

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

1. operate continuously for at least five years prior to applying for recognition under this section; **The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) has been in continuous operation serving the schools of the region since 1885 (139 years). The NEASC accredited the first Vermont independent school in 1929.**

2. maintain membership in a peer organization that supports accrediting agencies in continuous improvement and alignment with best practices in school accreditation; **The New England Association of Schools and Colleges is a member and has voluntarily participated in a review process by the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA). See attachment**

3. use a peer review process that includes evaluation by leaders of similar school; **The accreditation process for independent schools, developed and utilized by NEASC, includes a peer review process which is led by leaders from similar schools.**

4. appropriately train all staff and peer reviewers who are involved in the accreditation process; **The NEASC staff is composed of former senior educational leaders from schools throughout New England. These NEASC staff members have extensive training and experience in the NEASC accreditation Standards and processes. All visitors receive training and orientation prior to their work on a school accreditation visit. Extensive training is provided for all visiting committee chairs. All visiting team members complete a confidentiality form and have been background checked at their schools or by NEASC. See attachment**

5. accredit schools based on publicly accessible documented standards, including mission, governance, finance, program, community of the school, administration, development, admissions, personnel, general health and safety, child and student protection and well-being, facilities, student services, school culture, and residential life (as applicable); **NEASC has developed and maintains Standards for Accreditation based on research and best-practices. The current Standards for Accreditation for schools that are members of the Commission on Independent Schools can be found at <https://www.neasc.org/standards-independent>**

6. perform a comprehensive onsite visit of any school seeking accreditation while such school is in session; **The process developed and utilized by the NEASC-Commission on Independent Schools includes two visits, one semester apart, during the ten-year accreditation cycle. The first visit is called the Foundation Visit and focuses on Standards 1-6. The second visit is called the Program Visit. This visit focuses on Standards 7-14. All visits are conducted at a time when school is in session and students are present.**

7. require that schools seeking accreditation to maintain a curriculum that is informed by research, document individual student progress, and have mechanisms for monitoring, assessing, and providing feedback on student progress; **The NEASC-CIS Standards for**

Accreditation addresses the school's curriculum in Standard 9. The indicators in this Standard require that:

- 9.a. A relentless commitment to excellence, as defined by the school, inspires the program.
- 9.b. The school's core values, beliefs, and educational philosophy inform and guide program planning at all levels.
- 9.c. The students' personal identities, neurodiversity, experiences, and particular backgrounds are intentionally reflected in the program.
- 9.d. The school's current written curriculum, evidence-based best practices, and/or pedagogical research inform the program.
- 9.e. The written curriculum aligns horizontally and vertically.
- 9.f. Faculty have dedicated time to discuss the written curriculum and how to implement it effectively.
- 9.g. Faculty employ a range of assessment practices to appropriately promote learning, monitor growth, and consistently measure student progress.
- 9.h. Educational media and technology enhance the instructional program and meet the needs of the students and faculty.
- 9.i. The school's international programs and partnerships (if applicable) are aligned with the school's mission and meet the needs of all engaged in or affected by them.
- 9.j. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

8. require that schools seeking accreditation promote an equitable, just, and inclusive community of adults and students, foster a culture of learning, and inspire students to respect and value diversity in its many forms; **The NEASC-CIS Standards for Accreditation addresses the school's curriculum in Standard 8. The indicators in this Standard require that:**

- 8.a. The school recognizes, values, and nurtures the unique reality of every student at each stage of development.
- 8.b. The faculty and staff regularly monitor each student's social and emotional development.
- 8.c. The school understands and responds to the realities of the students' social and emotional experiences outside the school.
- 8.d. The school inspires and cultivates in its students the personal qualities valued by the school.
- 8.e. Students' perspectives and opinions are appropriately heard and addressed.
- 8.f. School culture promotes, supports, and celebrates the essential equity and inclusion of all students.
- 8.g. The school understands the unique needs of each student with a disability, including disability-based behaviors, and, within the United States, the rights offered to children with disabilities under IDEA.
- 8.h. The school inspires student engagement and belonging in the school community.
- 8.i. The school's practice of equity reduces the predictability of who succeeds and who fails by ensuring every learner has access to the resources they need when they need them.
- 8.j. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

9. conduct ongoing and periodic reviews as necessary throughout the accreditation cycle of the schools that it accredits and provide interim reports during the accredited school's approval period that are sufficient to meet the informational needs of the Board; **Integral to the NEASC-CIS accreditation process is the ongoing and period review of accredited schools. At the time of the visit, schools that do not meet one or more standards must document, within one year, how they have addressed the unmet standard. All schools must file a Two-Year Progress Report, addressing the Major Recommendations in the Visiting Team Report, in addition to providing information on Standard-Specific recommendations, enrollment trends, finances, and the school's strategic planning. All schools must also file a Five-Year Progress Report, addressing enrollment trends, improvements in the students' learning and experience, improvements in curriculum and instruction, the role of the school's governing body, strategic planning, and finances. A NEASC director meets with every Head of School at the time of the Five-Year Progress Report. The NEASC Commission on Independent Schools may request a Special Progress Report on any subject and timetable and may schedule a Focused Visit to a school following a Special Progress Report. All NEASC member schools also submit an Annual Report which, at times, triggers a NEASC director visit or special steps for the school.**

10. demonstrate substantial understanding and familiarity with state laws, policies, and regulations that apply to approved independent schools in Vermont; **The leadership of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges has been monitoring the state laws, policies and regulation that apply to approved independent schools in Vermont. Senior leaders from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges have discussed state laws, policies and regulations with staff members of the Agency of Education, the State Board of Education, and members of the state legislature. Senior NEASC leaders have also testified before the legislature in support of these. Finally, three members of the NEASC professional staff, including the president/CEO are residents of Vermont.**

11. agree to review and share with the Agency of Education evidence of practices and compliance with state-specific requirements during the initial or interim stages of an approved independent school's accreditation period. **The NEASC-Commission on Independent Schools requires independent schools in Vermont to provide the following documentation as a part of its preparation for the accreditation process.**

- The school's harassment, hazing, and bullying prevention policies and procedures.
- The school's Discipline Plan.
- The school's Rule 4500-compliant policy for the use of restraint and seclusion.
- The school's user's agreement with the Vermont Crime Information Center and any related criminal records requests.
- The school's Concussion Action Plan
- The school's Immunization Plan
- The school's Emergency Preparedness Plan

Also, the following information is regularly shared with the Agency of Education for every accredited independent school in Vermont.

- **The accreditation action taken by the Commission on Independent Schools (this includes the action taken relative to the accreditation visit and all interim reports)**
- **A copy of all school's accreditation visit report**
- **A copy of the notification letters from the Commission to the school**

(b) Any accrediting agency seeking to be recognized by the Board under this section shall submit a letter and supporting evidence to the Board detailing the ways in which it meets each criterion. **Letter attached**

Each applicant shall also provide its methodology for assessing and supporting schools in meeting and advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and other nondiscriminatory practices. **The New England Association of Schools and Colleges is committed to supporting schools in meeting and advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and other nondiscriminatory practices. The NEASC- Commission on Independent Schools is piloting a practice where schools will receive a focused report on their DEI efforts.**

Upon review of each submission, the Board shall determine whether it will recognize the accrediting agency and set the length of time that such recognition will be in effect.

The Board may impose additional conditions upon a recognized accrediting agency as it deems appropriate. Applicants shall be notified of a decision and any conditions of continued recognition in writing. (c) The Board shall create, and the Agency of Education shall maintain a publicly available list of currently recognized accrediting agencies that meet the criteria described in subsection (a) above. The Board may remove any agency from the list of recognized accrediting agencies at any time, after finding that it no longer meets one or more of the criteria listed above. (c) The Board shall continue to recognize any accrediting agency that accredits an approved independent school in Vermont as of April 1, 2024 until December 1, 2024.