VISITING TEAM REPORT

Brookwood School

301 Cardinal Ridge Rd
Thomasville, GA 31792 United States

Dr. Randy Watts
Head of School

Mrs. Raina Cauley
Middle School Director
Accreditation Coordinator

Mr. Dave Farace
Head of School
Chair
The Bolles School
7400 San Jose Blvd
Jacksonville, FL 32217, United States

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A History of SAIS Accreditation

SAIS member schools are part of a remarkable history of quality assurance in education.

SAIS began its organizational life in 1903 as the "Mid-South Association of Independent Schools," providing training for teachers in private schools and some early public schools in the southeastern states. In 1953, another organization began as the Southern Association of Independent Schools, providing a forum for independent school administrators to work with public schools through SACS and to contribute to the larger interest in accreditation in the southeast. MAIS and SAIS merged in 1986 to form the present SAIS, with an emphasis on accreditations through SACS for independent schools and professional development for administrators, trustees, and teachers. Today, SAIS works to help both established and emerging schools approach these issues with creativity and innovation. Working at the state, regional, and national levels, SAIS serves and strengthens member schools through the promotion of the highest quality educational standards and ethical conduct.

The mission of SAIS is to provide leadership, accreditation services, and professional development resources that will strengthen member schools as they fulfill their missions. The focus of SAIS's interest when it began in 1953 was to develop and maintain relationships with the expanding organization of SACS in order to ensure significant input from independent schools into the exploding world of public school accreditation. The post-WWII years of baby booming, facility planning, teacher training, and legislative entitlement funding eclipsed the scope and role of private education in America close to the current level of service. Part of this history of negotiating standards in a predominantly public-school oriented world of education caused SAIS to embark on its own method of accreditation in the late '90s. The efforts resulted in the SAIS method of accreditation available to member schools.

SAIS has designed and implemented a significant program of accreditation to assist member schools as they develop and promote high quality education in this region. This method is based on a school's stated mission and its own unique approach to thorough and vigorous self-examination.

In today's world of accountability in schooling, accreditation serves as a critical component of a school's demonstrated effectiveness and ability to provide successful schooling for children. A school that is able to achieve accreditation demonstrates a commitment to a process that requires the school to meet a set of rigorous standards; to engage in a program of continuous school improvement; and to demonstrate quality assurance to its stakeholders through self-evaluation and peer-review. SAIS accreditation provides schools access to an integrated network of services and technical assistance that supports every school's ability to identify and meet its goals for improving student performance and the teaching and learning process.

SAIS accredited member schools are part of an international network of accredited schools that have demonstrated success in educating children. As such, SAIS accreditation is recognized throughout the world as a symbol of quality in education for students and teachers. To earn accreditation, schools must meet quality standards, be evaluated by an outside group of peer professionals, and implement a school plan focused on strategic improvement and student performance. Accreditation is voluntary and must be renewed each year.

The Review

A team representing SAIS conducted an on-site visit to review this school's self-study and standards compliance. The team was comprised of team members whose diverse independent school backgrounds provided an array of expertise. The visiting team sought the answers to these four critical questions within the framework of the school's self-study. The following pages contain the findings.

In conducting the on-site reviews, the visiting team was responsible for:

1. Assessing the adequacy of the self-study process;
2. Identifying strengths of the school deserving commendation;
3. Developing recommendations that may help to strengthen the programs of the school;
4. Assessing compliance with the standards of SAIS;
5. Developing a written report of the findings.

To fulfill the team's responsibilities, team members:

1. Reviewed documentation provided by the school;
2. Conducted interviews with board members, parents, school personnel, students, and community members;
3. Applied the standards for accreditation;
4. Developed a draft of commendations and recommendations;
5. Contributed to the content and focus of the written report;
6. Provided input as to the determination of accreditation.

The primary focus of the self-study process is to demonstrate the capacity of a school to meet the requirements for accreditation. A typical self-study consists of:

1. Analysis and response to accreditation standards;
2. Identification and demonstration of a continuous process of improvement;
3. Implementation of methods that provide for quality assurance.

The study addresses four critical questions relative to each of the school's stated goals for improvement and mission fulfillment:

- PROFILE: Where is the school today? The PROFILE should include clear, comprehensive information reflecting current student performance data, stakeholder perspectives, community characteristics, and analysis of strengths and limitations in the areas of student learning and school performance.
- VISION: Where does the school want to go? The VISION is a clear, compelling purpose communicated through the school's vision and mission statements, beliefs, and core values.
- PLAN: What is the plan to get there? The PLAN should be based on an analysis of pertinent data, research of the best practices, and alignment with generally-accepted expectations for student learning at schools with similar missions.
- RESULTS: How will the school know when it has accomplished its plan? The RESULTS are documented evidence demonstrating successful implementation of strategies that resulted in accomplishment of the school's mission and student achievement gains related to the school's mission.

SAIS Accreditation Policies

- Accreditation Committee
  The SAIS Board of Trustees has established the SAIS Accreditation Committee to oversee the accreditation services offered by SAIS. The Accreditation Committee establishes and maintains review boards whose members review and act upon visiting team recommendations. The Board of Trustees reviews and officially approves the schools recommended for accreditation by the Accreditation Committee.
- Accreditation Appeal Process
  If the visiting team recommendation to offer accreditation or re-accreditation is rejected, specific reasons will be given and the school may be given a timeframe and assistance to address deficiencies. The decision of a review board may be appealed in writing by the head of school, referencing specific area(s) in which the school was found deficient. A subsequent review board will review the original findings and the appeal materials. If the decision is upheld by the subsequent review board, the decision may be appealed in writing by the head of school to the SAIS Board of Trustees. The school's accreditation status will remain unchanged during an appeals process. The judgment of the SAIS Board of Trustees is final.
- Interim Report Requirements
  Accredited schools must submit a two-year interim report to SAIS after the team visit. This report ensures continued compliance with standards/indicators and documents efforts made in addressing the visiting team's recommendations and the school's self-study goals.
- Member in good standing: Schools must remain a member in good standing, with all annual membership dues paid in full and abiding by policies and procedures.
- Notification of substantive change / head of school change: Accredited schools must notify SAIS in a timely manner of a substantive change using the form at www.sais.org/change. Changes may include: head of school change, other leadership changes, adding or contracting grade levels, merger, name change, mission change, major construction, crisis situation, litigation, school closure, other changes. In the event of a substantive change, SAIS may request additional information or conduct a visit to the school.
- Terms of accreditation and re-accreditation: Terms of accreditation are generally for five years commencing on July 1 and concluding on June 30. Schools must host a visiting team prior to the expiration of their term of accreditation and during the same semester of their previous accreditation if a re-accreditation visit and within three years of becoming a candidate for accreditation if an initial accreditation. Any variance to an accreditation timeline must be approved by SAIS. A new self-study is required for each five-year period reflecting evidence of continuous improvement.
- Non-compliance: Stakeholders may file a non-compliance complaint against a school. Upon receipt and verification of a non-compliance report, the school will be given an opportunity to respond to the inquiry. The inquiry, response, and any subsequent written correspondence on the matter may be made available to the accreditation visiting team chair on the next accreditation visit. However, an immediate investigative visit to the school may be undertaken if the response by the school is unsatisfactory or an accumulation of complaints indicates that a school's response is inconsistent with a preponderance of evidence. As is frequently the case, if a school's practices are bordering on non-compliance, a discussion that is triggered by a non-compliance complaint is often a catalyst to remedy such practices. In the event that a school is not compliant, a series of actions will be undertaken with the school such as but not limited to: a request to remedy the non-compliance issue, placing the school on warned status or probation, and an ultimate action of dropping accreditation.

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Mr. Dave Farace
Head of School
The Bolles School
7400 San Jose Blvd
Jacksonville, FL 32217, United States
(904) 256-5026
faraced@bolles.org

Team Members

Ms. Meredith Chase
Assistant Head of School for Finance and Operations
The Howard School
1192 Foster St NW
Atlanta, GA 30318-4329, United States
(404) 377-7436
mchase@howardschool.org

Mr. Anthony L. Clay
Director of Advancement
Carolina Friends School
4809 Friend School Rd
Durham, NC 27705-8193, United States
(919) 383-6602
aclay@cfsnc.org

Mr. Bryan Overly
Upper School Teacher
The Lovett School
4075 Paces Ferry Rd NW
Atlanta, GA 30327-3099, United States
boverly@lovett.org

Ms. Wendy Teffeteller
Middle School Service Coordinator
Episcopal School of Knoxville
950 Episcopal School Way
Knoxville, TN 37932, United States
teffeteller@esknoxville.org

School Snapshot

Mission

The purpose of Brookwood School is to provide an exceptional college preparatory educational experience to students from four years of age through twelfth grade. Brookwood is committed to developing the whole child: academically, physically, spiritually, and socially.

This mission statement informs decision making in the school as it is present during our faculty and staff, administrative, and board meetings. It can be found on our website and social media accounts, for example, as well as being in print and located around the school. The results can also be seen in our SAT test results which far outscore the state average and demonstrate our success as a college preparatory school; our outstanding athletic records and numerous championships; our morning assemblies in each division which are based on Judeo-Christian tradition; and our active student life filled with various clubs and social events.

Brief History

Founding Vision, 1970

Once upon a time in the warm pine-scentedland of South Georgia, a group of parents had a dream. They dreamed of a fine school for boys and girls where they could get the best education possible in bright classrooms with a limited number of students and the best equipment. They dreamed that each child could develop his entire potential. They dreamed of the freedom these students would have in their activities and the close friendships they would develop with their teachers because the classes would be small. They dreamed of the field trips such a group could take, the games they could play, and the family atmosphere that would be developed. And they knew if these dreams came true, these students would be prepared for college and for life physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and aesthetically. Founding Vision, 1970

Founded in 1970, Brookwood School is a co-educational college-preparatory day school centered on the mission of providing an exceptional college-preparatory educational experience to students from four years of age through the twelfth grade. Brookwood is committed to developing the whole child academically, physically, spiritually, and socially.

In the fall of 1970, 140 students started the long standing tradition of excellence. The founders of Brookwood School sought a superior educational experience for the children of Thomasville and the surrounding areas. In an effort to maintain that tradition of excellence, Brookwood School consistently and earnestly strives to keep its expectations and standards high, while expanding its vision to meet the challenges of an ever-changing educational environment.

Today, Brookwood School's fourteen buildings are situated on an attractive campus of more than 40 acres located south of Thomasville in southwest Georgia. Brookwood's employees consist of forty-eight full-time teachers, eleven administrators, ten teaching assistants, five support staff members, and two full-time maintenance staff. There are also part-time employees, who work primarily in athletics and with other extracurricular activities.

Brookwood seeks excellence in intellectual and social growth for its student body of 474 in grades junior kindergarten through twelfth grade. Integrity and ethical behavior are strongly encouraged through an Honor Code governed by students. Academically qualified applicants are admitted without regard to race, creed, color, gender, or national and ethnic origin. The traditional values of honor, wisdom, achievement, and citizenship form the foundation on which Brookwood's sound liberal arts education is established.

Leadership

Brookwood School operates within the governance structure of a self-perpetuating board of directors. The board of directors provides the governance structure for Brookwood and hires one employee, the headmaster, who oversees the operations of the school. Brookwood adheres to NAIS guidelines for independent school boards and trustees. The method for the selection of the members of the board of directors is indicated in Brookwood's Board bylaws. Brookwood School was founded in February of 1970 and continues to operate under those original articles of incorporation. Brookwood School is a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization.

Per the bylaws, a board of trustees of the school has been created for the purpose of raising capital funds and rendering advice and support to the board of directors, administration, faculty and students of the school.

The headmaster has a Leadership Team consisting of: assistant headmaster/upper school director; middle school director, lower school director; athletic director, director of instructional technology; upper school dean of students; director of advancement; director of admissions; financial officer; director of facilities; director of fields & grounds; college counselor; administrative assistant. The headmaster meets with the full Leadership Team twice per month, and with the division directors twice per month (on alternating months). The headmaster maintains standing appointments with the athletic director, director of advancement, and director of admissions. The headmaster prepares a monthly report to the board of directors which includes reports from the Leadership Team in order to keep them well informed about the school.

The governance structure of Brookwood's Board of Directors supports and models inclusive strategic decision-making methods. The board committee structure was revised in 2016 following the implementation of Brookwood's strategic plan. In addition to the standing committees of Executive, Governance and Finance, the following committees were created to align with the four goals of the strategic plan: Academic Program; Leadership Development; Enhance Advancement, Marketing, Community Relations, Enrollment; and Campus Development.

The four committees that were created as a result of the strategic plan include representation from Brookwood's Board and Leadership Team. The committees meet as needed, at least four times per year, and gather ideas, information, and proposal to be brought to the monthly board of directors meeting for review, discussion, and, when appropriate, approval. Each of these committees annually propose revised goals from the strategic plan, which are presented for approval at the September board meeting. Once approved, each board member, along with the headmaster, sign these goals, which then become the shared and agreed upon goals for the academic year. Updates on the progress of the goals are given twice per year and are made available to the public on the website.

Self Study

Brookwood School has been in the process of preparing our self-study for the 2018 SAIS visit since our last accreditation visit in 2013. At that time, we were given recommendations about what Brookwood needed to accomplish as a school. The visiting committee's recommendation to provide online grades to parents was met in 2015 when the school adopted the learning management system Haiku. Brookwood has since integrated all Blackbaud products with OnCampus meeting those needs and others. Our athletics and physical education program has expanded to include STEAM education in the lower school physical education classes and a more comprehensive health and conditioning approach in the middle and upper schools. Additional staff were added to support the PE program, as well. To meet the spiritual needs of our students, we continued our morning assemblies, trained all faculty in Darkness to Light curriculum, and delivered Olweus bully prevention training to middle school faculty to implement in advisory groups. Finally, to aid the social development of our students, a school counselor was added to our faculty in 2014. In addition, new volunteer and leadership opportunities have been created for students in all division levels.

During the 2015-16 school year, Brookwood School launched a strategic planning process. The strategic plan was developed to provide a long-range view of future school priorities created through a highly inclusive and

participatory process. A steering committee was formed and focused on research, environment scans, SWOT analysis, committee exercises, and trends in both the independent school and education worlds. In order to build a base of sound information and to guide the planning process, the school enlisted the assistance of a research and planning firm, Ian Symmonds & Associates. A comprehensive research effort was completed, including stakeholder surveys, competitive and educational landscape analysis, market segmentation, and demographic trends. In the fall and winter of 2015, the strategic planning steering committee worked collaboratively through a series of exercises designed to establish priorities based upon the findings of the research. This process culminated in February 2016, with the steering committee developing a small set of priorities for future focus. As strategic priorities were developed, the steering committee expanded upon them to outline specific initiatives, action plans, and immediate priorities. Each of these strategic goals contains several strategic initiatives and numerous action plans. The strategic initiatives and action plans benefit from having additional implementation details, such as costs and metrics of success, recorded in the planning process, which will be utilized as the school moves forward on executing the strategic plan.

The planning process was completed as the steering committee recommended the strategic plan to the board of directors. From this process the following committees were created to align with the four goals of the strategic plan: Academic Program; Leadership Development; Enhance Advancement, Marketing, Community Relations, Enrollment; and Campus Development.

The four committees that were created as a result of the strategic plan include representation from Brookwood's Board and Leadership Team. The committees meet as needed, at least four times per year, and gather ideas, information, and proposal to be brought to the monthly board of directors meeting for review, discussion, and, when appropriate, approval. Each of these committees annually propose revised goals from the strategic plan, which are presented for approval at the September board meeting. Once approved, each board member, along with the headmaster, sign these goals, which then become the shared and agreed upon goals for the academic year. Updates on the progress of the goals are given twice per year and are made available to the public on the website.

For the purpose of the self-study, we focused on the specific strategic plan goals proposed by the original committees. During an all-school faculty meeting in September of 2017, the chairs from each of these four groups presented the top three goals for each area of the strategic plan. The faculty then broke into small groups with the various chairs to discuss the feasibility, need, and impact of each of these goals. They also discussed the need for additional stakeholder input. After hearing from each committee, the faculty then completed a survey ranking each proposal on the categories mentioned above and also provided feedback about willingness to serve on a committee. Based on the results of the survey, the faculty decided to focus on four goals:

1) Academic - Curriculum mapping

2) Leadership - Enhanced student leadership opportunities

3) Advancement - Strategic campus events

4) Campus Development - Completing the campus master plan

Committee chairs were appointed for each goal and committee members consisting of faculty, administration, board members, parents, students, and/or alumni were created. These committees were charged with finalizing the self-study report for SAIS re-accreditation.

Improvement

Brookwood's plan for continuous improvement is grounded in our strategic plan, which was completed in 2016. Through collaboration between faculty, the Leadership Team, and the board of directors, we reviewed the goals from the strategic plan and selected the the following four areas for school improvement:

1. Academic - Curriculum mapping

Through the self study process, it was determined that our curriculum maps needed to be updated. In schools, great people and great plans are of paramount importance in providing the best learning experience for our students. The curriculum maps we currently have were created during the 2011-2012 school year and are in need of updating. We have had noteworthy advancements to our curricular offerings since this time.

This goal is to develop a process and timeline for creating new curriculum maps. One of the main directives is to create a framework that is useful as well as user friendly and aligns curriculum, instruction, and assessment while increasing vertical and horizontal collaboration.

2. Leadership - Enhanced student leadership opportunities

Currently, Brookwood has many opportunities for our students to participate in formal and informal leadership roles. These would include SGA, club leadership, team leadership, and in-class discussion. Brookwood would like to continue to grow in our theme of “A Community Building Leaders.” We believe that each student can develop skills and confidence in areas about which they are passionate and can, in turn, influence others. This is our definition of leadership.

The committee will identify areas where growth is possible and probable. These will include classroom practices, program development, community involvement, and internal community outreach to utilize the various talents of our students.

3. Advancement - Strategic campus events

Brookwood School has made a conscious effort to activate its campus to be used for community events that may attract mission appropriate enrollees. During the 2016-17 academic year, the school hosted the following events: Hands on Thomas County board retreat, Covey Film Festival, Warrior Run, Holiday Hoops Basketball Tournament, Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours, three Open Houses, Alumni drop-in in Beverly Athletic Center, Empty Bowls, Full Hearts, Oak Street Episcopal Missions Camp Hope, Warrior Way Summer Camps, and JK Behind the Scenes Tour.

Statistically, 80% of prospective students and families who tour campus convert to enrolled students. The focus of this goal is how to better activate our campus strategically to attract prospective families through hosting non-admissions related events.

4. Campus Development - Completing the campus master plan

Brookwood's campus has seen a lot of growth and change in the past several years. We are proud of our facilities, yet want to ensure that we are moving forward strategically with an emphasis on creating learning environments that will continue to serve our students and school programs for years to come.

In 2017, Brookwood hired the firm Hord, Coplan, and Macht to lead our campus master planning process. This has been an inclusive process; all members of Brookwood's community were surveyed. Furthermore, the campus master planners have been on campus for three visits to meet with stakeholders. The next step is to complete this plan and to begin to implement the initial phase, which will likely include a renovated cafeteria and expanded space for arts. The Campus Development Committee will oversee the completion of the campus master plan with ongoing feedback and input from stakeholders.

Introduction

Introduction and Overview of the Visit

Brookwood School offered a warm welcome to the SAIS visiting team. The school's administrative team was well prepared and all documentation was available online or in the workroom. All constituent groups were open and cooperative, evidence of a caring school culture. Classroom visits were a highlight of the visit as the team observed a variety of teaching and learning styles across all divisions.

The interviews with various stakeholder groups were enlightening. Common words/phrases used to describe the Brookwood community were: family, academic excellence, whole child development, leadership development, and opportunities. The school recently refreshed its brand to include the tagline "A Community Building Leaders" and the visiting team found this to be authentic and on point.

The visiting team was impressed with and commended the board and head of school for their understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities in school governance. The team felt that Brookwood's strategic vision was clear and compelling and that the strategic goals are achievable and will advance the mission of the school.

Area 1

Title

Academic - Curriculum mapping

Description

Faculty of Brookwood recognized the need to update curriculum maps that were created during the 2011-12 school year. The Faculty Stakeholder Group, comprised of faculty and staff from all divisions, was tasked with developing with a process and timeline for updating Brookwood's curriculum maps. An initial vision of this group is to create a framework that is user friendly and aligns curriculum, instruction, and assessment while increasing vertical and horizontal collaboration.

Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- The interest in this goal was driven by Brookwood teachers who voted on curriculum mapping as a top priority;
- Faculty and staff members appointed to the newly formed Faculty Stakeholder Group have extensively explored and interviewed curriculum mapping companies after multiple conversations with independent schools;
- Committee members were intentional in the selection of Rubicon, expressing a priority to support Brookwood faculty in this mapping process;
- The recent addition of a Leadership Cadre (administrative team) that provides formal support, guidance, and action plans to the Faculty Stakeholder Group.

Recommendations

The visiting team recommends that the school consider the following:

- Developing a detailed internal communication plan to inform faculty and staff about the school's curriculum mapping three year process;
- Reviewing the all-school calendar so as to provide ample collaboration time for cross-divisional faculty in each discipline to execute the goals outlined by the Curriculum Mapping Committee;
- Exploring if and how these maps may be used in the broader Brookwood community.

Area 2

Title

Leadership - Enhanced leadership opportunities

Description

Brookwood School has a vision for developing the whole child by increasing student leadership opportunities (formal and informal) and expanding club offerings.

Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- The level of student involvement in creating organizations where all students can lead and participate in a variety of experiences;
- A focus on servant leadership and the willingness of faculty/staff and Brookwood community to support student growth and development;
- "Warrior Wednesday" leaders commitment to providing diverse experiences;
- Rebranding of Brookwood's theme “A Community Building Leaders” is an authentic representation of the community.

Recommendations

The visiting team recommends that the school consider:

- Exploring new daily schedules that provide more time for student leadership activities, professional development for teachers, deeper learning and advisory meetings;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of middle school tribes while enhancing the advisory program for middle school students;
- Continuing to evaluate the middle school program for developmental appropriateness and distinction from the upper school program.

Area 3

Title

Strategic campus events

Description

Brookwood School seeks to enhance its institutional advancement, marketing communications, community relations, and enrollment management efforts. Because 80% of campus tours convert to enrolled students, the subcommittee of teachers, administrators, parents, and students focused on a conscious effort to activate the Brookwood campus for strategic community events that may attract mission-appropriate enrollees.

Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Engaging the services of a strategic enrollment consultant (Ian Symmonds and Associates) and employing the SAIS value narrative survey to help assess perceptions of the school and craft a plan for moving forward;
- Including students as part of the sub-committee and explicitly valuing their voices in the process, including incorporation of their recommendations (which also furthers Goal 2 of enhancing student leadership opportunities);
- Being intentional in reaching out to individuals, families, and organizations in the wider community (especially those of color) in order to foster greater awareness of and enrollment interest in the school.

Recommendations

The visiting team recommends the school consider the following:

- Exploring ways to ensure the sustainability of continuing and adding new strategic campus events so they justify the investment of staff time and other resources;
- Continuing thoughtfully to enhance and expand summer programs as a means of attracting non-Brookwood families to campus (while also generating revenue);
- Studying campus master plan projects (e.g. enhanced dining, arts, and athletic facilities) as possible venues for new strategic community event opportunities.

Area 4

Title

Completing the campus master plan

Description

Brookwood School engaged the services of Hord, Coplan and Macht in 2017 to create a comprehensive campus master plan to meet the needs of the community. The plan is expected to be implemented over a 15 year period. If Brookwood School proceeds with the next growth phase in the diligent and thoughtful manner of past capital improvements, the school is poised for continued success.

Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Thoughtful design of the updated campus master plan that includes meaningful input from all stakeholder groups;
- A history of solid financial planning, fiscal responsibility in annual operations and well executed fundraising efforts.

Recommendations

The visiting team recommends that the school consider the following:

- Continuing to include all stakeholders in the campus master planning process;
- Continuing to offer timely and clear communication as the campus master plan is implemented;
- Continuing to build a culture of philanthropy, particularly with new families and stakeholders;
- Adding personnel to the advancement staff as time and resources become available.

Additional Commendations and Recommendations

Additional Commendations

The team commends the school for the following:

- Valuing long-standing traditions while also embracing innovative educational best practices (from service leadership to STEAM programs).
- Superior care and maintenance of the facility is evident from the moment you arrive on campus. The Facilities Department maintains the campus in a way that honors the school community.
- A strong commitment by the Board of Directors and Head of School to best practices in independent school governance.

Additional Recommendations

The team recommends the school consider the following:

- Continuing to work towards greater racial/ethnic diversity, inclusivity, and equity (including student and faculty/staff/administrative demographics, Board representation, curriculum, and classroom and library resources).
- Using periodic professional development each year to strengthen the commitment by the Board of Directors and Head of School to best practices in independent school governance.

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation

Summary

The SAIS visiting team would like to thank the school for their enthusiasm, attention to detail and cooperation. The faculty and staff were professional and clearly know and love each child under their care. The team is grateful for the generous hospitality that was extended.

Standards Compliance

The school is in compliance with all standards of the SAIS accreditation process as verified by documentation, observations, and interviews.

Self-Study Quality

The self-study conducted by the school meets the standard of quality and thoroughness required by the SAIS accreditation process and answers the four critical questions as outlined in the Guidebook.

Recommendation

The school is unanimously recommended for accreditation.