



Accreditation Standards and Indicators



SAIS accreditation is a voluntary practice widely accepted as a high mark of distinction. The process carefully considers a school's capacity to serve the needs of its student community in accordance with its mission. The SAIS accreditation process comprises three distinct but related parts:

1. The school demonstrates compliance with research-based standards and independent school effective practices in the areas of:
 1. mission
 2. governance and leadership
 3. teaching and learning
 4. stakeholder communications and relationships
 5. resources and support systems
 6. virtual education
2. The school conducts a thorough self-study that engages stakeholders and results in aspirational yet attainable and measurable goals for its future sustainability.
3. The school hosts a visit from peer educators who respond to the school's vision for its future and are charged with ensuring that the school has addressed significant questions regarding their adherence to their mission and future capacities of fulfilling their mission.

Through standards compliance SAIS schools analyze their finances and financial policies, communications practices, curriculum review procedures, employment policies including professional development opportunities, fair and ethical admissions procedures, safety planning, etc. Checking standards is necessary, but it is only the beginning of the SAIS accreditation process.

The commentary in italics after each indicator is provided to help clarify the purpose of the indicator as you respond in writing and prepare for your chair and visiting team. At the end of each standard, there are lists of both required and suggested evidence. They are by no means exhaustive, nor do they represent restrictions placed on schools as they creatively address their operational efficiencies. In responding to indicators, the school must indicate that it believes itself to be in compliance with the indicator, provide a description of how the school complies, and provide evidence or documentation that support its claim

STANDARD 1: MISSION

The school commits to a mission that leads to continuous improvement for teaching and learning.

An SAIS accredited school's mission guides decision-making, allocation of resources, and the building of community.

- 1.1 Establishes in collaboration with its stakeholders a mission for the school that guides all planning and decision-making and ensures the mission is congruent with principles of academic scholarship: permitting and encouraging freedom of inquiry, diversity of viewpoints, and academic independent, critical thinking.**

The mission of the school is an essential written foundation on which all programs and organizational structures are based. The mission statement should be reflected in all offerings, activities, and personnel within the school. The mission statement is what sets a school apart from others. It is a statement of the unique culture of the school. It permeates the school in places such as the beginning of the school's charter or bylaws, in its handbooks and viewbooks, in its admissions materials, on the walls of classrooms and offices, and in the minds and hearts of the entire school community.

- 1.2 Assures that goals are aligned with and advance the mission of the school.**

The goals should be aligned with and reflective of the mission of the school and congruent with all aspirations that guide SAIS member schools. Examples of such alignment can typically be found in the school's strategic plan, its self-study, minutes of meetings about school policy and administrative/faculty decisions, etc. Schools should ask themselves, "Will this goal help us carry out and fulfill our mission?"

- 1.3 Ensures the beliefs and mission guide the instruction and curriculum throughout the school and reflect research and best practices concerning teaching and learning.**

Regular discussions about educational philosophy, developmental psychology, and organizational design should clearly reference the mission. Debate about new directions or new methods of teaching/learning should evidence consideration of the mission.

- 1.4 Regularly reviews its mission and revises when appropriate.**

A forceful, vital mission requires that schools and their governing boards review the mission statement periodically. Without regular review and reconsideration, a mission can become nothing more than a historical landmark in the school's existence. This indicator should not be taken as an expectation that the mission statement will be changed each year; many remain useful for decades. But missions do require maintenance and careful consideration if they are to influence the work of the school. The intervals and timing for such review are up to the school.

- 1.5 Provides evidence that no form of bias or prejudice is allowed or practiced within the mission scope of the school in order to promote an equitable, just, and inclusive community that inspires students to respect and value diversity.**

This indicator ensures that all SAIS schools model equity and justice in their daily practices, in their recruiting approaches, and their curriculum.

Documents Relative to Standard 1: MISSION

Each indicator must be accompanied by evidence of compliance. This list of documents will assist the school in meeting most, but not necessarily all, indicators.

Required documents:

- Evidence of nondiscrimination policies in handbooks, website, employment information, student applications, school publications
- Evidence of regular mission review
- Statement of how freedom of inquiry is approached within the context of the school's mission

Suggested documents that may be used to show evidence of compliance with indicators:

- Description of how mission drives decision making within the school bylaws
- Handbooks
- Admissions materials
- Survey/focus group results
- Minutes from meetings of divisions, departments, administration
- Professional growth opportunities
- In-service programs

STANDARD 2: GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

The school provides a governance, leadership, and organizational structure that promotes its mission.

In an SAIS accredited school, trustees and administrators clearly understand their roles and are advocates for the school's mission, vision, and continuous improvement. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders.

2.1 Operates within the jurisdiction of a governance structure or civil authority and, when necessary, has a charter, license, or permit to operate within that jurisdiction.

Schools will operate independently with the necessary charter, license or permit as required by the relevant jurisdiction. Schools that function under the authority of another 501(c)(3) authority, such as an ecclesiastical bishop or national organization, or as a proprietary school must show the location of evidence that such authority has been delegated to the school.

2.2 Complies with all applicable statutes and governmental regulations.

The school will comply with applicable statutes and governmental regulations (federal, state, local) including those related to programs for young children. It should be remembered that noncompliance with some regulations could put the school in legal and financial jeopardy.

Schools offering extended day programs and/or serving children younger than (senior) kindergarten shall provide evidence that they know and meet applicable state statutes and requirements related to pre-k programs. Typically, a state agency prescribes regulations for these programs, and schools may or may not qualify for exemptions. To be considered for SAIS accreditation, these programs must be part of the overall school program and included in the school's standards compliance and self-study. These programs must be operating in full compliance with the state agency and/or must demonstrate exemption from regulation.

2.3 Obtains necessary information about the legal requirements and obligations that exist in the state, federal, or other jurisdictions in which it operates.

Leaders in a school should demonstrate that they have access to the information regarding the legal requirements necessary to operate a school. The name(s), affiliations, and relationships should be indicated in the school records.

2.4 Establishes by its governing process policies to ensure no conflict of interest between businesses, professional or parental roles, and duties to the school.

No economic or other advantage must come to a trustee (or employee) because of his or her role or affiliation with the school. Board members should not participate in discussions that relate to conflicts of interest involving their businesses, or themselves, or their family relationships. Annual signed consent forms, orientation, and on-going training are typical methods of demonstrating adherence.

- 2.5 Assures that the governance structure supports and models inclusive decision-making methods.**
A governance best practice is for boards to follow procedures during meetings that allow for open and confidential conversations; and likewise, to develop protocols to speak as one voice outside of meetings.
- 2.6 Assures that the governance structure establishes comprehensive monitoring of overall school policies.**
The governing board establishes regular methods for monitoring policies while balancing the need for the managers of the school to address day-to-day concerns.
- 2.7 The school engages in formal and regular strategic thinking and planning aligned with its vision, mission, and beliefs and provides for the continuity of mission.**
Evidence of visioning and planning must be made clear, and a current strategic plan must exist and be available for review. A strategic planning process that is mission-driven, comprehensive of all facets of the school, and inclusive of representatives of all stakeholder groups, could serve as the basis for the school's self-study and school report as a required component for accreditation.
- 2.8 The school is prepared to maintain stability during transitions of leadership for both trustees and the head of school.**
Orderly succession planning and practice help to ensure the continuity of mission. Succession plans must account for board member and board leadership transitions as well as head of school transition. Succession plans must include provisions for training for a first-time head of school and a newly appointed trustee.
- 2.9 Assures that the governance structure clearly defines roles and responsibilities for board members and the head of school and provides procedures and evidence for: orientation; continuous growth, renewal, and training; and evaluation of both the board and the head of school.**
Clear evidence of the distinction between the roles of the board and head of school is required.
- 2.10 Has an organizational structure that includes separate entities that carry out the distinct functions of governance and day-to-day management.**
The school employs best practices in determining the roles of the board and the head of school. Typical responsibilities of the governing board include: employ, nurture, support, and evaluate the administrative head of the school; manage the investments and commission the audit of the school; assume fiduciary responsibility for the school; set policy for the school. Typical day-to-day responsibilities of the administrative head of school include oversight of personnel, curriculum (as well as extra and co-curricular offerings), student life, and administration of the approved budget. Policy manuals,

employment documents, bylaws, admissions materials, board handbook statements can be used to demonstrate adherence to this indicator.

- 2.11 Establishes policies and procedures that recognize and preserve the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the managers of the school and assures that the governance structure does not interfere with the day-to-day operations of the school.**

The school demonstrates a clear distinction between policy and management.

- 2.12 Assures that the administrative head of the school allocates and aligns the human, instructional, financial, and physical resources in support of the vision, mission, and beliefs of the school. The head of school shall have responsibility for the expenditure of all funds raised in the name of the school by booster clubs and other related organizations of students, parents, alumni, or supporters.**

Provide evidence of alignment of allocation of funds and mission of the school. Ensure that the administrative head of the school has the authority to manage the school's board approved budget. Ensure that all entities of the school that raise funds operate under the authority of the administrative head of school.

- 2.13 Assures that the governing body provides adequate risk management policies for the protection of the school and adequate documentation of insurance or equivalent resources to protect its financial stability and administrative operations from protracted proceedings and claims for damage.**

Descriptions of risk management practices and policies, copies of insurance policies, agreements with pro bono or retained counsel, description of equivalent resources are possible resources to document adherence.

- 2.14 Assures that debt service or lines of credit are managed in such ways as to ensure that fiscal responsibility remains under the control of the governing authority.**

The school maintains and enforces policies, which ensure fiscal responsibility.

- 2.15 Assures that the school is not in, nor in prospect of moving into, financial reorganization under the protection of bankruptcy.**

The school operates without excessive debt and within a balanced budget for more than one year.

- 2.16 Budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and plans for improvement and to fund a maintenance reserve.**

The financial reports of the school must be made available to the visiting team while on the campus. The evidence of a reserve fund in place indicates that the school takes this need seriously and although there is not a specific amount to be set aside, fiscally prudent and sound schools provide for future maintenance or programmatic needs based on the school's financial capacity, its physical plant size and age, and the complexity of its programs.

2.17 Maintains its accounts in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles GAAP. Its accounts are reviewed or audited annually by an independent licensed accountant. A full audit is conducted in the year before the visit.

Business manuals, procedure handbooks, a copy of the audit, board minutes accepting the audit, etc. can provide evidence of this. To be in compliance, a school must hold a full audit for the fiscal year as close as possible to their accreditation visit (usually the year immediately prior) and minimally reviews in the intervening years. "Independent" means not an employee of the school. It is a best practice to conduct audits annually.

Documents Relative to Standard 2: GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

Governance Documents

Required documents:

- Bylaws
- Board policy manual
- Evidence that the board has engaged in conversations about leadership transitions
- Evidence of annual board governance training
- Succession plan which includes provisions for training for a first-time head of school and a newly appointed trustee
- Articles of incorporation
- Most recent strategic plan
- Head of school annual evaluation procedure
- Board development plan and evaluation procedure
- Conflict of interest statements signed by all trustees and key employees

Facility and Safety Documents (see also Standard 5)

Required documents:

- Licenses or permits for the school to operate (if required in your municipality, city, or state)
- Documents demonstrating adherence to fire, safety, and health codes
- Documentation of annual training of all faculty and staff in identifying and reporting suspected sexual abuse
- Extended care and daycare license or exemption from license (if applicable)
- Institutional risk management plans (including if applicable: vehicle safety, requirements for drivers, chemical handling and storage, preventative maintenance and inspections, field trips, sports programs, outside contractors, use of facilities)
- Insurance documents
- A statement of how the school maintains continuous compliance with applicable local, state, and federal legal requirements

Financial Documents

Required documents:

- Annual school budget
- Financial audit

- Current financial statements: financial position, activities, cash flow
- Description of lines of credit
- Copy of filed tax documents (typically IRS Form 990)
- Financial procedures handbook

Suggested documents that may be used to show evidence of compliance with indicators:

- Names and contact information for school attorney and accountant
- Name and contact information for the Department of Child Protective Services
- Documents that show the authority of the governing board
- Policy statements regarding conflicts of interest, recusal, or contract bidding and awarding processes
- Evidence of board training related to decision making
- Descriptions of successful decision-making processes
- Bylaws, board meeting agenda items
- Description of a monitoring method
- Minutes of planning and visioning meetings, retreats, etc.
- Meeting minutes that demonstrate discussions of succession planning
- Meeting minutes which include board approval of an audit
- Policies that describe safety procedures (see also Standard 5)

STANDARD 3: TEACHING & LEARNING

The school provides a curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement of all students in support of its mission.

An SAIS accredited school provides a curriculum that reflects best practices, strategies, and activities. The curriculum includes clearly defined expectations for student development that are subject to review and revision at regular intervals.

3.1 Develops and aligns the curriculum and instructional design with the school's mission and expectations for student performance.

The visiting team will be looking for evidence that the curriculum and instructional methods are aligned with student expectations and the mission of the school. The mission language should show up often in minutes or official notes of division meetings and in the descriptions of how the school organizes its instructional program to accomplish its objectives.

3.2 Designs curriculum to encourage students to reach their potential.

Encouraging students to reach their potential may suggest a comprehensive academic program and co-curricular activities, differentiation, AP, Honors, IB programs, dual enrollment, or a myriad of other opportunities and approaches. Independent schools commit to the uniqueness of students and have designed curriculum with individuals in mind.

3.3 Provides for articulation and alignment across all subject areas and levels of schools.

The visiting team will be looking for evidence in conversations and written statements and curriculum guides about the coordination of the teaching and learning philosophy of the school. Cohesive mission language should show up often in minutes or official notes of instructional and curriculum meetings and in the descriptions of how the school organizes its instructional program to accomplish its objectives.

3.4 Implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning.

There are numerous approaches to expectations for student learning. These expectations should be understood by all and should be enumerated, as best as possible in admission materials, handbooks, curriculum guides, etc. and should be the subject of minutes of faculty or department meetings. Note that this curriculum must be implemented.

3.5 Emphasizes elements of collaboration and collegiality that include honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, responsibility, citizenship, self-discipline, and respect for others.

Evidence of these attributes in the mission, objectives, program, curriculum, co-curricular activities, and the overall culture among staff and students are useful pieces of information. Surveys can provide an important means of assessing the effectiveness of the school's efforts to emphasize these elements.

3.6 Schedules instructional time to support student learning.

Apart from the requirements of state law, such time should be evident in the scheduling documents for the school.

- 3.7 Plans a mission appropriate academic calendar with a minimum of 170 days, or more if required by state law, during which students and teachers engage in teaching/learning activities (Note: for half-day kindergarten programs, one-half day is equivalent to one full day in meeting the 170-day standard). See DOE website: U.S. Department of Education (DOE)**

Evidence of compliance with state law is adequate, along with a copy of the school's calendar. Note that although state law differs, generally the requirement is a minimum of the equivalent of 180 days of instruction at 4-6.5 hours per day (720-1170 total hours).

- 3.8 Assures that the curriculum relies on sound learning principles, based on relevant research and provides a mission appropriate, well-balanced variety of educational experiences for all students.**

The heart and soul of a school is teaching and learning and its commitment to engaging the relevant research regarding teaching and learning. In-service programs, professional development, and/or other faculty seminars can assure attention to these principles and experiences.

- 3.9 Assures that the curriculum promotes the active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities to explore the application of higher order thinking skills and to investigate new approaches in applying learning.**

The school must provide examples (written and/or observable) of such activities.

- 3.10 Assures ready access to instructional technology and a comprehensive library/media collection integrated to support learning goals.**

While differences and limitations may exist in the volume of technology or resources a school can obtain, the salient feature of this indicator is how instructional technology and media/library resources are being used to enhance and support learning goals.

- 3.11 Assures that the school has a policy and procedure for responding to challenged materials.**

Modern challenged materials may include books, websites, art, social media, etc. Operational guidelines for addressing a variety of situations in a mission appropriate manner should exist.

- 3.12 Provides a comprehensive system for assessing student progress based on clearly defined student results for learning.**

Curriculum guides, benchmarking assessments, report cards, standardized tests, progress reports, and rubrics can provide a framework for assessment. Knowing each student individually is a hallmark of independent education.

3.13 Uses assessment data for making decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes.

Examples of documented uses of data for student placement, teacher preparation, and curriculum adjustments are sources of evidence.

3.14 Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness and uses the results to improve student performance.

“Systematic” may include an analysis of surveys and focus groups, assessment data, benchmarking studies, teaching and learning profiles, etc. Regular reviews (by semester or annually or other) in appropriate groups (division, grade level, or other) and the results of those reviews could provide evidence of compliance.

Documents Relative to Standard 3: TEACHING & LEARNING

Required documents:

- Curriculum guides/curriculum map
- List of course offerings
- Academic Profile/Academic Quick Facts Sheet
- School calendar
- Daily/weekly schedules
- Description of challenged materials process
- Statement of how the school’s mission is reflected in its expectations for student learning

Suggested documents that may be used to show evidence of compliance with indicators:

- Curriculum scope and sequence
- Lesson plans
- Syllabi
- Minutes of grade level, department, division meetings
- Professional development opportunities
- List of co-curricular offerings
- College acceptances
- Instructional and curriculum meeting minutes/notes
- In-service agendas
- Character or leadership programs
- Team building activities among faculty and/or students
- Advisory meetings
- Student council agendas/minutes
- Technology plan
- Media/resources plan
- Operating budget related to this indicator - technology
- Technology acceptable use policy
- Standardized tests or other regular assessments
- Progress reports
- “Mission Skills Assessment” rubrics

- Report cards, portfolio assessments
- Analysis of student assessments through the curriculum and instructional meeting minutes/notes
- Adjustments in placement, teacher preparation, curriculum are documented in the above meeting minutes
- Surveys of parents, teachers, students, alumni, etc.

STANDARD 4: STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION & RELATIONSHIPS

The school develops and maintains effective communication and relationships to further its mission.

An SAIS accredited school communicates clearly and accurately with its stakeholders and encourages collaboration to further its mission.

4.1 Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning.

The school must demonstrate involvement with the community through discussions, presentations, communications, and outreach activities with internal and external stakeholders such as students, parents, faculty, key civic groups, and leaders.

4.2 Assures that communications among and between school staff, stakeholders, and alumni are clear and effective.

Clear and consistent communication is key to an effective mission-driven school and should exist in formats and methods that address the needs of those with whom communication is taking place.

4.3 Uses the knowledge and skills of parents to enhance the work of the school.

Minutes from periodic parent meetings along with an organized volunteer program would be good indicators of compliance. There must be evidence that parent input is received, reviewed, and, where applicable, implemented – while not overstepping the operational authority and responsibility of the school.

4.4 Assures that there is ongoing evidence of communication with appropriate agencies, such as public health, mental health, physicians, and other professionals.

The school should be able to demonstrate that it has established relationships with appropriate external community resources so that both routine and emergency services in a wide variety of fields are readily available (see Indicator 5.11).

4.5 Assures that the school's advertising and promotional materials reflect accurate information about the school's programs and accomplishments.

Admissions materials, viewbooks, website, and other internal and external marketing materials should align with physical and testimonial evidence and should be accurate and true representations of the school. Claims made regarding school accomplishments should be able to be documented.

4.6 Gathers information about graduates and other former students, using the resulting data to inform the school.

Retention and attrition studies of students, results of alumni surveys, exit interviews with families that leave prior to graduation, and written summaries of interviews with parents provide evidence. Surveys of faculty/staff and students can also provide important data to help improve the school.

Documents Relative to Standard 4: STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION & RELATIONSHIPS

Required documents:

- Communication to and from community resources such as police, fire department, city/urban planning offices, child protective services, state and local emergency management, mental health resources, and other agencies and service providers as appropriate.
- Relevant examples of communication with various stakeholders.

Suggested documents that may be used to show evidence of compliance with indicators:

- Volunteer guidelines and/or handbook
- News stories
- Exit interviews
- Coffee talks
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Newsletters
- Parent night schedules
- Emails
- Social media
- Publications, Magazine
- Communications schedules and plans
- Minutes from parent meetings
- Minutes from administrative meetings where parent input is discussed
- Statements in handbooks indicating relationships with community resources
- Note that confidential examples of medical or other referrals need not be shared
- Website content
- Survey data and analysis
- Examples of database information
- Examples of how information gathered are used for school improvement and mission fulfillment

STANDARD 5: RESOURCES & SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The school has the resources, services, and policies necessary to support its mission.

An SAIS accredited school has sufficient human and material resources, employs a qualified and competent staff, and provides ongoing professional development. The school has well-defined and communicated policies and procedures to promote a safe, healthy, and orderly environment.

5.1 Provides written policies covering recruitment, employment, assignment, evaluation, and termination of service to all school personnel.

Handbooks and other materials should describe all phases of faculty and staff members' association with the school. Note that the concepts in Indicator 5.1 are expanded upon in Indicators 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5. Regular reviews of personnel practices will help keep the school current on the most recent laws and requirements. HR policies and procedures should also include consideration of volunteers: in the school, as chaperones, on the fields, as host or homestay families, etc.

5.2 Assures that administrative, instructional and support staff are qualified and competent to perform the duties assigned to them in the school in order to meet the needs of the total school program and the students enrolled.

The focus here is on three characteristics of excellence at independent schools – qualifications of employees, competence of employees, and meeting the needs of students. Clear position descriptions are the best evidence, coupled with specific qualifications of the individual regarding their suitability for the work assigned. Apart from credentialing, certification, or alternative preparation and subject matter accumulation, heads or division leaders must be able to explain reasons for hiring.

5.3 Assures that there is an effective orientation program for faculty and staff new to the school.

Program description with agendas and minutes provides a good explanation. Consider how the school assesses the effectiveness of the orientation program and its continuation throughout an employee's period of being "new."

5.4 Assures that all staff members participate in a continuous program of professional development.

All staff, including but not limited to faculty, administrators, administrative, custodial staff, boarding, and or homestay families are part of this requirement. While the specifics of the program are up to the school and may differ based on the employee's role at the school, there must be evidence that a formal method is in place which may include: how individuals are made aware of this requirement; how the fulfillment of this requirement is recorded; descriptions of what professional opportunities are made available and how they are aligned with the strategic vision of the school; and how professional development is funded.

- 5.5 Implements an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel.**
Programs of evaluation of performance can take many forms and should be developed to support the growth and development of employees within the mission context of the school. There is no one correct way to do this. A thorough written description of the evaluation system provides good evidence. Consider how the school assesses the effectiveness of the evaluation program.
- 5.6 Provides well-defined and written student policies encompassing recruitment, admissions, administration of financial aid, conduct, discipline, and separation.**
Student materials should describe all phases of student's association with the school. Consistency and compliance with state law are necessary. Note that the concepts in Indicator 5.6 are expanded upon in Indicators 5.7, 5.8, and 5.9.
- 5.7 Assures that there are well-defined, published admissions and financial aid/scholarship processes including criteria upon which decisions are made and that professional ethics are strictly observed in the process.**
Review of documentation along with interviews with parents will support this indicator.
- 5.8 Accepts students for whom there is a reasonable expectation of success from the program.**
Evidence of compliance should demonstrate admissions decisions based on a student's compatibility with the school's mission, program, and academic guidelines.
- 5.9 Assures that guidelines for student conduct, attendance, dress, and discipline are written and communicated to all students, parents, and members of staff.**
Written notices are key indicators of compliance. As an example: where uniforms are required, the team should easily be able to compare the written dress code with the actual implementation of it by the student body.
- 5.10 Provides counseling services that meet the needs of students.**
Counseling services may include college counseling, emotional counseling, learning differences, spiritual counseling, etc. However provided, these must show alignment with the mission and needs of students. Faculty should be aware of procedures in place and of their role in the process.
- 5.11 Assures that students whose needs cannot be met in school are referred to appropriate agencies or resources for assistance.**
Having existing relationships with outside agencies and resource providers (see Indicator 4.4) allows a school to continue to assist students whose needs the school cannot meet fully.
- 5.12 The school maintains secure, accurate, and complete records of operations, finances, personnel, and students in accordance with state and federal regulations including**

both paper and electronic records. The school has a plan to ensure appropriate access and maintenance of all relevant records in the event of a school closure.

SAIS schools are required to implement and maintain a records retention system that meets applicable governmental requirements for all operating, financial, personnel, and student records. The records retention system applies to paper and electronic records, includes appropriate back-up systems and details consistent processes for records destruction. In states where no guidance is provided by governmental agencies, SAIS schools should consult with the SAIS office to ensure appropriate access and maintenance of all relevant records in the event of school closure.

5.13 Has a written crisis management plan.

A written plan that is understood and practiced by faculty, staff, and students and that is regularly reviewed and evaluated is the best evidence.

5.14 Provides documentation of ongoing health and safety procedures and inspections.

This can be satisfied with certificates of inspection from agencies that are charged with inspecting and certifying the campus on safety matters.

Schools offering extended day programs and/or serving children younger than (senior) kindergarten shall provide evidence that they know and meet applicable state statutes and requirements related to pre-k programs. Typically, a state agency prescribes regulations for these programs and schools may or may not qualify for exemptions. To be considered for SAIS accreditation, these programs must be part of the overall school program and included in the school's standards compliance and self-study and must be operating in full compliance with the state agency and/or must demonstrate exemption from regulation.

Documents Relative to Standard 5: RESOURCES & SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Personnel Documents

Required documents:

- Employee applications, agreements, and handbooks
- Description and documentation of the hiring process including screening and background check procedures (both initial and periodic) for employees
- Description of professional development
- Employee evaluation process
- Termination policy
- Description of expected qualification of employees
- Job postings and job/position descriptions
- Credentials, experience, professional development, and demographics of current faculty
- Faculty orientation schedule and topics addressed
- Evidence of faculty training as required for CPR, first aid, child protective services issues and reporting, etc.

- Description of the connections between strategic initiatives, assessment of employee needs, and allocations of time and resources dedicated to professional learning
- Evidence of ongoing training for adults in recognizing and reporting of sexual misconduct

Additional Requirements for Virginia Schools

- Description of process for assessment and management of concussions
- Procedures for prevention and mitigation of bullying
- Evidence of training in medication administration
- Staff qualifications including but not limited to job descriptions, personnel handbook, performance evaluations, fingerprint criminal background checks (on all employees full-time or part-time) and Child Abuse & Neglect Registry Search (on all employees full-time or parttime)
- Records demonstrating professional personnel are CPR, first aid and AED certified
- All state recognized accredited schools with early learning programs must meet, or exceed, Department of Social Services licensure regulations regardless of licensure status. Evidence of licensure or an approval of an exemption from licensure must be available at every private school that serves children under the age of eligibility for kindergarten and/or offers before and after school care for children up to age 12. Documentation collected by associations assures that private preschool programs are in compliance with local, state, and federal legal requirements in these areas.

Student Documents

Required documents:

- Admissions materials
- Student and parent handbooks
- Financial aid materials
- Standards of ethical admissions practices
- Evidence of ongoing, age-appropriate training for students in recognizing and reporting of sexual misconduct
- Boarding or homestay program handbook (if applicable)
- School crisis plans (facilities, communications, media, transportation, health, continuity, etc.)
- Certificates from the health department, fire department, elevator inspections, etc.
- License or exemptions from appropriate state agencies as required
- Data security protocols
- Document retention policies
- Plan for permanent access to documents (student records, employee records, etc.)

Other documents that may be used to show evidence of compliance with indicators:

- Volunteer applications, agreements, and handbooks
- Description of screening and background check procedures (both initial and periodic) for volunteers

- Description of a professional development program
- Volunteer evaluation process
- Mentoring program
- Minutes of meetings demonstrating support for employees new to the school
- Minutes from faculty meetings where professional growth opportunities are discussed - could include any number of growth opportunities such as pedagogical approaches, content area information, health and wellness training, mandatory reporting procedures and student safety, etc.
- Notifications of opportunities for training/professional development
- Reports given by employees regarding professional learning
- Descriptions of PLC or Critical Friends groups
- Analysis of staff participation in professional learning for a defined period of time
- Descriptions of the successful candidate as aligned with mission and academic goals of the school
- Evidence of pertinent assemblies, grade meetings, advisory groups, student community building activities, etc.
- Descriptions of counseling services in parent and student handbooks
- Written procedures of referrals in faculty handbooks
- Evidence of faculty orientation to referrals
- Written agreements with outside providers for student referrals
- Schedule of drills and analysis of efficiency/adequacy

STANDARD 6: VIRTUAL LEARNING

The school's virtual learning, whether required by circumstance or offered outside of its regular in-person programming, aligns with its mission.

In an SAIS accredited school, any virtual learning offered is provided with the same attention to mission and quality as the rest of the school's program. SAIS schools aim to offer courses and opportunities that reflect the school's culture, care, vision, values, and mission in all programs they provide, using whichever delivery mechanisms serve the students participating in these opportunities.

Requirements for consideration for SAIS Virtual School Programs

The program must be administered at an existing SAIS member school or meet the current membership requirements including a physical school campus. Curriculum may include degree granting, enrichment, credit recovery, blended learning programs. The program must be part of the overall school program under the same charter, incorporation, tax entity and governance. The head of school shall have responsibility for all operations of the virtual program. The program must comply with all SAIS accreditation standards and indicators.

- 6.1 The school's plans for developing, sustaining, and expanding virtual learning opportunities are integrated into schoolwide curricular and financial planning.**
Handbooks, curriculum guides, budget documents include references to virtual learning.
- 6.2 Applicable school policies, such as academic integrity and appropriate use, specifically reference virtual learning.**
The school ensures that virtual learning policies include guidance for both students and teachers on academic integrity and appropriate use of technology as well as training in cyber safety.
- 6.3 Faculty members teaching virtual or blended courses receive adequate training and professional development opportunities in the delivery and use of virtual or blended learning, including strategies to promote academic integrity and appropriate use.**
The school maintains records of attendance at professional development programs and/or training sessions for teachers and other staff members that include virtual learning practices and methods.
- 6.4 Virtual and blended learning programs are regularly evaluated for effectiveness, and the school uses the results of these evaluations to enhance and improve its offerings.**
The school includes virtual learning elements in its regular evaluation processes.
- 6.5 The design and delivery of the virtual courses meet the needs of the students and support student-to-student and student-to-faculty interactions.**
A clear rationale for synchronous and asynchronous virtual learning including descriptions of how interactions are supported.

6.6 There is a clear, written plan and policies for student and staff safety and wellness specific to the virtual environment.

The school includes clear guidance and procedures for ensuring student and staff safety and wellness in handbooks and policy documents.

6.7 Includes applicable virtual learning documentation as evidence of compliance with all SAIS standards.

All documents, policies, handbooks, curriculum guides must include references to the virtual learning program.

Documents Relative to Standard 6: VIRTUAL LEARNING

Required documents:

- List of online courses offered and by whom, including accreditation if an outside provider is used
- Curriculum guide or other documentation through which students and parents are informed as to which courses are online
- School academic integrity policy
- School acceptable use policy
- School online safety policy
- Schedule of professional development for teachers engaged in online or blended learning