISA provides quality assurance and accountability for the accreditation programs of its 20 independent school member associations.

We look forward to beginning this dialogue with you and are eager to support Vermont's Agency of Education in recognizing the quality of independent schools in the state. In the pages that follow, we have included both narrative and links to supporting evidence to detail the ways in which AISNE meets each of the criteria set forth by the state of Vermont.

In partnership in our service to children and families,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sara Wilson,
Executive Director

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ABOUT AISNE

AISNE MISSION STATEMENT

With an ongoing commitment to equity and inclusion, the Association of Independent Schools in New England (AISNE) shapes the educational landscape for independent schools through leadership, education, service, and strategic advocacy.

AISNE STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

AISNE represents many different types of schools. In the context of the missions and values of our schools, AISNE seeks to encourage an environment in which all members of the community are valued, included and feel an authentic sense of belonging. We believe that cultivating diversity is an essential part of an effective learning environment.

For AISNE, diversity is an umbrella term that includes race, gender, age, ethnicity, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, social and economic class, physical and learning differences, and religion, as well as other characteristics that contribute to each individual's full identity.

We acknowledge and value the tensions and conflicts all schools experience as they work to become truly inclusive institutions, recognizing that progress comes from embracing, not avoiding, this important struggle.

We Believe...

- Schools have an obligation to prepare students to thrive in a diverse world and to develop in them the capacity to encounter difference with openness, empathy, and humility.
- The diversity of identities within our school communities enhances educational experiences, builds citizenship, and strengthens society.
- Transformative school communities are ones where all members feel a deep sense of welcome and belonging and have the opportunity to engage their full potential.
- Cultivating cultural competence in school communities, particularly in school leadership and governance bodies, and creating spaces where community members can practice strengthening those skills are essential to the work of DEIB.
- In the power of courageous dialogue and in the power of the collective network to support and compel each member school to be a learning community for all of its constituents.
- Our schools, no matter where they are in the work, can evolve their teaching and learning practices to meet the opportunities and demands of the future.
- Collaborative leadership among AISNE schools – demonstrated through the sharing of experiences and best practices – can positively shape the future of education.

Values in Action

AISNE's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in our schools (DEIB) comes in many forms across our portfolio of programs and services. Some recent examples of our work:

- *Leadership cohorts and programs for current and aspiring leaders of color in our member schools.*
- *Partnership with local and national organizations that advance DEIB in independent school education.*
- *Support for DEIB practitioners in schools.*
- *Robust DEIB indicators woven throughout AISNE accreditation standards.*
- *Student-oriented events that support current students of color in independent schools.*
- *Timely and relevant professional development that addresses the challenges and amplifies the opportunities that arise out of the work of creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive school communities that engender an authentic sense of belonging.*

SECTION 2227(a)1

Section 2227. Recognized Accrediting Agencies

(a) The Board shall recognize accrediting agencies that meet the following requirements:

1. operate continuously for at least five years prior to applying for recognition under this Section;

AISNE is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that is governed by an [independent board](#) and run by a small [staff](#) based primarily in New England. AISNE can trace its beginning back to 1904, when a group of passionate teachers in the greater Boston area came together to develop a professional development speaker series. Today, AISNE thrives because of that same collaborative passion to enhance and advance independent education.

With more than 270 member schools, AISNE is one of the largest regional associations in the country and represents a diverse range of schools in terms of size, pedagogy, religious affiliation, and admission. We serve our schools by providing strategic information, accreditation, advocacy, and a wide range of professional development opportunities. In October 2020, following two years of community discussion and consensus building, AISNE officially merged with the Independent Schools Association of Northern New England (ISANNE), which was a network of 60 schools in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine. This was a milestone for both organizations and afforded the opportunity to strengthen services provided to independent schools in the region.

AISNE has been accrediting its member schools for more than 75 years and currently has more than 90 accredited schools across the New England states. Over the past few years, the number of schools accredited by AISNE has grown substantially, as our organization has expanded accreditation services to schools serving high school-aged students.

SECTION 2227(a)2

Section 2227. Recognized Accrediting Agencies

(a) The Board shall recognize accrediting agencies that meet the following requirements:

2. maintain membership in a peer organization that supports accrediting agencies in continuous improvement and alignment with best practices in school accreditation;

AISNE served as a founding member of [ICAISA](#), the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation, which is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Governed by a board of directors, ICAISA evolved from its precursor organization, the NAIS Commission on Accreditation, in 2018. ICAISA represents a shared commitment to excellence in independent education and accreditation by encouraging and supporting continuous institutional improvement. The original Commission was established by the NAIS board of trustees in 2001 at the request of accrediting independent school state and regional associations, and convened for the first time in 2002. The Commission's work was intended to assure the quality of independent school accrediting programs, and that purpose is supported and enhanced under the aegis of the new organization, ICAISA. A primary responsibility of ICAISA is to develop a public understanding of, and credibility for, state, regional, and international independent school accrediting programs. In addition, the Council develops criteria for effective independent school accreditation practices, exemplary standards, and models of successful accreditation policies and procedures; and engages in research to inform accreditation practice.

ICAISA members are accountable to one another through a process patterned on the independent school accreditation model. Over the course of a 10-year cycle, associations prepare a self-study demonstrating compliance with the Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices. The Criteria provide common ground for member associations by delineating best practices, policies, and procedures. In addition, associations use the Core Standards, a set of "ideal" standards, in assessing their own standards.

ICAISA Member associations voluntarily commit to engage in a ten-year review cycle that includes a rigorous and impartial review of its accreditation program through self-study, peer visitation, and annual reporting. As part of the process of "accrediting the accreditors," each member association:

- Hosts a visit from a team composed of ICAISA members;
- Receives written recommendations for improvement from the ICAISA review team; and
- Engages in follow-up activities designed to improve the state, regional, or international accreditation process.

ICAISA members must meet the following criteria:

- Be incorporated as a 501(c)(3), 501(c)(6), or equivalent not-for-profit international entity.
- Have at least five years of experience as a fully functioning accrediting association.
- Adhere to non-discrimination practices in hiring.
- Have an accrediting process with the primary purpose of reviewing and accrediting nonprofit independent elementary schools with minimally three consecutive primary and/or middle grades (defined as between grades one through eight), and/or nonprofit independent secondary schools with minimally four consecutive grades, or the international equivalent.
- Comply with the ICAISA [Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices](#)
- Successfully complete the ongoing renewal and interim review process as outlined in the ICAISA Review Guidelines and conducted by representatives of the ICAISA Council.
- Commit to attendance by the association's Executive Director (or equivalent title) at all meetings of the Council and participate actively in committees.
- Complete all required report submissions, including an Annual Report.
- Submit timely payment of all membership dues and meeting registration fees.

In December of 2021, a Visiting Team from ICAISA found AISNE to be in full compliance with its Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices, as well as its Criteria for Standards, in every aspect. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

SECTION 2227(a)3

Section 2227. Recognized Accrediting Agencies

(a) The Board shall recognize accrediting agencies that meet the following requirements:

3. use a peer review process that includes evaluation by leaders of similar school types;

The full timeline for AISNE Accreditation—described in detail in a later section—is a cyclical process with full reaccreditation occurring every 10 years, anchored in a process of peer review through a decennial onsite visit.

As detailed in AISNE's [School Accreditation Handbook](#), at the decennial visit, the Visiting Team assesses the school through the lens of its mission and affirms its alignment with AISNE's Eligibility Criteria and Standards for Accreditation. The Visiting Team is composed of accredited school peer volunteers (5-10 faculty and staff members representing a range of roles, experiences, and expertise) who spend 3 days on campus reviewing materials the school has prepared, observing in classrooms, conducting interviews with stakeholders, reviewing documentation, and composing a Visiting Team report that provides commendations, recommendations, and suggestions to guide the school's continuous improvement. After an opportunity for review and correction by the Head of School, the final report and supporting materials are then reviewed by AISNE's Membership Committee, all of whom are sitting heads

of AISNE member schools, which then votes on a recommendation for accreditation status that is sent to the AISNE Board.

Each Visiting Team is led by a Team Chair, who is the Head of an AISNE member school. In the year prior to a school's onsite visit, AISNE's Director of Accreditation will engage in a collaborative process with the Head of School to identify appropriate peer schools and leaders that can best provide the sort of experience and expertise needed to effectively evaluate the school.

The Chair's role includes:

- Conducting a preliminary visit with the Director of Accreditation and the Head of School on campus to plan for the visit
- Coordinating logistics of the visit in collaboration with the school
- Preparing the team for the visit through advance communications
- Managing the team and assigning meaningful tasks and responsibilities during the visit
- Supporting Visiting Team members during the visit and helping to make the visit a positive and valuable professional development experience for them. In particular, serving as an encouraging voice and providing any on-the-job support needed, particularly for new team members.
- Overseeing the writing of a Visiting Team report that reflects the school's own self-identified strengths, areas of growth, and future directions and provides meaningful and attainable recommendations to then guide the school's continuous improvement.

AISNE communicates to its members that accreditation is anchored in a peer-review process that encourages educators to view their efforts as a collegial duty within the independent school community, ensuring the sustained quality of independent school education. Accredited schools are expected to support AISNE's peer-review accreditation process by volunteering members of their faculty / staff to serve on site Visiting Teams, with Heads of accredited schools serving as Visiting Team Chairs for other accreditation site visits.

SECTION 2227(a)4

Section 2227. Recognized Accrediting Agencies

(a) The Board shall recognize accrediting agencies that meet the following requirements:

4. appropriately train all staff and peer reviewers who are involved in the accreditation process;

AISNE provides comprehensive training materials for schools engaging in the accreditation cycle, as well as the peer faculty and staff who have volunteered to serve as Visiting Team members. The [School Accreditation Handbook](#), [Self-Study Coordinator Handbook](#), and [Visiting Team Handbook](#) are all revised annually and approved by AISNE's Membership Committee,

then introduced to members of the relevant stakeholder group through virtual webinar trainings which are recorded and distributed for ongoing review and reference, along with a folder of training materials.

For accredited schools, the major training takes place roughly two and a half years prior to the end of the 10-year accreditation term, as the school prepares to launch its year of reflection and self-study. The training process launches with a half-day virtual workshop, delivered by the AISNE Director of Accreditation, to prepare the school's leadership to (a) complete the Self-Study process using the template provided, and (b) to engage the full community effectively throughout the process so accreditation can serve as a time of reflection, engagement, and planning. Each school is asked to identify one or two Self Study Coordinators, who are then charged with leading the school's reflective process and ensuring completion of all necessary documentation and preparation for the visit. These Self-Study Coordinators are then invited to participate in a series of monthly workshops and check-in sessions, enabling members of the cohort to use one another (along with AISNE's Director of Accreditation) as thought partners as they execute the Self-Study process at their home schools.

For Visiting Team members, training takes place roughly 2-3 months prior to the onsite visit via a series of virtual workshops delivered by the AISNE Director of Accreditation. During these training sessions, Visiting Team members are introduced to their roles and responsibilities, the AISNE standards, and the expectations for their time on site, including the types of biases that must be actively avoided during the evidence-gathering and analysis processes. Through a variety of interactive activities and discussions, Visiting Team members learn how to gather evidence, practice writing sections of the report, and evaluate written examples. A similar set of workshops is provided for Visiting Team Chairs, focusing on the specifics of the role as it relates to building relationships with the leadership team of the school being visited, supporting Visiting Team members, and managing the group effectively.

In addition to these formal training opportunities required of all accredited schools and Visiting Team members, AISNE's Director of Accreditation maintains regular contact with the Heads of all AISNE-accredited schools. Following a regular cadence of communication, the AISNE Director of Accreditation shares updates with each cohort regarding what to expect in the upcoming year, based on their school's unique timeline. Using email, zoom calls, and in-person visits, AISNE prioritizes building strong, responsive relationships with schools in order to ensure they have access to all the information and support they need to successfully complete their portion of the accreditation process.

SECTION 2227(a)5

Section 2227. Recognized Accrediting Agencies

(a) The Board shall recognize accrediting agencies that meet the following requirements:

5. accredit schools based on publicly accessible documented standards, including mission, governance, finance, program, community of the school, administration, development, admissions, personnel, general health and safety, child and student protection and well-being, facilities, student services, school culture, and residential life (as applicable);

AISNE's [Eligibility Criteria and Standards for Accreditation](#) are available to the public on the AISNE website, and are provided to all accredited schools through the AISNE School Accreditation Handbook.

AISNE's Standards are divided into three major focus areas: Leadership, Student Experience/Program, and Institutional Advancement and Operations, with further standards and indicators delineating the essential elements of school health within each of these areas. These are provided in their entirety at the link above.

Leadership

Std. 1: Mission and Philosophy

Std. 2: Governance

Std. 3: Administration

Student Experience/Program

Std. 4: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Life

Std. 5: Student Well-Being

Std. 6: Program Resources

Std. 7: Residential, Homestay, and Exchange Programs (*if applicable*)

Institutional Advancement & Operations

Std. 8: Enrollment Management and Outreach

Std. 9: Community Engagement and Partnerships

Std. 10: Development

Std. 11: Staffing and Human Resources

Std. 12: Finance

Std. 13: Facilities

Std. 14: Safety and Risk Management



As detailed in the chart below, AISNE’s standards are in direct alignment with those categories articulated by Vermont in Section 2227.a.5.

VT Agency of Education	AISNE
Mission	Standard 1: Mission and Philosophy
Governance	Standard 2: Governance
Finance	Standard 12: Finance
Program	Standard 4: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Life
Community of the school	Standard 9: Community Engagement and Partnerships
Administration	Standard 3: Administration
Development	Standard 10: Development
Admissions	Standard 8: Enrollment Management and Outreach
Personnel	Standard 11: Staffing and Human Resources
General health and safety	Standard 14: Safety and Risk Management
Child and student protection and well-being	Standard 5: Student Well-Being Standard 14: Safety and Risk Management
Facilities	Standard 13: Facilities
Student services	Standard 6: Program Resources
School culture	Standard 4: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Life Standard 5: Student Well-Being
Residential life (<i>as applicable</i>)	Standard 7: Residential, Homestay, and Exchange Programs (<i>if applicable</i>)

SECTION 2227(a)6

Section 2227. Recognized Accrediting Agencies

(a) The Board shall recognize accrediting agencies that meet the following requirements:

6. perform a comprehensive onsite visit of any school seeking accreditation while such school is in session;

Every 10 years, an AISNE-accredited school must engage in a rigorous self-study that involves reflecting on, assessing, and affirming its practices in relation to its mission. The self-study process is mission-focused, comprehensive of all aspects of school life, and inclusive of representatives of all of the school's stakeholder groups. Following the self-study, the school hosts a 3.5-day peer-review onsite visit, conducted by a Visiting Team composed of faculty, staff, and administrators from other schools in the AISNE network. Using the school's self-study, the Visiting Team assesses the school's compliance with the AISNE Standards of Accreditation, and the congruence of its educational program and practices to its mission. The Visiting Team produces a report commenting on their findings and highlighting commendations, recommendations, and suggestions to guide the school's continuous improvement over the next 10 years of its AISNE accreditation term.

Additionally, all schools must host the AISNE Director of Accreditation and a member of AISNE's Membership Committee on campus at the five year mark, for an interim visit to evaluate the school's progress toward implementing the recommendations of the decennial Visiting Team. Such visits are only scheduled during times when school is in session, to enable Visitors to observe the school's program and pedagogy and to meet with faculty and administrators.

SECTION 2227(a)7

Section 2227. Recognized Accrediting Agencies

(a) The Board shall recognize accrediting agencies that meet the following requirements:

7. require that schools seeking accreditation maintain a curriculum that is informed by Research, document individual student progress, and have mechanisms for monitoring, assessing, and providing feedback on student progress;

In AISNE's Standards for Accreditation, Standard 4 (Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Life) explicitly lays out expectations for schools around curriculum, assessment, and feedback. Specifically, Indicators 1, 2, and 5 (*italicized, below*) speak directly to the requirements articulated by the Vermont Agency of Education.

Standard 4: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Life

The school provides a mission-driven educational program that promotes learning and personal growth.

Indicator 1: *The school has a systematic and collaborative process by which faculty and administration document, review, evaluate, and revise the educational program.*

Indicator 2: *The school's curriculum and teaching practices are supported by current research and developmentally-appropriate practices.*

Indicator 3: The school's teaching practices, curriculum, and co-curriculum reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Indicator 4: The content and design of the educational program enable students to develop skills to navigate a complex future.

Indicator 5: *The school effectively assesses students and communicates their progress to families.*

Indicator 6: The school's extracurricular and co-curricular programs support and advance its mission and philosophy.

SECTION 2227(a)8

Section 2227. Recognized Accrediting Agencies

(a) The Board shall recognize accrediting agencies that meet the following requirements:

8. require that schools seeking accreditation promote an equitable, just, and inclusive community of adults and students, foster a culture of learning, and inspire students to respect and value diversity in its many forms;

Between 2020 and 2023, AISNE's Membership Committee engaged in a comprehensive revision process, resulting in the latest iteration of AISNE's Standards for Accreditation. One focus of this revision process was to embed the essential elements of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) across all standards. AISNE now has DEIJ indicators embedded throughout all of its accreditation standards. These DEIJ-related Standards & Indicators were written with input from a robust network of school Diversity Practitioners. This illustrates AISNE's belief that these principles should be embedded across all areas of the schoolhouse and are the responsibility of all stakeholders in the design and implementation of school programs, policies, and practices. A few specific examples, pulled from a variety of AISNE Eligibility Criteria and Standards for Accreditation, are provided below.

Eligibility Criteria:

- **Criteria 4:** Has a non-discrimination statement as required by law.

Standard 1: Mission and Philosophy

- **Indicator 4:** The School articulates to its community how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are reflected in the mission and philosophy of the school.
- **Indicator 5:** The school attends to the quality of life of all members of the community and takes actions to create an equitable, inclusive, safe, and just environment.

Standard 2: Governance

- **Indicator 5:** The governing board establishes policies that reflect diversity, equity, and inclusion and ensures that these qualities are reflected in decision-making and governing body membership.

Standard 3: Administration

- **Indicator 2:** The school's administration works to establish and implement policies that reflect its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to ensure that these values are reflected in decision making.

Standard 4: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Life

- **Indicator 3:** The school's teaching practices, curriculum, and broader educational program reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Standard 5: Student Well-Being:

- **Indicator 2:** The program content, teaching methods, and assessment practices accommodate student developmental levels, learning styles, and abilities.
- **Indicator 3:** The school recognizes differences within the student body such as gender, learning style or ability, race, age, ethnicity, family background, family structure, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and religious practice and has appropriate systems to assess, plan for, and respond to how aspects of student identity impact well-being.

Standard 8: Enrollment Management and Outreach

- **Indicator 2:** The school consistently follows policies and procedures regarding admission, including scholarship (if applicable) and financial aid (if applicable), that promote the school's goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Importantly, schools conduct self-evaluation through the Self-Study, measure their progress, and set goals for continuous improvement in all areas with a DEI lens. Additionally, peer review Visiting Teams include a DEI Practitioner who evaluates school culture and climate, in addition to the educational program.

SECTION 2227(a)9

Section 2227. Recognized Accrediting Agencies

(a) The Board shall recognize accrediting agencies that meet the following requirements:

9. conduct ongoing and periodic reviews as necessary throughout the accreditation cycle of the schools that it accredits and provide interim reports during the accredited school's approval period that are sufficient to meet the informational needs of the Board;

AISNE follows a ten-year accreditation cycle, inclusive of periodic reports and reviews, evidenced in the graphic below. The decennial onsite visit is the highlight of the accreditation term, but schools are required to submit some form of reporting on an annual basis, in addition to a more substantial report and in-person Interim Visit at the halfway point in their accreditation term.



Initial Accreditation:

Prior to its initial AISNE accreditation, a school must be an AISNE Associate In-Region Member. (This membership category is for non-profit schools that are not accredited by AISNE or NEASC in MA, ME, NH, RI, or VT.) In order to become a candidate for AISNE accreditation, the school must meet all of AISNE’s Eligibility Criteria. After an initial consultation and review of materials affirming compliance with the Eligibility Criteria by the AISNE Director of Accreditation, the AISNE Membership Committee makes a recommendation to the AISNE Board, which votes on the school’s approval as a Candidate for initial AISNE accreditation (this status is called Recognition of Candidacy).

During a review of a school’s Accreditation Candidacy Application, the Membership Committee reserves the right to decline the school for accreditation candidacy at its discretion, if the Committee believes the school is not a good match for AISNE’s accreditation program.

There is an expectation that schools in this category host their first site visit for AISNE accreditation within five years of being accepted as a Candidate for initial accreditation. If a school does not receive initial accreditation following its site visit, it is asked to submit a “Corrective Action Plan” within six months and has a total of 3 additional years to successfully complete the initial accreditation process.

Reaccreditation:

Schools go through AISNE reaccreditation every 10 years. Working with AISNE, the school establishes a mutually agreed upon date when a Visiting Team will visit the school for 3.5 days for the reaccreditation visit. The school must successfully complete a new Self-Study using the *AISNE School Accreditation Handbook* and demonstrate alignment with the current version of the Eligibility Criteria and Accreditation Standards each time it goes through AISNE reaccreditation.

Phases of Accreditation

A. Self-Study:

The Self-Study is the heart of accreditation, and the process must be thorough, broad, deep, and inclusive of the entire school community. The Self-Study process involves applying the viewpoint of the school’s unique mission and culture to a critical analysis of all aspects of the school. Through an inclusive, community-wide process, the school engages in thoughtful self-evaluation and goal setting, which includes identifying strengths, opportunities for improvement, and future directions. *A school is expected to take at least one full school year to complete its Self-Study prior to hosting the onsite visit.*

B. The Team Visit, Vote & Report:

The school hosts a 3.5-day visit by a Visiting Team composed of peer volunteers, assembled by the Director of Accreditation in collaborative consultation with the Head of School. The Visiting Team is led by a Head at another AISNE member school, providing the opportunity for both peer feedback and relationship-building across the AISNE network.

Based on the Self-Study and the findings during the visit, the Visiting Team assesses the school’s compliance with the AISNE Eligibility Criteria and Standards of Accreditation, and congruence between the school’s stated mission and its current program and practices. The team votes on each of the AISNE Standards using the categories: Exemplary, Good, Needs to Improve, and Fail. The team also produces a report commenting on their findings and highlighting commendations, recommendations, and suggestions to guide the school’s continuous improvement.

The school is held accountable by AISNE for addressing any recommendations made by the Visiting Team during its accreditation term.

C. Review Phase & Accreditation Decision:

Once complete, the Director of Accreditation reviews, edits, and formats the Visiting Team Report. The Head of School is provided with a draft of the report and given the opportunity to identify any factual errors prior to the report being finalized.

A Head of School disagreeing with a comment, suggestion, or recommendation made in the Visiting Team report, or with a negative vote on one or more of the Standards for Accreditation, may register those disagreements in writing to the Director of Accreditation. This response must be submitted within three months of receipt of the Visiting Team's report. This response is logged in AISNE's database of record and may be shared with people who have been privy to the report, including the Chair of the Visiting Team, AISNE's Executive Director, Membership Committee, and Board of Directors.

The Membership Committee reviews the Visiting Team Report and the vote sheet indicating the school's compliance with the Accreditation Standards and recommends an accreditation decision to the AISNE Board. There are two possible recommendations:

1. Full Accreditation for a 10-year term (with an interim report and visit in Year 5); or,
2. Provisional accreditation status. (*For information about Provisional Status, see Section IV: Following the Onsite Visit.*)

The AISNE Board votes on the recommended accreditation status, and the Director of Accreditation communicates the Board's decision to the Head of School and Board Chair. Schools receive an AISNE Accredited School Certificate with each successful reaccreditation every ten years.

D. One-Year Action Plan:

In the academic year immediately following the school's site visit, the Head of School sends a written report (*One-Year Action Plan*) to the Director of Accreditation. The *One-Year Action Plan* outlines a plan, including a timeline, to address the Visiting Team's Recommendations. The school is expected to have adequately addressed all of the Recommendations within five years of the onsite visit. Failure to do so may lead to Provisional status.

After reviewing the *One-Year Action Plan*, the Director of Accreditation and a Membership Committee member may conduct a virtual or in-person meeting with the Head of School, focusing on supporting the school's development of a strong plan to address all Recommendations and any areas of concern.

E. Five-Year Interim Visit & Report:

Five years after the site visit, the Head of School sends a *Five-Year School Progress Report* to the Director of Accreditation. This Report details the school's process and progress in

addressing the Visiting Team’s Recommendations. The school must have adequately addressed each Recommendation in order to remain fully accredited.

A Five-Year Interim Visit is conducted by the Director of Accreditation, a Membership Committee member, and / or the Chair of the original Visiting Team to review progress on all Recommendations and to assess the state of the school more broadly. This visit includes conversations with the Head of School, the Board Chair, and any other staff as requested by the Review Team members; typically this visit includes meetings with representative members of the faculty, staff, administration, and Board.

AISNE’s Membership Committee reviews a summary report of the interim visit by the Interim Visit Team and votes to continue the school’s current accreditation for the remainder of the 10-year accreditation term, or to place the school in Provisional accreditation.

Maintaining AISNE Accreditation:

Once accredited, schools are required to remain in alignment with AISNE Eligibility Criteria and Accreditation Standards. Additionally, schools are required to remain a Full Member of AISNE by submitting timely payment of membership dues and completing the Accredited School Annual Report, which provides updates on substantive changes a school may be experiencing. Accredited schools are also required to complete Pulse Points, AISNE’s salary and benchmarking survey, annually.

The accreditation status of a school can be assessed and changed at any time for reasons including, but not limited to, non-compliance with any Eligibility Criteria and / or Standards, for failure to submit adequate one-year and five-year interim reports, failure to complete the Accredited School Annual Report, and failure to pay AISNE membership dues.

SECTION 2227(a)10

Section 2227. Recognized Accrediting Agencies

(a) The Board shall recognize accrediting agencies that meet the following requirements:
10. demonstrate substantial understanding and familiarity with state laws, policies, and regulations that apply to approved independent schools in Vermont; and

AISNE works in partnership with each New England state to ensure an up-to-date knowledge of the regulations applicable to independent schools. In Vermont, AISNE works in close partnership with the Vermont Independent Schools Association (VISA), the independent school lobbying organization - which has significant overlap in school members with AISNE - to understand and remain abreast of the regulatory landscape impacting independent schools. AISNE requires all accredited schools to “have a process for the ongoing monitoring of its compliance with all federal, state, and local legal and regulatory requirements” (Eligibility Criteria 8). Compliance with this Criteria is reviewed and confirmed during the Decennial Visit, and a

school affirms its ongoing compliance with this and all other accreditation Standards & Criteria when it completes its Annual Report each year.

SECTION 2227(a)11

Section 2227. Recognized Accrediting Agencies

(a) The Board shall recognize accrediting agencies that meet the following requirements:

11. agree to review and share with the Agency of Education evidence of practices and compliance with state-specific requirements during the initial or interim stages of an approved independent school's accreditation period.

AISNE Visiting Teams create a narrative report at the conclusion of the decennial visit commenting on the Visiting Team's findings about the school's alignment with accreditation Standards and Criteria. This report highlights commendations, recommendations, and suggestions to guide the school's continuous improvement over the next 10 years of its AISNE accreditation term. This report may be shared with the Agency of Education and other collaborative accrediting agencies as required by the cooperative relationship. Additionally, AISNE shares accreditation decisions with any relevant stakeholders, including each school's Head of School and Board Chair. The accreditation decision may be shared with the Agency of Education and other collaborative accrediting agencies as necessary.

AISNE also has an [Addendum](#) process that is completed when accrediting a school in Vermont, which affirms the school's compliance with state-specific requirements as articulated in Vermont Independent School Rule 2223.3.4. Maintaining Safe and Equitable Access to Educational Opportunities states that "Approved independent schools are expected to provide for the safety, protection, and equitable treatment of students and school personnel in accordance with state and federal laws. School governance boards and leadership teams shall make every effort to remain current in their understanding and implementation of recognized best practices and procedures in this regard and shall also take care to remain compliant with laws adopted after the promulgation of these rules." During the self-study process, the Head of School completes the Self-Study Addendum for Schools in Vermont, which requires their attestation that they develop and maintain several policies, plans, and practices required by the state. During the decennial onsite visit, the Visiting Team Chair and Head of School review together the requirement that the school develops and maintains such policies, plans, and practices and both the Visiting Team Chair and Head of School sign an attestation to this effect. This addendum may be shared with the Agency of Education as necessary.

APPENDIX

- AISNE's [Association Bylaws](#)
- AISNE's [Eligibility Criteria and Standards for Accreditation](#)
- AISNE's [School Accreditation Handbook](#)
- AISNE's [Self-Study Coordinator Handbook](#)
- AISNE's [Self-Study Template](#)
- AISNE's [Self-Study Coordinator Training Materials](#) (*spring 2024 example*)
- AISNE's [Visiting Team Handbook](#)
- AISNE's [Visiting Team Member Training Materials](#) (*fall 2024 example*)
- AISNE's [Self-Study and Visiting Team Report Addenda for Accredited Schools in Vermont](#)