



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH ACCREDITATION

THE SELF- STUDY

*Based on the 7th Edition of
The NEASC/CIS Guide to School Evaluation and Accreditation*

THE NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Compatible with Edition 7.02
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Schools involved in the NEASC accreditation process may photocopy this document while undergoing the self study.

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

FOREWORD

The self-study handbook is one of a series designed as supplements to the 7th Edition of the NEASC/CIS Guide to School Evaluation and Accreditation (the Guide). The aim is to provide more detail about the beginning stage of the accreditation process and to provide practical advice and illustrations.

This handbook is intended to assist schools which are about to undertake the self-study. This edition was produced by Dorothy Galo, Robert J. O'Donnell and Pete Woodward of NEASC and Gerry Percy and David Styan of CIS. It draws upon previous work by Kevin Bartlett, Carol Esposito, John F. Monbouquette, Marsha McDonough and Peter Stokes.

We trust this booklet will assist schools as they undertake the demanding, but rewarding, work involved in the accreditation process.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE SELF-STUDY - A BRIEF SUMMARY

The self-study is the most important stage of the entire accreditation process and will normally take more than one academic year to complete. Such an extensive commitment of time is justified by the ambitious requirements of the self-study. The school must learn the current opinions of its community: the board, management, staff, students and parents. During the self-study the school will develop a School, Community, and Student Profile which will reveal student aspirations, needs and abilities which must be accommodated by school programs.

Of special importance is the creation of the philosophy and objectives which conveys the school's fundamental beliefs about education, and what it seeks to accomplish for its students. Following a comprehensive review of its programs, the school must prepare thorough documents to enlighten a visiting team of evaluators who must then determine whether the school is worthy of accreditation.

The self-study shall be based on the structure found in the 7th Edition of the *NEASC/CIS Guide, Version 7.02*. Each section in Part Two covers a major area of school operations, and contains a list of instructions for the self-study committee assigned to that area. These steps are reproduced in full in Chapter Two, part D of this booklet. In summary they involve:

- collecting and analyzing data
- developing a descriptive profile of each section of the school
- assessing current indicators in light of the school's philosophy and objectives and the NEASC/CIS Standards for Accreditation and rating the school against each standard
- writing a statement of conclusions to include principal strengths, principal factors needing attention, and plans for improvement
- signing, assembling and submitting the report

CHAPTER TWO: ORGANIZATION OF THE SELF-STUDY

A. PREPARATIONS

1. Before entering the self-study phase, many schools endeavor to have one or more key staff members trained and selected for a visiting team to another school. This evaluation experience can provide valuable insights into the purposes and procedures of the accreditation process which can be shared with the school staff. Details of training workshops and how to be selected for a visiting team can be obtained from the NEASC offices.
2. A school should obtain from NEASC (or reproduce for itself) enough hard and/or electronic copies of the Guide for use by the school head, the steering committee, and any others who should have an overview of the self-study and evaluation process. In addition, a copy of Part II should be separated into its sections for distribution to committees working on areas of the self-study.
3. A steering committee should be appointed well before the self-study to develop an overall plan and schedule of work. The composition of the steering committee varies from school to school, but there is much to recommend the following basic structure: steering committee chair, a secretary, and a representative from each of the sections of the self-study i.e. from Section A Philosophy and Objectives to Section G Student and Community Life.

The advantage of this structure is that it provides feedback and progress reports at each steering committee meeting. Some smaller schools may be obliged to have a smaller steering committee, but they should understand that communication between the steering committee and other staff members is of great importance.

The considerable duties of the steering committee commonly include:

- a. establishing, within the deadlines set by the school, a timeline for the conduct of the self-study.
 - b. creating the composition of all self-study committees. This will involve recruiting members of the school community from beyond the teaching body itself.
 - c. as individual members, serving on committees dealing with sections of the self-study.
 - d. providing guidance and support to other staff members. See below for more details about this.
4. The school should begin the self-study by administering the opinion surveys and complete the Community, School and Student Profile, as outlined in Part One of *The Guide*.
 5. It is important that a school review its statement of philosophy and objectives before examining any aspect of school programs. If this review is not carried out in advance, the school may find itself examining areas of its operation on the basis of a philosophy which is still under review.

B. THE SCHEDULE OF THE SELF-STUDY

The average school will need more than one school year to undergo a thorough self-study. The school should begin far enough in advance of the visit to allow committees full opportunity to discuss issues thoroughly. Some schools set aside school days for staff to meet in plenary sessions or smaller groups for this purpose.

NEASC normally schedules team visits either in March/April or October/November to avoid opening or closing school activities, inclement weather, school vacations or pressure of school examinations. A typical time-line is set out below. The school must bear in mind that the entire self-study document must be in the possession of NEASC, the visiting team chair and the co-chair at least **eight** weeks before the visit. All other sections assigned by the team chair to visiting team members must be received by team members at least six weeks before the visit.

Sample Time-Line

This scheme shows an example of a year and a half between the preliminary visit and the team visit:

March 2004 Preliminary Visit	April/June 2004 Review of Philosophy and Objectives and Completion of Part One	September 2004 Appointment of Committees and main Self-Study commences
June/July 2005 Self-Study completed	August 2005 Self-Study printed or burnt onto CD's	September 2005 Distribution of Self-Study
November 2005 Team Visit	January 2006 Decision regarding Accreditation	By January 2007 Completion of First Progress Report

C. INVOLVEMENT OF STAFF

A successful self-study will depend in large measure on the broad involvement of the school community in the self-study process. The aims of the self-study cannot be achieved if the school head prepares the self-study report alone or with a few assistants. Indeed, the principal values of this process lie in the opportunities to instill in the school community a greater understanding of and commitment to the school's purposes, to conduct a comprehensive review of school offerings and to prepare a realistic plan to improve all school programs.

Every teacher should have meaningful assignments, preferably in no more than two areas: one relating to their teaching subject, and another involving an overview of some aspect of the school's operation.

In addition, support staff, board members, students and parents should sit on committees preparing section(s) of the self-study. Choices will vary from school to school, but some typical examples might be:

- nurse on committee E – Student Support Services
- student representatives on committees A – Philosophy and Objectives and G – Student and Community Life
- board members on committees A - Philosophy and Objectives, and C - Governance and Management
- parent representatives on Committees A - Philosophy and Objectives, E – Student Support Services, F – Resources and G – Student and Community Life and so on....
- throughout the self-study process it is vital for the school to encourage a climate of “constructive criticism”. Individuals should be given the opportunity to praise what they consider to be the positive features of the school but also to point out (with proposed solutions) where they feel the school needs to improve.

D. GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING PART ONE OF THE SELF-STUDY

Part One of the Self-Study is the initial stage, and should be completed early in the Self-Study process, before commencing Part Two. All Self-Study Committees, and later all Visiting Team members, will need to use this material in their work. It is imperative, therefore, that this part is updated just prior to the Team Visit.

In order to make the opinion surveys more specific, schools which have multiple campuses may apply the survey separately to each campus.

DESCRIPTIONS OF COMMUNITY, SCHOOL AND STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

An understanding of the characteristics of the community, school, and students is essential in order to meet the students' needs. Equally important are the expectations held by the school in its local area as the school determines what programs and learning experiences to provide. The information summarized in this section will be valuable data as the school assesses the degree to which its programs serve the students, parents, and community.

Duly completed Part One documents in their entirety should be made available to all Self-Study Committees carrying out the procedures described in Part Two of this Guide. All Part One documents must also be sent to all Visiting Team members six weeks in advance of their arrival on site.

The Part One Committee, whose role is to carry out this component of the Self-Study, should assemble materials requested under the all headings which now follow.

GENERAL

Create written paragraphs which address the following aspects of the school and its community:

1. A summary of the history and major characteristics of the school, the community and the student body.
2. Comments on the composition of the current student body, describing the national and cultural backgrounds of students.
3. An identification of voluntary adult groups that regularly contribute to the mission of the school (examples: Parent Teacher Organization, Alumni) and an explanation of their roles.
4. Relationship to the local government including special opportunities and support provided.

5. What qualities or characteristics attract students to the school?
6. Describe briefly the public relations materials produced that support the program. (e.g. newsletters and brochures).

The sections within Part One are:

1. School Staff
2. Students currently on roll
3. Student nationalities
4. Graduates/School Leavers
5. Student Movement Patterns-Enrolment
6. Student Movement Patterns-withdrawal
7. Student Achievements
8. The Opinion Survey

Important to the success of a school are the attitudes of the students, teacher, parents, and other community members toward its program. The school is therefore expected to conduct and analyze Opinion Surveys of students, faculty/staff, Governing Body members and parents (option: Alumni/ex-students) regarding the school and its program.

The school must use the Survey Instruments which have been specially constructed for NEASC by Center for Research and Educational Advancement at Endicott College. These can be accessed under "Specialized Surveys" at:

<http://www.centerforresearch.net/?page=surveys>

Survey Contact Person:
Peter Hart, Executive Director
Endicott College
376 Hale Street;
Beverly; MA 01915; USA
lehart@endicott.edu

Please note that GISA makes a separate charge for its services, the exact figure depending on the size of the school.

The school may also wish to add questions of its own to the basic instruments, especially if it intends to consult the community on an on-going basis in the future.

To ensure the widest possible participation in the Opinion Survey, the school is strongly encouraged to:

- Offer computer facilities and practical help to those members of the community who need it.
- Contact or NEASC to seek translations of the survey into other languages if required - the list of languages available (free) can be obtained from: JHowe@neasc.org

9. Comments on opinion survey results

Part One of the Self-Study Report submitted to NEASC and the Visiting Team by the school must contain the results from these Surveys, as compiled externally by the GISA. Importantly, the school must also add a one or two typed page document for each survey (students, staff, Governing Body members, parents, and *optional* alumni/ex-students) in which the Part One Self-Study Committee explains:

- The most significant findings of the survey
- The implications
- The actions taken or planned by the school as a consequence of the findings.

While the statistics emerging from the Opinion Surveys will be of interest, it will be much more important for NEASC and Visiting Team members to read how the school has reacted to the main findings.

E. GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING PART TWO OF THE SELF-STUDY

These general guidelines are to be used in completing the self-study sections A-G.

All documentation submitted as part of a self-study report must be written in English. Exceptions must receive prior approval.

It is very important that the Committee which is examining section A, Philosophy and Objectives meets first and presents an interim report which is then made available for all the other committees in a similar way to the Part One report. Committee A will need to re-convene shortly before the report is finalized to ensure their report is up-to-date.

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STEP 1: COLLECT AND REVIEW THE INFORMATION

The committee should collect or prepare the materials called for in each section of the Guides. Schools should also:

- a) use current documents, whenever possible.
- b) describe briefly on one page those items which are too bulky or too expensive to duplicate. All such items should then be available in the visiting team room for use during the visit.

STEP 2: WRITE THE DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE

Self-study committees shall:

- a) ensure that the descriptive profile is concise and limited to the most important aspects of the section. The profile should occupy no more than one page.
- b) ensure that the profile presents only factual data. Opinions and evaluations shall be avoided. There will be ample opportunity to convey opinions and judgments in Steps 3 and 4.
- c) remember that the aim is to produce a clear, accurate and complete profile so that the visiting team can validate it during the visit and incorporate it in whole or in part into the team report.
- d) consult the numbered list in Step Two of the corresponding section of the Guide when each self-study group develops their descriptive profile.

The committee shall now:

- a) review the school program with respect to the relevant section to ensure consistency with and support of commitments made in the school's statement of philosophy and objectives.
- b) determine the school's status with regard to each standard and write in the ratings (M, D or E), commenting where required or desirable.

STEP 3: RATE THE SCHOOL AGAINST INDICATORS AND STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

The committee shall evaluate the school's practices in terms of each indicator.

The school may omit a rating of any indicator which it feels is not applicable; however, a brief explanation of the reasons for doing so should be given at the end of this section.

Determine a rating for a given standard in light of the ratings for its related indicators.

STEP 4: WRITE THE STATEMENT OF CONCLUSIONS

The committee should briefly summarize their main conclusions with respect to:

- a) principal strengths in the area;
- b) principal factors needing attention;
- c) draft **plans or proposals for improvement.**

STEP 5: ASSEMBLE, SIGN AND SUBMIT THE SELF-STUDY REPORT TO THE STEERING COMMITTEE

For each section of the self-study, assemble the following items, in the order set out below:

- a) Items required to COLLECT AND REVIEW THE DATA
- b) Descriptive Profile
- c) Ratings of Indicators And Standards
- d) Statement of Conclusions.

Each member of the self-study committee must sign their name and position to testify to their involvement in the committee's ratings and conclusions. No person may be solely responsible for any aspect of the committee's work.

In the event that only one person is in a position to determine a valid rating, that person's judgment will suffice on condition that one or more staff members indicate(s) by their signatures that the ratings and conclusions have been discussed with them and appear to be reasonable and valid.

F. GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING OF PART THREE OF THE SELF-STUDY REPORT

Introduction

Part Three constitutes the final stage in the Self-Study process. It provides an opportunity for the Steering Committee to review the work of the other Self-Study Committees, paying special attention to Step Four in each of the section reports. Step Four in each Self-Study Committee's Report identifies principal strengths, principal factors needing strengthening, and Draft Plans for Improvement. The Steering Committee should analyze the work of the various Self-Study Committees to identify *major* areas of strength and concern, and then it should present a summary of their findings and their plans for improvement. The task is to focus on those areas that are of major importance to the school as a whole, focusing on the quality of students' learning and/or well-being.

Instructions

The Steering Committee should write a Statement of Major Conclusions by taking the following steps.

- a. Review the Statement of Conclusions from Step Four in each of the Self-Study Reports A to G that that have been forwarded to the Steering Committee. It would be helpful to ask each Self-Study Committee, as it completes its work, to highlight those conclusions it feels are of major importance to the school.
- b. Select from the above lists of conclusions the major strengths of the school.
- c. Select from the above lists of conclusions the major factors needing strengthening or broad issues facing the school.
- d. Identify, for each of the selected major factors in need of strengthening, **Major Draft Plans for Improvement**. In some cases these may reflect proposals that were identified by the various Self-Study Committees. In other instances, the Steering Committee may develop a more comprehensive proposal for improvement that addresses more than one of the factors in need of strengthening that were listed by the Self-Study Committees.
- e. Summarize the information in (a) to (d) above into a coherent Statement of Major Conclusions which appropriately represents the major strengths and needs of the school as a whole and which identifies **Major Draft Plans for Improvement** that may become part of the Action Plan that the school will be required to submit as part of its First Progress Report within 15 months of the Team Visit. The focus should be on the quality of students' learning and/or well-being.

Note: Before the Part Three Report is finalized, it is strongly recommended that comments be sought from individual Self-Study Committees A to G.

G DISTRIBUTION OF THE SELF-STUDY

The school is required to adhere strictly to the following schedule for distribution of the self-study report:

- a) The NEASC offices should receive the entire self-study report in electronic form at least ten *weeks* before the visit is due to begin.
- b) The team chair and co-chair should also receive the entire self-study at least **eight** weeks before the visit.
- c) All other team members should receive Part One (Community, School, Student Profiles and Results of Opinion Surveys), plus Sections A, C and D of Part Two (Philosophy and Objectives, Governance and Management, and School Staff), plus the specific sections and assigned to them by the team chair, at least **six** weeks before the visit. Alternatively, the school could send each member the whole self-study on a CD.
- d) Please note that the ten, **eight** week and **six** week deadlines refer to receipt of documents. The school must judge the time at which packages should be sent in light of the speed and reliability of the delivery method chosen.

After receipt of the Self-Study Report, the team chair is responsible for contacting the accrediting agencies if it is unsatisfactory in some way. In such a case NEASC will decide whether the report is acceptable, and the school will be informed. An unacceptable report at this point could result in a postponement of the school's evaluation.

H. THE SELF-STUDY STEERING COMMITTEE (SSSC). THE EARLY STEPS.

(Guidelines only. Each school should choose procedures which best suit its circumstances.)

1. The Head of the school should select someone other than him/herself to be Chair of the SSSC. This person will effectively have the role of “Accreditation Co-coordinator”. He/she should be someone who communicates well across all school sectors and who, as far as is known, will be staying at the school for the whole Self-Study period and during the Team Visit.
2. The Head, with the help of the SSSC Chair, should build a Self-Study Steering Committee. Advice on membership and functions is given in Appendix One.
3. Organize the SSSC’s own schedule of meetings, as these should take preference over most/all other meetings.
4. The SSSC should choose Chairs for the Self-Study Committees: Part One, and Part Two A to G. (Remember there will be multiple Section B committees according to the number of horizontal school divisions and vertical subject areas – see Appendix Two for more on this topic.) It is vital that the best possible people be appointed, even if it means turning down some of the volunteers that come forward. Normally all Chairs should be people who work within the school itself. As far as possible, the chosen Chairs should be people who will be staying at the school for the whole Self-Study period and for the Team Visit if feasible. Some Chairs should be members of the SSSC itself.
5. Hold a meeting to train Committee Chairs on how to run a committee (see Appendix Three) and on the “Five Steps” each committee has to follow (see Appendix Four, drawn from pages 20 and 21 of the *Guide to School Evaluation and Accreditation*).
6. Choose Section Committee members by “nomination” and/or “canvassing”. Appendix Five contains suggestions on the “categories” of people who should/could be represented. Avoid having “specialists only” on given committees. E.g. put a French teacher on the vertical Maths Committee B with the Mathematicians! Try to ensure that someone will ask the searching/unusual /“silly” question!
7. Ensure that it is clear which of the committees each SSSC member will monitor, and the “methods of persuasion” to be used according to the personalities involved.
8. Organize a staggered time-line for completion of draft and final Committee reports. A good approach is to set a completion date for each committee, then “work backwards” to create the time-line. Remember that the Part One Committee and Part Two Committee A should report early, as other committees depend on using the school’s up-to-date Philosophy and Objectives and survey data.

Remember that the SSSC will need time towards the end of the process to complete Part Three (the summary).

9. Publish the list of Committee Chairs, members and reporting dates.
10. The Part One Committee (Opinion Surveys etc) and Part Two Committee A (Philosophy and Objectives) should begin work, to be followed by B to G.

GUIDELINES FOR COMPOSITION OF THE SELF-STUDY STEERING COMMITTEE

The Self-Study Steering Committee (SSSC) should be of a size and composition which best meet the needs of the school, and therefore CIS does not attempt to impose rigid “rules”. However, the school may find the following guidelines useful:

- a) Remember that the SSSC does not itself “do the Self-Study”, but it does have to “ensure that the Self-Study gets done”. Therefore the SSSC does not need to be large – perhaps 5 members in a small school up to say 12 members in a very large school.
- b) The Head of School may wish to be a member of the SSSC, but he/she should not be its Chair. The Chair of the SSSC (often called the Accreditation Co-coordinator) would best be a person from a “middle management” position who communicates well across all school sectors and who, as far as is known, will be staying at the school for the whole Self-Study period and during the Team Visit.
- c) Some members of the SSSC should also be the Chairs, or prominent members, of some of the individual committees carrying out Self-Study Part One and/or Part Two Sections A to G. Hence the SSSC will be seen to be involved, not aloof.
- d) Members of the SSSC should be drawn from various parts of the school.
- e) Members of the SSSC should be good communicators and motivators.
- f) Members with previous experience of the Self-Study and/or Team Visit stages of the accreditation process would be useful on the SSSC.
- g) Membership of the SSSC is best kept to people who work in the school itself so that the committee can be called together rapidly if necessary. Parents and others not working in the school should be included in individual Self-Study Committees, but normally not in the SSSC.

I SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDELINES FOR SECTION B OF THE SELF-STUDY

To be read in conjunction with the guidelines in the Introduction to Section B in the main Guide.

The Need for Multiple Reports

Every school must produce a number of Section B self-study reports. For example, a school whose structure shows three identifiable divisions or phases and nine subject strands will create a total of twelve Section B reports (three horizontal plus nine vertical).

Each of these reports must contain the Five Steps found in any self-study report (i.e. Collect and Review the Information; Write the Descriptive Profile; Rate the School against the Indicators and Standards; Write the Statement of Conclusions; Assemble Sign and Submit the Report).

This multiplicity of Section B reports reflects the Seventh Edition's deliberate focus on curriculum in all its aspects: design, delivery, assessment and review.

The generic language used in the Standards and Indicators allows them to be used by all Section B self-study committees.

Horizontal Reports

As an example, a school which consists of three recognizable divisions or phases (perhaps Elementary School, Middle School and High School) will produce three separate horizontal Section B self-study reports, one for each of the three divisions. Each of these three reports will address the total curriculum on offer in the given school division.

Vertical Reports

In addition to the horizontal reports described above, the school must produce a vertical self-study report on each and every one of the identifiable subject strands within the school. So, for example a school will typically produce separate vertical Section B reports for Mathematics, English Language, Other Languages, Natural Sciences. Etc. While necessarily covering all subject areas, the school itself will decide the exact number and nature of the subject strands on which it will produce vertical reports. For example, the school may decide that the results of self-study on History and Geography are likely to be so different that it would be best to produce entirely separate Section B reports on these two subject strands. However, if there are many similarities between History and Geography, the school may decide to create just one Section B Social Sciences report to cover both. In this case, for the few Standards and/or Indicators in Step Three where History and Geography merit very different ratings, the school could give two ratings carrying a note "H" or "G" to designate the subject concerned. The self-study committee may wish to explain the situation further in the comments which it can add under Step Three.

These subject reports are described as “vertical” because they must cover the entire grade range within the school. So, for example, the Mathematics subject report should cover the delivery of Mathematics (either as a designated subject or as part of an integrated program) for the entire range of grades. This would, for example, cover K to 12 (US-style numbering) or Reception to Year 13 (UK system) in an “all-through” school. If sharp divisional differences prevent the self-study committee from finding one suitable rating for Mathematics against a specific Indicator or Standard, more than one rating can be given as long as each rating carries a note to show to which division it applies (e.g. Elem for Elementary, Mid for Middle, etc). The self-study committee may wish to explain the situation further in the comments which it can add under Step Three.

NOTE: When the Visiting Team later constructs its report, it will follow the same pattern of multiple Section B reports as that followed by the school itself during self-study.

J. HINTS ON CHAIRING A SELF STUDY COMMITTEE.

This list of points is mainly intended to help those with little or no previous experience of chairing a committee. Those who already have knowledge of such processes may also find some points that are helpful and of interest. Whatever your situation, you will find that while the task of chairing a self-study committee is very demanding it is also an extremely rewarding professional experience.

- Always be well organized and well-informed. Remember you as Chair must ensure that the committee fulfils all its responsibilities within the specified time-line.
- Always have on hand the essential working documents, namely:
 - the relevant Section of the Accreditation Guide
 - the relevant Section of the Preliminary/Preparatory Visitor's Report (particularly the "suggested areas for attention")
 - the booklet *The Self-Study*, which includes example Self-Study committee reports
 - the school's Philosophy and Objectives
 - any relevant results from the Opinion Surveys carried out under Part One of the Self-Study process
- Notify committee members well in advance about the time and date of meetings. If possible have a regular time slot (e.g. 3.45 p.m. to 5pm every other Tuesday) so committee members can plan to avoid accepting commitments which clash.
- Publish a plan/agenda, with discussion time limits, for each meeting. Insist on punctuality and adherence to the time table for discussion.
- Set the tone of the meetings by being consistently polite, but also very firm. Wherever possible use humor to de-fuse potentially difficult situations.
- Avoid beginning committee meetings with "a blank sheet of paper" as this will inevitably lead to over-lengthy discussions. Instead, wherever possible, distribute tasks in advance to individuals or very small groups of members, so they can carry them out and present the results to the next meeting. In this way committee business begins with some concrete proposals for consideration.

- Have a “secretary” to keep notes of the decisions taken to avoid going over old ground at future meetings. This role can be assigned to members on a rota basis if necessary.
- The committee is expected to make consensus decisions. The Chair must strike a fine balance between encouraging everyone to contribute, while preventing any one person from monopolizing the committee’s time. If a member makes a proposal which is not adopted by the majority, ensure that the individual concerned still feels his/her contributions are valued. In particular, try subtly to prevent Board or Senior Management Team members, or loquacious individuals, from totally eclipsing less experienced staff members or students. If subtlety fails, be firm!
- In the case of apparent deadlock, or excessive debate on a given detail, curtail the discussion and move on to the next point. Attempt to resolve conflicts through calm conversations with individuals outside the normal committee context if you feel that is appropriate. Return to the unresolved issue at a future meeting when passions have cooled and perhaps more information is available.
- Try to get to know your committee members well, and use subtle techniques to draw the best out of them. Remember some people react best to a quiet word outside the committee context itself.
- Consider when it may be appropriate to split the Committee into sub-groups to work on different component areas within the Section if it is wide-ranging. [For example under Section F Resources you may wish to ask a sub-group to concentrate on the library/media centre standards F7 and F8. That sub-group should report back to the whole Committee because its findings also affect the rating of other standards such as F5, F6 and F9.]
- Carry out exercises from time to time during which committee members reflect on the functioning of the committee (rather than on the subject matter in question) to see how that might be improved.
- If in doubt, seek help and advice from fellow Committee Chairs or from the Chair of the Steering Committee (who is welcome in his/her turn to contact the CIS Accreditation Service in Madrid if necessary).

Note: In the very first meeting of a Self-Study Committee it is useful for the Chair to ask members to make a fairly rapid, provisional rating of the school against all the Standards in the Section concerned. (The Indicators will help guide this process.) Any provisional “D” or “M?” ratings will reveal those areas where improvement is needed. The Committee Chair should report these to the School Management, and ask whether the Self-Study Committee will be expected to become an “action group” to drive improvement or whether some other approach will be used. In any event, it is hoped that by the end of the self-study the situation will have improved sufficiently for poor provisional ratings to be justifiably replaced by more positive definitive ratings.

K. POSSIBLE COMPOSITION OF SELF-STUDY COMMITTEES

Each school should make its own decision on these matters.

Certain school sectors may only be represented on a given sub-group of a Committee in order to address a specific component of a wide-ranging Section.

	SECTION	DEFINITE REPRESENTATION	POSSIBLE REPRESENTATION
	Part One	Management, Staff, Board, Parents, Students	
	Part Two		
A	Philosophy & Objectives	Management, Staff, Board, Parents, Students	
B	Curriculum (various “vertical” and “horizontal” committees)	Management, Staff	
C	Governance & Management	Management, Staff, Board	Parents
D	Staff	Management, Staff, Board	
E	Student Support Services	Management, Staff	Board, Parents, Students
F	Resources	Management, Staff	Board, Parents
G	Student & Community Life	Management, Staff, Board, Parents, Students	
	Part Three	Steering Committee	

n.b. Remember “Staff” could include teaching and/or support personnel, chosen to suit the committee’s area of focus

CHAPTER THREE: A SAMPLE SECTION FROM A SELF-STUDY

**ANGLO-AMERICAN SCHOOL OF
SCHLOSSBERG-LES-BAINS**

SELF-STUDY FOR ACCREDITATION

with the

COUNCIL OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

and the

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

SECTION C GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Editor's Note: In this sample self-study, instructions taken directly from the CIS/NEASC Guide are shown in italics. Responses from the Anglo-American School of Schlossberg-Les-Bains are shown in normal print.

The Guide to School Evaluation and Accreditation

SECTION C

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

SELF-STUDY REPORT OF:

School: Anglo-American School of Schlossberg-Les-Bains

Address: 23 Calle Sotode
Middletown 5065
Nomansland

Date Report Completed: December 10, 2002

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARING THIS SECTION OF THE REPORT:

Typed Name	Position	Signature
G. Bush (Chair)	Head of Upper School	(signed)
K. Disney	Chair, Board of Trustees	(signed)
G. Madden	Business Manager	(signed)
D. Maradona	Chair, English Dept.	(signed)
T. Learing	Dean of Faculty	(signed)

Instructions

Self-Study Committee should now follow Steps One to Five as they consider this area of school life.

STEP ONE: COLLECT AND REVIEW THE INFORMATION

The following documents have been collected, reviewed, and are included with the report sent to Visiting Team members:

1. Job descriptions for top administrators.
2. School catalog with information about the school.
3. The current school calendar.
4. Certification of insurance.

All other documents requested have been collected, reviewed, and will be available to the Visiting Team in the Team Meeting Rooms in the library conference room and the Royal Hotel.

STEP TWO: WRITE THE DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE

The Self-Study Committee should produce the Descriptive Profile of this area by responding succinctly to all the questions shown and be filling out any forms in cases where they are provided. Responses to the questions and entries on any forms should be purely factual, and should not include evaluations or judgments. The Self-Study Committee has ample opportunities to express its opinions in Steps Three and Four.

The Anglo-American School of Schlossberg-Les-Bains was founded in 1976 by primarily British and American parents representing diplomatic and business interests in Middletown, Nomansland. The school was incorporated under the laws and regulations of Nomansland.

The school is governed by a self-perpetuating Board of 16 trustees who can be appointed for no more than two, consecutive three year terms. The Board includes a chair, vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer and board committees include Finance, Nominating, Buildings and Grounds, School Life, and Compensation. The Board meets monthly during the academic year and the Head of School is an ex-officio member of the Board. Policies of the Board have accumulated over time and can be found in the minutes of previous meetings over the years of operation. Periodically and informally the trustees evaluation their effectiveness.

The Board hires and evaluates the Head of School. The Head is responsible to carry out the policies determined by the board, to hire and fire if necessary all school personnel, and to oversee the daily operations of the school. The Head is evaluated yearly by the chair of the Board. The Board expects the Head to identify and outline important issues and business for the Board's consideration, and to make recommendations for action. After due discussion with the Head and amongst Board members, decisions made are then to be carried out by the Head. The Head is responsible for all decisions outside of decisions establishing board policy.

The Head appoints key administrators and department heads to assist him in running the school. He meets with those persons individually and weekly as a team. The Head either delegates decision-making to his key administrators or seeks their advice and counsel before making his decisions. A concerted effort is made to have decisions at the school be collaborative and inclusive. Important decisions are announced through a newsletter to teachers and staff, parents, and others.

The finances of the school are managed primarily by the Treasurer of the Board, the Business Manager, and the Head of School. Annually the Board approves a budget which has been presented to them by the Head and Business Manager. The Board sets the tuition level, the overall percentage for possible salary increases, and the Head's salary. The Head determines individual employee salaries. The remainder of the budget is the responsibility of the Business Manager, but monitored by the Head and Treasurer.

The Business Manager has a bookkeeper and secretary to assist her. An audit is conducted annually by an international auditing company, Jones Anderson, with an office in Nomansland. The entire Board receives a copy of the audit and the management letter. The budget for the current year is equivalent to \$3.2 million, which is slightly more than the previous year in which there was a modest surplus at year-end. The Business Office sends monthly statements to parents which includes required payments for unpaid tuition, fees, and school store charges for books and supplies.

The school's long range planning includes a five-year financial plan addressing the payment of all debt, tuition forecasts, and capital fund-raising. The school has recently established a capital reserve fund for the sole purpose of providing financial aid to qualified, deserving low income families and students.

The school maintains comprehensive insurance for liability, fire, casualty, and theft, as well as disability, unemployment, and life insurances for employees.

STEP THREE: RATE THE SCHOOL AGAINST THE INDICATORS AND THE STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

The Committee should use the information collected in Step One as a source of evidence upon which the ratings in this step will be based.

- i. For each Standard, the Self-Study Committee should first consider all the Indicators provided and rate the school's own practice against each one (W = Widely Implemented; P = Partially Implemented; N = Not Implemented). Given that the circumstances of each school are unique, the Committee may wish to add one or more of its own Indicators to the list and also give a rating against them. The Committee may comment on any of its ratings if considered to be appropriate.
- ii. The Committee may also comment on any "M" rating. The Self-Study Committee should then examine each Standard for Accreditation, and rate the school accordingly (M = Meets the Standard; D = Does Not Meet the Standard; E = Exceeds the Standard). The Committee's work in rating the school against the

Indicators, both those provided and any others added, will guide the process of rating the Standard. All ratings of "D" or "E" must be accompanied by brief comments. The Committee is also encouraged to comment on any "M" rating where this would help to clarify the response.

	Section C: INDICATORS RELATED TO STANDARD ONE	Rating W, P or N
1a	<i>The governing body restricts its actions to the determination and the funding of policy, and the selection, retention and formal appraisal of the Head of School.</i>	W
1b	<i>The governing body provides appropriate training for its members in the understanding and performance of their duties.</i>	P
1c	<i>The governing body uses a clear evaluation system to regularly and rigorously appraise its own performance against its duties and pre-determined goals.</i>	P
1d	<i>The governing body is so constituted that it can provide continuity for the school in the event of sudden change.</i>	W

Section C: STANDARD ONE	Rating E, M or D
<i>The governing body shall be so constituted, with regard to membership and organisation, as to provide the school with sound direction, continuity and effective support.</i>	M

	Section C: INDICATORS RELATING TO STANDARD TWO	Rating W, P or N
2a	<i>There is a clear understanding by the governing body and the Head of School of their respective functions which are set out in written form.</i>	W
2b	<i>The governing body makes policy decisions only after consideration of the Head of School's recommendations.</i>	W
2c	<i>The governing body has developed a clear, written job description for the head.</i>	P
2d	<i>The governing body and the head of the school enjoy a good working relationship.</i>	W

Section C: STANDARD TWO	Rating E, M or D
<i>There shall be a co-operative and effective working relationship between the governing body and the Head of School.</i>	M

	Section C: INDICATORS RELATING TO STANDARD THREE	Rating W, P or N
3a	<i>The Head of School is suitably qualified and experienced in education.</i>	W
3b	<i>The Head of School provides leadership for the total school program.</i>	W
3c	<i>The governing body utilizes a clearly defined appraisal system for the Head of School, conducted with his/her full knowledge. Appraisal outcomes are reported in writing to the head who has the opportunity to discuss and appeal any aspects of the appraisal.</i>	P
3d	<i>The Head of School has direct access to the governing body.</i>	W
3e	<i>The Head of School has total responsibility for the recruitment, selection, assignment, orientation, deployment and appraisal of all the school staff.</i>	W
3f	<i>The Head of School delegates the above functions, where appropriate, to the staff of the school.</i>	W

Section C: STANDARD THREE	Rating E, M or D
<i>The Head of School, although accountable to a higher authority, shall be the responsible leader of the school.</i>	M

	Section C: INDICATORS RELATING TO STANDARD FOUR	Rating W, P or N
4a	<i>The school has educational and financial plans for the short, medium and long term.</i>	W
4b	<i>All plans have the financial implications clearly stated.</i>	W
4c	<i>There are procedures to involve the staff in educational and financial planning.</i>	P
4d	<i>Educational and financial plans are made known to the school community.</i>	W
4e	<i>All plans are periodically reviewed and updated.</i>	W

Section C: STANDARD FOUR	Rating E, M or D
<i>The school shall have educational and financial plans for the short, medium and long term, with strategies for accomplishing the school's goals and for assessing the effectiveness of the actions taken.</i>	M

	Section C: INDICATORS RELATING TO STANDARD FIVE	Rating W, P or N
5a	<i>The governing body and the school management comply with all applicable statutes, government laws and regulations.</i>	W
5b	<i>The governing body ensures that the school respects all local codes, fulfils its contracts, and settles its debts promptly.</i>	W
5c	<i>The governing body avoids conflicts of interest, thereby setting an example for the school community.</i>	P
5d	<i>The governing body provides protection for the school staff from community exploitation and unjust criticism.</i>	P
5e	<i>All statements and representations relating to programs, services and resources are clear, factually accurate and current.</i>	W
5f	<i>The governing body pursues all relationships with the school or staff members only through the Head of School.</i>	P

Section C: STANDARD FIVE	Rating E, M or D
<i>The school shall observe legal and ethical principles in all its dealings with the school community.</i>	M

	Section C: INDICATORS RELATING TO STANDARD SIX	Rating W, P or N
6a	<i>The governing body has a comprehensive and up-to-date policy manual</i>	N
6b	<i>Orientation and training sessions take place so that all members of the governing body understand policies and their implications.</i>	P
6c	<i>The governing body arranges to publicize its decisions and deliberations by, for example, open meetings, newsletters, publication of the Governing Body minutes, etc.</i>	W

Section C: STANDARD SIX	Rating E, M or D
<i>The governing body shall have clearly formulated policies set out in a policy manual to give consistency and order to its operations, and it shall ensure that these policies are understood by the school community.</i>	D
<i>Comment (if applicable): A Trustee Policy Manual does not exist. The school needs to give priority to creating one</i>	

	Section C: INDICATORS RELATING TO STANDARD SEVEN	Rating W, P or N
7a	<i>After appropriate consultation and debate, the governing body sets fee levels which ensure the ongoing financial stability of the school.</i>	W
7b	<i>The Governing Body establishes the school's annual budget after appropriate consultation with the relevant constituents.</i>	W
7c	<i>Any endowment funds are under the management of qualified financial managers, and the Governing Body supervises the endowment management.</i>	W
7d	<i>The school regularly considers culturally appropriate means of raising additional funds.</i>	W

7e	<i>The Head of School submits to the governing body, appropriate reports on financial matters.</i>	W
7f	<i>The school maintains an adequate forecast of monthly cash flow to anticipate and provide for its obligations.</i>	W
7g	<i>An annual external audit is performed by an independent auditing firm.</i>	W

Section C: STANDARD SEVEN	Rating E, M or D
<i>The financial resources of the school shall be capable of sustaining a sound educational program, consistent with its stated philosophy and objectives, and of providing for long-term stability.</i>	M

	Section C: INDICATORS RELATING TO STANDARD EIGHT	Rating W, P or N
8a	<i>The financial affairs of the school are competently managed, and published budgets shall be made available to duly authorized persons.</i>	W
8b	<i>The financial management of the school ensures that sound business and accounting practices are followed on the management and disbursement of funds.</i>	W
8c	<i>School obligations for goods received, services rendered and debts incurred are discharged promptly in accordance with agreements, contracts and/or sound business practice.</i>	W
8d	<i>The school's insurance program is comprehensive and provides for necessary risk and liability coverage for employees and members of the governing body/ownership.</i>	W
8e	<i>Insurance coverage is reviewed periodically with respect to risks, liabilities and obligations</i>	W
8f	<i>Personnel handling institutional funds are bonded.</i>	W

Section C: STANDARD EIGHT	Rating E, M or D
<i>The management of the school's finances shall be, at all times, in accordance with the standards which operate in the host country and shall be consistent with best practice in international schools.</i>	M

	Section C: INDICATORS RELATING TO STANDARD NINE	Rating W, P or N
9a	<i>Normally, changes in fees are communicated to parents early enough to allow parents to make arrangements to change schools if necessary.</i>	W
9b	<i>Total servicing of long-term debt, including both interest and principal payments, is apportioned to both present and future beneficiaries. Parents are informed of the percentage of tuition allocated for debt-service.</i>	P
9c	<i>Billing procedures to parents are orderly, timely, and carried out in accordance with sound business practice.</i>	W

	Section C: STANDARD NINE	Rating E, M or D
	<i>Parents or others enrolling students shall be informed in advance of the precise nature and scope of the financial obligations and be given an estimate of the total expenses.</i>	M

Reminder: Comments should have been made in the appropriate box for any Standard rated "D" or "E". Comments are optional for any Indicators as well as for Standards rated "M".

STEP FOUR: WRITE THE STATEMENT OF CONCLUSIONS

In a series of brief statements, keeping the Standards in mind, the Self-Study Committee should write its main conclusions for this Section with respect to:

- i. Principal strengths in the area concerned which impact positively upon the quality of students' learning and/or well-being
- ii. Principal factors needing strengthening in order to improve the quality of students' learning and/or well-being
- iii. Draft Plans for Improvement which will impact positively upon the quality of students' learning and/or well-being. These Draft Plans (which ideally would include timelines, lists of those responsible for action, resources required, etc.) will be useful to the school as it draws up its Action Plans for inclusion in the First Progress Report at a later stage of the accreditation process. The Committee should ensure that it includes *Draft Plans for Improvement* which address all Standards given a "D" rating in Step Three.

1. Principal strengths in Governance and Management

- a. Board structure and functioning
- b. Relationship between Board and Head and understanding of responsibilities of each
- c. Inclusiveness of decision-making throughout the school

d. Financial management, stability, and planning

2. Principal factors needing strengthening

- e. New trustee orientation
- f. Developing a Board policy manual
- g. Formal, written evaluation of Head of School
- h. Formal, annual evaluation of the Board
- i. Job description for Head of School
- j. Inclusion of staff in development of budget
- k. Conflict of Interest resolution

2. Proposals for Improvement

Action	In Charge	Personnel	Resources	Timescale	Success Criteria
Trustee nominating committee to establish an orientation program for all new trustees	Chair of Nominating Committee	Head, Senior Staff, Board	Printing Costs, plus annual orientation day at local hotel	To be completed by the start of the next academic year	All new trustees claim to be well-informed. Survey opinion
Review all prior Board of Trustees minutes for recorded policy decisions and collate them into a Trustee Policy Manual to be available in the Head of School's office	Chair of the board	Head, Senior staff and all Board members	Printing Costs	One year from start of process	Copies available and consulted. Policy manual seen to guide all actions. Quoted wherever appropriate
Establish written instruments for both Board and Head evaluations to be conducted at the end of each school year	Head and the Chair of the Board	Head and the Chair of the Board with approval by the whole Board	Printing Costs. Annual Board retreat costs	Be in operation by beginning of next academic year	Much clearer ideas of capabilities of both Head and Board. Publish summary for all
The Board Chair and Head to write a job description for the Head	Chair of the Board	Chair and Head	ime	Within one year	Both parties to have clearer understanding; help appraisal. Guide new search for Head

Establish a means for department heads to state up-coming needs for capital improvements, staffing, and materials at the beginning of the budgeting process	Head (or Deputy with special responsibility for curriculum	Heads of department plus Senior managers, Plus Business manager	Time	In time for the next Budget cycle	Better financial management. Resources more wisely used. No rush to spend money before deadlines. Greater sense of fairness in funding allocations
Write a Conflict of Interest Resolution for the Board, have every Board member sign, and keep with Board Policy Manual in Head's office	Chair of the Board and the head	Head, senior colleagues and the Board, plus external consultant?	Time	Within six months	No more acrimonious sessions of the Board

STEP FIVE: ASSEMBLE, SIGN AND SUBMIT THE SELF-STUDY REPORT

The Self-Study Committee should carefully assemble all the materials collected and produced during Steps One to Four inclusive, so as to form the Self-Study Report on the Section concerned.

As evidence of the co-operative action which is so vital in this process, the cover page for this Section in the report should carry the name, position and signature of all the Self-Study Committee members responsible for it. Note: no one person should be exclusively responsible for evaluating any particular area of a school's operation.

The Self-Study Committee should submit its report to the Self-Study Steering Committee.