

# AISNE School Accreditation

## Vermont House Education Committee

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Presenters:

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## About AISNE

The [Association of Independent Schools in New England](#) (AISNE) is a non-profit membership association of 265 independent schools across New England and an accrediting organization for Kindergarten - Grade 12 independent schools. AISNE's origins date back to 1920, when teachers in the greater Boston area gathered to consider teaching best practices.

For more than 50 years, AISNE has been an accreditation leader and currently accredits 79 of our member schools.

AISNE currently has 17 member schools in Vermont.

AISNE was formally recognized alongside NEASC by the Vermont State Board of Education as of July 1, 2023, ensuring that independent schools in the state have accreditation options that meet their needs and budget.

A list of AISNE member schools can be found [here](#).

## **AISNE Mission Statement**

With an ongoing commitment to equity and inclusion, the Association of Independent Schools in New England (AISNE) shapes the educational landscape for independent schools through leadership, education, service, and strategic advocacy. (*Approved 2014*)

## **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Statement**

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

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

We acknowledge and value the tensions and conflicts all schools experience as they work to become truly inclusive institutions, recognizing that progress comes from embracing, not avoiding, this important struggle. (*Approved 2022; Full statement [here](#).*)

## About the membership

Full Members are non-profit independent schools located in MA, ME, NH, RI, or VT that are accredited by AISNE or the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC).

To be accredited by AISNE, schools must meet these eligibility requirements:

1. Has a clear statement of mission and philosophy.
2. Consists of three or more consecutive grades in kindergarten through grade twelve or equivalent.
3. Is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization as attested by federal and state records.
4. Has a non-discrimination statement as required by law.
5. Is governed by an appropriately constituted and substantially independent governing board, in accordance with the by-laws of the corporation.
6. Has policies and procedures to ensure that any perceived or actual conflicts of interest for board members are disclosed and managed appropriately.
7. Has an annual audit of the school's financial statements, performed by an independent certified public accountant.
8. Has a process for the ongoing monitoring of its compliance with all federal, state, and local legal and regulatory requirements.

## **AISNE's Services**

- Accreditation
- Professional Development
- Data Benchmarking
- Governance Support and Training
- Recruitment platform and directory of schools

Accreditation is available to AISNE's **independent elementary, middle, and high school members** in New England.

Accreditation provides **quality assurance that a school is meeting rigorous standards** in all aspects of its operations.

Accreditation emphasizes **institutional health and continuous school improvement**.

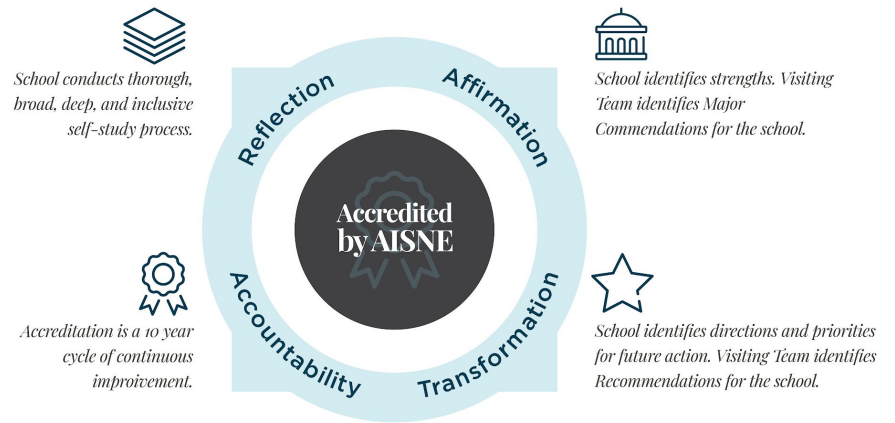
The ultimate goal of the accreditation process is the **enhancement of student learning** and growth in each school.

Balancing school independence and accountability for ensuring safe, welcome, equitable, and just school environments for all.

AISNE Accreditation is underpinned by four core values: **Reflection**, **Affirmation**, **Transformation**, and **Accountability**.

It involves a school's **self-evaluation and goal-setting, peer review, and accountability**.

## The AISNE Accreditation Principles



Accreditation is a cyclical and ongoing process.

A school goes through full reaccreditation - self-study and a 4-day onsite visit - every 10 years.

An interim report and campus visit is conducted in Year 5, with Annual Reports submitted each year.

This schedule provides accountability for accredited schools and allows AISNE to monitor standards compliance and substantive changes throughout the 10-year cycle.





## Benefits of AISNE Accreditation

- Facilitates institutional self-reflection, goal setting, and continuous improvement:
  - Strengthens a school's commitment and congruence to its **mission**;
  - Requires self-reflection and **self-evaluation**;
  - Affirms the school's **strengths**;
  - Identifies **areas for improvement**;
- Provides quality assurance and accountability:
  - Requires the school to compare its performance to **standards of good practice**, and demonstrate its **compliance with industry standards**;
  - Demonstrates the school's willingness to be held **professionally accountable**;
  - Enhances **the school's credibility** with its constituents and within the community;
  - Focuses on the institution rather than on individuals which helps to ensure the **long-term health** of the school.

## Who Is Involved in the Process?



## Eligibility Criteria

1. Has a clear statement of mission and philosophy.
2. Consists of three or more consecutive grades in kindergarten through grade twelve or equivalent.
3. Is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization as attested by federal and state records.
4. Has a non-discrimination statement as required by law.
5. Is governed by an appropriately constituted and substantially independent governing board, in accordance with the by-laws of the corporation.
6. Has policies and procedures to ensure that any perceived or actual conflicts of interest for board members are disclosed and managed appropriately.
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## Accreditation Standards

### Leadership

- Std. 1: Mission and Philosophy
- Std. 2: Governance
- Std. 3: Administration

### Student Experience Program

- Std. 4: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Life
- Std. 5: Student Well-Being
- Std. 6: Program Resources
- Std. 7: Residential, Homestay, and Exchange Programs (*if applicable*)

### Institutional Advancement & Operations

- Std. 8: Enrollment Management and Outreach
- Std. 9: Community Engagement and Partnerships
- Std. 10: Development
- Std. 11: Staffing and Human Resources
- Std. 12: Finance
- Std. 13: Facilities and Grounds
- Std. 14: Safety and Risk Management

# Emphasizing Student Safety, Belonging, and School Sustainability

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## Safety and Risk Management

The school implements policies and procedures that promote a safe and healthy school environment consistent with its mission and has a comprehensive approach to risk management.

- The school's health services are adequate to meet the needs of its students and support the prevention of illness and injury.
- The school thoroughly and regularly trains all personnel in the legal requirements of mandated reporting and fosters a culture of appropriate emotional and physical boundaries between students and employees.
- The school ensures that all employees who supervise students have undergone thorough background and reference checks as mandated by state law.
- The school has a reporting procedure in place to respond to and document incidents regarding health and safety of students and employees.
- The school has a formal process for regularly reviewing and evaluating exposure, risk, and coverage.
- The school has comprehensive, written security and crisis management plans that are followed by employees.
- The school maintains appropriate adult-student supervision during school hours and all school-sponsored student activities and programs.
- The school ensures student and adult safety during on- and off-campus activities.

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging are interwoven across Standards, ensuring that they are reflected in all programs and operations.**

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

### **Mission and Philosophy:**

The school attends to the quality of life of all members of the community and takes actions to create an equitable, inclusive, safe, and just environment.

- How does the school assess, monitor, and address inclusion and belonging for each and every community member?
- Provide examples of ways in which the school promotes an equitable, inclusive, safe, and just community.

### **Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Life:**

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

- Provide examples of ways the school provides opportunities for students to become knowledgeable about and/or engaged in issues of equity and justice in society at large.
- Does the school have an articulated curriculum that addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion? If not, how does the school address these topics?
- How are diversity, equity, and inclusion considered and reflected in curriculum, allocation of school resources, educational materials, library collections, and use of facilities?
- How are the school's curriculum, teaching practices, and educational resources evaluated through an anti-bias, anti-racist lens?

### **Student Well-Being:**

The program content, teaching methods, and assessment practices accommodate student developmental levels, learning styles, and abilities.

- How does the school ensure it has sufficient resources to address the abilities, learning styles, developmental needs, and cultural backgrounds of the students enrolled?

The school recognizes differences within the student body such as gender, learning style or ability, race, age, ethnicity, family background, family structure, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and religious practice and has appropriate systems to assess, plan for, and respond to how aspects of student identity impact well-being.

- How does the school assess how identity impacts student well-being?
- Describe how the school prepares staff to understand how aspects of student identity impact well-being, and to support students appropriately.
- Describe how the school affirms student identities.

## **School sustainability is assured through strong governance and fiscal management.**

The school's board and leadership operate in a collaborative partnership that provides effective oversight, strategic vision, and resource development to sustain and promote the school's mission and philosophy.

The school practices effective financial management, and its financial operations, resources, planning, and oversight are adequate to support the school's mission and sustain its long-term viability and stability.

- The administration implements sound fiscal practices and procedures, including the development of a board-approved annual operating and capital budget, multi-year budget projections, appropriate controls, and the execution of an annual audit.
- The board and administration work collaboratively and strategically to ensure the development and implementation of appropriate policies, practices, and processes for the sustainable, long-term financial management of the school.
- The board and administration engage in periodic benchmarking to assess factors that could impact the school's financial health.

# Accountability & Improvement

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- In December 2021, AISNE hosted our own decennial re-accreditation process.
- The visiting team spent two days with various community members across the AISNE landscape.
- Recommendations and commendations in the final report.



*“Perhaps most importantly, the Visiting Team experienced at every turn a distinct and deep human connection fostered by AISNE among its many stakeholders.”*  
—Team Report

# Affordability of AISNE Accreditation

An independent school with < than 100 students and < than \$1m in revenue can expect to pay \$1,445 in AISNE membership dues and accreditation fees annually.

AISNE’s membership dues are based on a school’s program revenue (*as of 2022*)

An annual accreditation fee is based on enrollment:

From	To	Dues
-	1,000,000	1,080
1,000,000	3,000,000	1,320
3,000,000	5,000,000	1,910
5,000,000	7,000,000	2,787
7,000,000	10,000,000	3,725
10,000,000	15,000,000	5,080
15,000,000	20,000,000	6,747
20,000,000	30,000,000	9,174
30,000,000	45,000,000	12,930
45,000,000	75,000,000	15,105

Enrollment Bands	FY19 Fees	FY20 Fees	FY21 Fees	FY22 Fees
Under 99	\$335.00	\$345.00	\$355.00	\$365.00
100-199	\$455.00	\$468.00	\$480.00	\$494.00
200-299	\$530.00	\$546.00	\$565.00	\$581.00
300-399	\$655.00	\$675.00	\$695.00	\$715.00
Over 400	\$718.00	\$740.00	\$760.00	10 \$782.00



# Resources

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- [Full AISNE Standards & Indicators - Self-Study Template](#)
- [AISNE DEI-related Standards & Indicators](#)
- [Evaluating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion on Campus](#)  
*(from AISNE School Accreditation Handbook)*
- [VT Education Quality Standards Presentation](#)

# Thank you!

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