Accreditation in Independent Schools: Perceptions of the Goals and Outcomes Associated with the Process

---

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Curry School of Education

University of Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

---

by

Charles H. Jones III

May 2014

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this descriptive study was to explore internal stakeholders' (teacher, administrator, or trustee) perceptions regarding 15 critical outcomes – in both theory ("stated goals") and practice ("outcomes") – associated with the accreditation process within their independent schools. Further, the research attempted to gauge whether or not these perceptions were influenced by respondents' roles within the school or time since the accreditation visit occurred. All respondents were from National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS)-member institutions that had undergone a site visit within the past two years.

Fifteen question sets reflecting the stated goals of accreditation were made into a web-based survey. Each question set contained three questions about 15 stated goals of the accreditation process; a stated goals section, an outcome section, and a qualitative section allowing for a comment on why an outcome had fallen short of "very much achieved" during the practical application of the accreditation timeline.

The sample used for the research included 255 individuals from 24 separate schools within one of the largest NAIS-affiliated regional accrediting associations. Percentages, medians, and ranks were used to analyze data while Pearson's chi-squared was used to test for independence of responses with the independent variables. Limited amounts of qualitative data were collected to contextualize quantitative analysis.

Three major conclusions were reached. First, questions arose as to whether or not

independent-school trustees were sufficiently engaged in the accreditation process. Second, the number of stated goals perceived as critical and the perceived difficulty of certain outcomes to be achieved were both of concern. Third, the question sets "student achievement" and "teacher learning and teaching" ranked lowest of all despite their foundational nature and recent national prominence in the era of No Child Left Behind.

Department of Leadership, Foundations, & Policy
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation, "Accreditation in Independent Schools: Perceptions of Outcomes Associated with the Process," has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

_____
Dr. Mark Hampton, Advisor & Chair

_____
Dr. Tonya Moon, Committee Member

_____
Dr. Michelle Young, Committee Member

_____Date

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to any number of people in my life:

To all the good people who helped me to love being an educator, and there are many of them out there. I'd like to specifically thank two of my old bosses, Sandy Ainslie and Hank Battle.

To Sheilah Sprouse, who has (regrettably for her) been with me every step of the way.

To my siblings, Hopie and Harry, who never judged this adventure too harshly . . .

To my children Charlie, Reece, and Cooper, who may always be reminded of Teddy Roosevelt's quote that, "nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty… I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life . . . "

To my wife Shea – who deserves no blame over how long it took to finish this doctorate – my unconditional love and thanks both in general and for continuing to support and needle me in this endeavor. I know I am a lucky man.

Last, to my parents Charlie and Hope Jones, a debt of gratitude that will never be repaid. Though this race was too long and I staggered far too many times, I managed to stride across the finish line; that I both ran and finished in the first place is because of your love, resolve, and support for your children to find success in their chosen path in life.

"It's not the first time, nor yet the last time"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the University of Virginia for allowing me to finish this 15+ year doctoral journey. It will not be forgotten . . .

I would also like to acknowledge my first advisor, Dr. Margaret Grogan, for being all that I could have hoped for back in my new-to-administration days.

I would like to thank my dissertation committee of Dr. Tonya Moon and Dr. Michelle Young, specifically for giving me sage advice with my proposal.

I would like to thank my editor, Jennifer Cleland Green.

Last, I would like to properly thank my "new" advisor – Dr. Mark Hampton – for his patience, advice, humility, and friendship since we first met in the summer of 2011. I could go on at great length about my respect for Dr. Hampton, but I will simply note that The University is quite lucky to have him . . .

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES & EXHIBITS

Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the great mistakes is to judge policies and programs by their intentions rather than their results.

Milton Friedman, December 7, 1975

Education is widely regarded as important to the history, life, discourse, and overall fabric of the American people, yet those not intimately involved in the profession of education are frequently at odds with how existing educational processes are evaluated – let alone whether these processes are effective – in order to ensure that they have the necessary societal outcomes (Worthen and Sanders, 1987). While there are numerous evaluative mechanisms in place in the United States education system, including government oversight, public scrutiny of educational outcomes, and critiques of the systems by which educators receive their credentials, accreditation is the primary means by which educational institutions are evaluated throughout the United States system of education (USDE, 2014). Federal and state governments are clearly vested in these systems by which the standards and quality of public schools and both public and private institutions of higher education are measured (Eaton, 2009a), yet there is one type of educational institution that has relatively no government oversight and a mission and clientele that may hold it accountable in far different ways: the independent school. Without the means to triangulate quality through the more systemic mechanisms in place for other institutions of education, the process by which independent schools are accredited necessarily relies on self-reflection relative to stated

missions and intended outcomes. Accepting this, how does the independent-school community know that it is using a robust and evaluative tool that is both valid for and adaptive to the needs of a wide array of mission-driven schools as they aspire to improve?

Background

The rise of the science of evaluation over the last century is a testament to its benefits, whether the focus is a program, product, system, institution, theory, model, student, or employee (Stufflebeam, 2001b). This does not come as a surprise, as without the process of evaluation, there is no way to distinguish the worthwhile from the worthless (Scriven, 1991). Nonetheless, despite evidence illustrating how man has engaged in it, evaluation is alternately ubiquitous, complex, misemployed, and confrontational, among other attributes (Scriven, 1991; Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1991).

The use of evaluation and its underlying research is commonplace within essentially every industry. Evaluation is of particular importance to the sciences, since it is the objectivity and systematic precision of scientific inquiry – a process where evaluation is a critical component – that separates good science from pseudoscience (Scriven, 1991). As public accountability has grown in the United States and monies necessary for research have become more scarce, the United States government has become a major proponent of evaluation in varied aspects of its work and funding streams. Not surprisingly, numerous government agencies promote the common benefits of evaluation, many of which are transferable across various industries. This includes the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's (USDHUD) criteria for meaningful evaluation: (USDHUD, 2011): (1) obtain objective information about

performance and how it can be improved, (2) provide objective evidence that a program is effective, demonstrating positive outcomes to funding sources and the community, (3) improve program effectiveness and create opportunities for programs to share information with other similar programs, (4) make a case for continued funding and attract new funding sources, (5) use evidence of program success, and (6) share the results of evaluation, revealing benefits to others outside of the program.

As mentioned, aspects of evaluation can be found in almost all areas of human life, particularly in the workplace. From Socratic dialogue to appellate court decisions, from book and movie reviews to public protest, evaluation takes many faces (Scriven, 1991). Evaluation can range from the micro scale, for instance, in the form of a job evaluation or anonymous phone call rating a truck driver's performance, to the macro scale, in such forms as a national election, a publicly traded company's credit rating, or engineering quality controls in affected industries. The intellectual process of evaluation – sitting atop Bloom's original Taxonomy and second atop the revised cognitive domain – is shared by all disciplines, and as Scriven (1991) notes, with rational thought in general.

In American education, the process of accreditation is generally the mechanism for evaluation and improvement at the school and system levels. To be clear, accreditation is not solely an evaluation, and conversely educational evaluation is not bounded by accreditation. However, they are intrinsically linked with one another. Since accreditation has grown alongside nearly all types of American schooling, its associations have "developed procedures for evaluating institutions or programs to determine whether or not they are operating at basic levels of quality" (USDE, 2014, p. 2). AdvancED – the largest accrediting consortium in the United States – summarizes why accreditation

matters and in doing so highlights its evaluative core (AdvancED, 2011a). Among these reasons are the institution's choice, in and of itself, to commit to standards of educational excellence; the expectation of quality that comes through becoming accredited; the experience of a process that is both valid and sustainable; the exposure to research and best practices; and the external and objective validation of the areas in which the institution is performing well, along with areas calling for continuous improvement. Finally, AdvancED (2011a) notes that effective accreditation systems are continuously being upgraded and improved.

Theoretically, an institution can choose whether or not to seek accreditation. However, public schools are typically mandated by state regulations to be accredited either by the state itself, a regional accrediting body, or both. Non-public schools, defined by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) as "a variety of religious and other (nonpublic) schools . . . these schools of choice have been part of the fabric of American education since colonial days (and) have been established to meet the demand to support parents' differing beliefs about how their children should be educated" (USDE, 2007), have more options when it comes to accreditation, having choice in whether or not to become accredited, and in which of the multiple organizations in the non-public accrediting space they choose as their accrediting body. Within independent schools, a subsection of non-public schools that characteristically both are 501(c)3 nonprofit corporate entities and have long-developed aims to be seen at the apex of American education, the role of accreditation is foundational yet unscrutinized. Independent schools own themselves, as opposed to public schools which are owned by the government and parochial schools which are owned by churches; as such, they govern

and finance themselves, largely through charging tuition, raising funds, and securing income from endowments, as opposed to public schools which are typically funded through the government and parochial schools which are subsidized by the church (NAIS, 2011a).

To be a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), most schools are accredited by one of 19 regional or state governing bodies that comprise the NAIS Commission on Accreditation (CoA). While it is technically possible to be a member of NAIS with accreditation by one of five regional accrediting associations that accredit higher education and public K-12 institutions, it is estimated that only about 1 to 2% of independent schools are accredited in this manner. Each CoA member association has slightly different criteria for the cycle of renewal, the visiting team, the standards to be met, the school's self-study, and the review by the association (NAIS, 2011c). Furthermore, the 19 accrediting bodies must agree to 23 core standards within their proprietary accreditation model "which define the culture of independent schools and relate directly to the first of the 'Criteria of Effective Accreditation'" (NAIS, 2009). Furthermore, these 19 associations must then agree to the 26 Criteria of Effective Accreditation. Since accreditation is the cornerstone of NAIS membership, the benefits of accreditation to member schools are generally considered self-evident. Typical of prescriptive literature available on accreditation for independent schools, the Commission on American and International Schools Abroad (CAISA), an agency within the New England Association of Colleges and Schools (NEACS), lists the benefits of accreditation as follows (NEACS, 2011b): (1) The Award of Accreditation Itself, (2) The Opportunity for Self-Assessment, (3) The Opportunity for Improved Intra-

School Contact and Understanding, (4) An Evaluation by Peers, (5) A Plan for the Future, and (6) Confirmation of the School's Needs.

Because independent schools value their autonomy and mission-driven work and enjoy little internal or external quality oversight other than self-determination, self-actualization, and the forces of a free market, accreditation sits at the crossroads of self-regulation and objectivity for them (accreditation official, personal communication, February 6, 2014). Not surprising, NAIS carefully defines accreditation in that light:

> The purpose of accreditation is to promote the education and well-being of all children in independent schools . . . (it) both respects the diversity of independent schools and promotes school improvement . . . (and) protects the public interest by assessing the school's congruence with its own mission and its compliance with association standards (NAIS, 2011c).

As such, accreditation may be more important conceptually to independent schools than it is to their public counterparts. Since there is no other established alternative to accreditation as an accepted tool of school evaluation in the world of independent schools, two options present themselves: create a new instrument of school evaluation or improve the one that already exists.

Problem Statement

A review of accreditation literature shows that there is very little, if any, research that informs educators about the perceptions of independent-school internal stakeholders (faculty, administrators, and trustees) on outcomes associated with the accreditation process. This is both surprising and important because these are the people who shoulder the added responsibilities and stress associated with accreditation while still effectively

maintaining their normal, non-accreditation year workload. In addition, they stand to benefit most from outcomes associated with accreditation. As mentioned above, and as will be discussed again in Chapter 2's review of the literature, accreditation conceptually sits at the crossroads of self-regulation and objectivity, and therefore is vital to understand whether or not the internal stakeholders perceive the process as accomplishing what it claims to accomplish. Furthermore, part of the improvement process is improving the process itself; existing literature that specifically addresses improving the process of effective accreditation is almost entirely prescriptive and not research-based. A cardinal feature of well-designed processes – the feedback loop – is not foundational in the accreditation mechanism, at least not with the independent-school models.

Within independent schools, the accreditation process and its development are of particular interest, as schools of this nature rely solely on reputation, tuition, fundraising, and endowments to continue to operate, all of which can be affected by the accreditation process and its outcomes. Aside from enlightened self-interest of appearing to the local marketplace as an institution that values self-improvement, the only motivation to improve a school may come from the accreditation process (accreditation official, personal communication, February 6, 2014). Further complicating this work, the relatively bureaucratic atmosphere of the process might be particularly vexing to those in independent schools who perhaps may be less accustomed to standard-driven interaction.

Regrettably, there is no descriptive research available on independent-school accreditation available to the public. There may be some research done by the

accrediting associations for their own use, yet officials interviewed for this study acknowledge that there is little if any substantive work on this issue. Only one study – NEACS (2005) – was publicly available and comprehensive. It surveyed its member schools to "examine the impact of accreditation on the quality of education at member institutions." The survey was only of school leaders, so it is difficult to verify that others within their community share their impressions of the value of accreditation. Also, respondents were not asked to reflect upon or evaluate any of NEACS' stated goals or outcomes of accreditation within the survey. Most other research regarding accreditation relates to higher education.

There is ample prescriptive material that explains what should be occurring with independent-school accreditation. NAIS and their 19 accrediting bodies offer differing levels of guidance on the process, value, and meaning of accreditation, and all provide a substantive trail of paperwork on the mechanics of the process. However, there is a lack of descriptive research of accreditation is within the independent-school world, and none specific to improving the process. In other words, an independent-school practitioner can find out what accreditation *should be*, but beyond their own experiences will find it difficult to know what it looks like in practice and whether or not the practice matches up with the theory (accreditation official, personal communication, February 6, 2014).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore internal stakeholders' (see Appendix A for a definition of this and other terms used in the study) perceptions regarding critical outcomes associated with the accreditation process in independent schools – derived from declarative statements of benefit, purpose, and reason by the 19 NAIS accrediting

agencies – in both theory and practice, and to gauge whether or not these perceptions are influenced by respondents' roles within the school or time since the accreditation visit occurred.

Research Questions

Question 1: What are the perceptions of internal stakeholders regarding outcomes associated with the accreditation process in both theory and practice?

Question 2: Are there significant differences between the perceptions of internal stakeholder groups regarding outcomes associated with the accreditation process in both theory and practice?

Question 3: Are there significant differences between the perceptions of internal stakeholders at schools less than one year out from their accreditation visit and internal stakeholders at schools past one year but not yet past two years from their accreditation visit regarding outcomes associated with the accreditation process in both theory and practice?

Rationale/Justification

According to practitioners in independent-school accreditation, each of the 19 accrediting associations beneath the NAIS umbrella continues to wrestle with ways to make its processes more effective (NAIS official, SAIS official, personal communication, May 2012-July 2012). Any initial steps to provide meaningful reflection on the independent-school accreditation model can only be of assistance to those who are willing to hear them. Accordingly, evidence whether a feedback loop (such as the perceptions of internal constituents) exists in the first place, if the feedback loop can be

improved, and clues as to where such improvement might occur will be of substantive benefit to the accrediting groups. Compounding this, since the accreditation process is the accepted means of evaluating schools and school systems within the world of education, research should be evident in the literature that evaluation of the accrediting process – specifically within independent schools – would improve the process, which in turn would improve schooling overall. This study will address the deficit of knowledge that currently exists regarding independent-school accreditation.

At a more nuanced level, there is always a fear that schools engage in a process because they "have to" rather than because they "want to," or that, as a college professor mentioned to Harvey (2004), "accreditation is most valued by those who are closest to not having it (the marginal)" (p. 220). The desire to have a process offering improvement is not enough, as an improved process still lacks effectiveness if it fails to invite into a deeper engagement those who stand to benefit by it. By better understanding the awarenesses and perceptions of stakeholders, accrediting bodies can design better methods to create a "want to" attitude towards the process.

Given that there are approximately 33,366 non-public schools in the United States and 1,500 schools within the NAIS universe (Broughman, Swaim, and Hryczaniuk, 2011), it would be helpful for both the independent school and accreditation communities to know what perceptions of accreditation exist for a spectrum of schools and what perceived needs and problems exist that are not currently being addressed. Furthermore, between NAIS and a number of independent-school consultants, such information would be essential when providing boards and administrators with information, workshops, in-house consultations on roles, responsibilities, effectiveness, and evaluations. Last, NAIS

as an organization is constantly probing its members for ways to provide more value, so adding to their corporate body of research will be of help to all member organizations.

Research that provides baseline data on the process of independent-school accreditation stands to be of some benefit to NAIS and its accrediting bodies, boards, heads of school, administrators, and those who provide them any services as means for creating a picture of current practices and needs. Since the NAIS Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices (Appendix B) and the NAIS Model Core Standards (Appendix C) are the basic building blocks for independent-school accreditation, using them as a central component in this study provides the entire community with a natural confluence of shared expectations regardless of the school's location or size, or the type of student.

This study may also lead to further exploration of independent-school governance, an area sorely lacking in descriptive research. Such exploration could also produce enormous benefits for accreditation, not only of independent schools, but throughout education.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The following review takes root in what can only be termed a paucity of literature on independent schools, specifically with consideration to accreditation. While remarking on research regarding independent-school trustees, Baldwin and Hughes' (1995) statement "what is remarkable about the body of research on independent schools' board of trustees is how little of it there is" (p. 55) proves truthful for nearly any facet of independent education deserving of research. The material currently available is largely prescriptive, with writings based on observations of "how something should be done" based on common lore or on casual opinion translated into expertise, rather than compelling evidence of success. Organizations like NAIS and their 19 accrediting associations, as well as numerous consulting firms, provide this sector with an ample amount of literature and consulting services of this kind, either through membership or for a fee. However the descriptive research done by these organizations is generally observational or survey-driven and neither readily available to the general public nor quoted as a source in their prescriptive literature.

There are explanations worth considering as to why there is not a more substantial battery of research in this area. The obvious one is that there are not many independent schools relative to public and even parochial schools, and thus, the lack of research is merely the injustice of being considered insignificant in comparison to the others. This is a simple explanation, and like similar easy answers, it does not quite take the whole picture into account. The issue is further complicated when considering that independent-school faculties (1) tend to come from highly competitive colleges where

they have demonstrated a notable level of achievement (NAIS, 2000d) and, (2) despite educating only a small number of American children, they are larger in context, given their noticeably lower student-to-teacher ratio of 8.8 to 1 as compared to the 17.2 to 1 ratio of public schools (NAIS, 2000f).

Another explanation centers on the lack of researchers involved in independent-school research, coupled with the relatively small population of professionals associated with independent schools in the first place. To wit, until recently only Teachers College of Columbia University specifically awarded a degree in independent school leadership (Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education and Human Development added independent-school specific programs in 2014; see Peabody, 2014): it houses the Klingenstein Center for Independent School Education (Klingenstein Center, 2014). Not surprisingly, the majority of research in this field comes from NAIS itself.

Regarding dissertations themselves, fewer graduate programs focusing on independent-school research leads to fewer dissertations. Last, the majority of research having to do with independent-school governance centers on the heads of schools. Since the few scholars who research independent schools are probably headmasters or those training to become headmasters, it follows that they would focus on what is most immediate to them.

Despite this hurdle regarding the dearth of independent-school research, there are other places to look for helpful literature. There is diverse research on aspects of evaluation, and a curious breadth and quality of literature within the field of higher education accreditation. Accordingly, this review is divided into three parts: The first is a conceptual review of evaluation with a sub-section on feedback loops; the second is an

examination of accreditation with a focus on accreditation in higher education, which enjoys a larger literature base, and can serve as a close substitute for independent-school accreditation because of its wide array of missions, school characteristics (including being "private"), and styles of accreditation; and the third is an overview of independent schools.

Evaluation

Evaluation, or at least aspects of the evaluation process, is as ancient as man himself. Many elementary textbooks are full of examples of ancient man working through a gradual process of improving the circumstances of his life and the hardships of his environment, concerning weaponry, eating utensils, music, and communication. In fact, a number of texts employ this concept as the central theme within the rise of ancient civilizations. As Michael Scriven (1991) writes in the *Evaluation Thesaurus*, evaluation may be a new discipline, but it is an ancient practice.

Scriven (1991) states that "evaluation is the process of determining the merit, worth, and value of things, and evaluations are the products of that process" (p. 1). Fournier defines evaluation in the *Encyclopedia of Evaluation* (2005) as:

> An applied inquiry process for collecting and synthesizing evidence that culminates in conclusions about the state of affairs, value, merit, worth, significance, or quality of a program, product, person, policy, proposal, or plan. Conclusions made in evaluations encompass both an empirical aspect (that something is the case) and a normative aspect (judgment about the value of something). It is the value feature that distinguishes evaluation from other types of inquiry . . . (p. 140)

Patton (2011) simplifies the complexity of evaluation into three questions: What? So what? Now What? The original "what?" wishes to compile evidence around what is offered, what occurred, what changed, what the outcomes and impacts were (anticipated or not), along with what the documented costs and benefits have been. The "so what?" delves deeper into the process, looking to make meaning, judgments, and comparisons from the evidence. Last, in the "now what?" phase, "what actions flow from the findings and interpretation of the findings?" (Patton, 2011, p. 3).

In today's world, particularly with the advent of the Internet, evaluation is commonplace and constant in almost every aspect of a person's life, whether it be of a product, process, or person (Scriven, 1991, p. 4). Sitting at a computer, a person can visit a website that evaluates accessories and best available pricing for his or her phone, then access a bulletin board that has semi-anonymous evaluations of nearly every doctor in the area, then switch searches to view an online dating service to evaluate potential spouses.

This ready access to evaluation is a relatively new phenomenon. Beyond the typical Data-gathering and synthesis found in the examples above, the discipline of evaluation is concerned not only with what the data says, but also with the premises and standards involved within the research process. The ubiquity of evaluation across all types of industries has existed in varying degrees for some time, but only in the past few years has common practice within the evaluation process seemingly begun to overlap. To some degree, the discipline of evaluation is still in flux. Scriven (1991) terms it the "paradoxical status of evaluation" (p. 9), writing that even within the concept of inquiry's supposed home of academia, (1) evaluation is not a topic in any standard school or college subject, although it is the highest level of cognitive function in Bloom's

Taxonomy (the second highest level as of 2000 in the revised Bloom's Taxonomy); (2) evaluation is the only skill needed in every branch of science, but it is not listed anywhere within the skills associated with scientific method; and (3) evaluation is the process used to accept and keep every student in college, but its legitimacy is denied in the social sciences by the very professors who use evaluations. Nonetheless, maturation of evaluation as a discipline can be seen can be seen through the ways in which it has spawned new models and its own academic discipline in the intervening decades.

Feedback Loops. Within these new models of evaluation terms and theories abound regarding learning organizations – the term "feedback loop" arguably being the most popular – but the central theme behind them is clear: successful organizations find ways both to live with dynamic complexity in their organization and marketplace and to overcome poor linkages between cause and effect (Kim & Senge, 1994). Kim and Senge (1994) discuss the need for a robust organizational learning cycle that, despite the association of many pitfalls, provides opportunity to improve the organization and the cycle itself. In so doing, organizations can moderate the complexities and create alternate linkages between cause and effect. This can only be done when organizations pursue and accept data that stimulate change in action, a single feedback loop, or in both action and modeling, a double feedback loop (Kim & Senge, 1994).

Argyris (1976, 1977, 2004) amplifies the term "double-loop learning." The example of a thermostat is often used to explain both the use and need of the double loop (Argyris, 1977). If a thermostat is programmed to maintain 72 degrees in a house, it constantly monitors and corrects the temperature. This is a single loop. The thermometer does not know how to gauge whether or not 72 degrees is really what the homeowner

wants on the day in question, nor does it know whether or not that particular setting is appropriate for the time of year, among various other concerns fundamental to its existence and program. A double loop would be needed to accomplish these more complex assessments. Argyris (1976, 1977) argues that most organizations use single loops to provide feedback and learn (if they have a loop to begin with), and that the second loop – focused on the progression of gathering, processing, reflection upon, and action with data – is far more critical to organizations.

To bolster this viewpoint, Argyris (2004) presents two action theories, "Model I" and "Model II." Model I is indicative of what the author has found in most single loop organizations and processes and is marked by four defining values, including (1) achieve your intended purpose; (2) maximize winning and minimize losing; (3) suppress negative feelings; and (4) behave according to what you consider rational. According to Argyris (2004), "Model I tells individuals to craft their positions, evaluations, and attributions in ways that inhibit inquiries into and tests of them with the use of independent logic. The consequences of these Model I strategies are likely to be defensiveness, misunderstanding, and self-fulfilling and self-sealing processes" (p. 391). In Model I, stability is achieved at the expense of learning.

Like Model I, Model II works to advocate, evaluate, and attribute. However, Model II adds a second loop, by through which it fosters valid information, informed choice, and vigilant monitoring of the implementation of the choice to learn and correct. "Double-loop learning focuses on detecting and correcting errors in the designs of the master programs that underlie the routines . . . double-loop learning is at the heart of the distinction, often made in the literature, between doing something right and doing the

right thing." (Argyris, 2004, p. 393).

Accreditation

AdvancED is the corporate entity that comprises three of the largest accrediting bodies in the United States – the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement, and the Northwest Accreditation Commission – and accredits a range of schools and programs from the primary to professional level. AdvancED defines accreditation as:

> A voluntary method of quality assurance developed more than 100 years ago by American universities and secondary schools, and designed primarily to distinguish schools adhering to a set of educational standards. The accreditation process is also known in terms of its ability to effectively drive student performance and continuous improvement in education (2011a, para. 1).

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), the umbrella organization that links and coordinates roughly 60 accrediting agencies throughout the United States, defines accreditation as "a process of external quality review created and used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities and programs for quality assurance and quality improvement" (Eaton, 2009a, p. 1). The process has expanded markedly since schools began to seek accreditation in the late 1800s, but at its heart, accreditation is the accepted method to evaluate the educational effectiveness of an institution or system through standards, protocols, and research-grounded processes ultimately to judge how well the broad spectrum of attributes within a specified environment are combining to impact positively student learning.

At the core of accreditation processes are the agreed-upon standards espoused by individual accrediting agencies. As noted by former Executive Vice President of The Council on Higher Education Accreditation, Dr. Fred Hayward,

> Standards are the backbone, the foundation, of our quality assurance and accreditation process. They set out what we value . . . what we define as appropriate and expected from our institutions, administrators, faculty members, and students. And they tell others what we expect of our institutions. Standards are in many respects the public face of . . . education in terms of what is expected by way of quality and performance (Hayward, 2010, p. 261).

In addition to the standards, critical components of accreditation include the process used to evaluate whether standards are being met and the personnel used to administer the accreditation. To be fair, there is a growing viewpoint in accreditation that standards measure educational inputs and that there has been great progress toward embracing more qualitative educational outputs such as AdvancED Indicator 3.1: "The school's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level" (AdvancED, 2011b, p. 4). But, while evident in some of the processes that follow, these outputs have yet to replace standards as foundational.

While the steps of individual accreditation processes can differ, they typically involve most if not all of the following steps (Eaton, 2009a). Within a predetermined accreditation cycle varying from a few years to ten years, institutions will prepare a self-study to gauge performance, react to agency standards, and often discuss plans for future

improvement. These institutions will then host a site visit from a team of peers (usually volunteers) who will use the visit and self-study to make a recommendation to the accrediting body as to whether the institution should be (re)accredited. Once the agency has made a judgment, accredited institutions will undergo periodic external reviews in the "off years" between site visits to ensure progress is being made on stated goals. This process has now reached a level of ubiquity such that there are published academic articles (see Wood, 2006) reviewing the proper process for planning the process.

History of Accreditation. Brittingham (2009) argues that three distinct actions of the United States government early in the nation's history provided a powerful impetus for how American accreditation developed. First, because decisions on education were purposefully left to the states and to the people, a wide array of colleges and schools were established, providing diversity in schooling that would have been far less likely had the industry been centralized and/or regulated. In concert with this diversity came the enlightened "social interest" (Brittingham, 2009, p. 10) of filling the regulation void by setting minimum standards for those in education by those in education. Brittingham argues that the second action involved Dartmouth v. Woodward in 1819, when the Supreme Court prohibited the state of New Hampshire from taking over Dartmouth College thus fortifying the rights of private institutions to grow and prosper without government interference. Furthermore, the United States Congress was given the opportunity to establish a national university, but after considering the possibility, declined the opportunity. In so doing the United States government removed a major impediment to the natural proliferation of educational institutions.

Brittingham (2009) further espouses that the genesis of American accreditation

was interwoven with past and current American cultural mores. Quoting de Tocqueville, she states that Americans form associations to deal with matters big and small, and accrediting agencies are a good example of this (p. 11). The American values of entrepreneurship and problem-solving are seen in symbiosis between the welcome expanse of school typology and the use of accreditation to make sense of it. By having a robust accreditation process, the level of trust in such a wide array of schools grows, and with a more complicated selection of schools comes the need to improve and strengthen the accreditation process. Additionally, the cultural ideal of a citizen being able to achieve a self-identified goal is only enhanced with the breadth and quality of institutions that can meet individual needs resulting from this symbiosis. Brittingham notes that accreditation is also grounded in the American tradition of volunteerism. Last, she writes that Americans believe in self-improvement, and that accreditation is not just about meeting desired standards but "an analytical exercise showing that the institution has the capacity and inclination for honest self-assessment, the basis of self-regulation and continuous improvement" (p. 11).

It is from these cultural and historical influences that the story of American accreditation begins in the 1880s, when regional groups of educators began forming in order to provide a stronger voice regarding government intervention, as well as to sort out the chaos associated with American education at the time, from elementary school through the university level (Middle States, 2011). At the time, roughly one percent of college-aged men (ages 18-24) were enrolled in higher education (Snyder, 1993), so the impetus to assemble was not one that came from a national platform. In fact, the first accrediting association – the New England Association of Colleges and Schools, founded

in 1885 – began when college presidents and secondary school headmasters gathered "to consider their mutual interests in ensuring that preparatory and secondary school graduates were ready for college" (Brittingham, 2009, p. 11).

Originally designed to standardize and regulate admissions and education standards, the new accrediting groups grew in influence and control, and from these roots came the novel concepts of peer-review and self-regulation that are still seen today (Miller & SACS, 1998). The United States government and schools themselves placed a great deal of emphasis on accreditation at the university level (Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools, 2011). Over time, the organic process of consolidation has occurred, leaving strong regional and national accrediting agencies that specialize in particular schools based on location, religious affiliation, vocation, and level of education, among other differentiations. Though Eaton (2009a) writes specifically about higher education, the truth of her statement is easily applicable to accreditation at other levels of education: "the U.S. accreditation structure is decentralized and complex, mirroring the decentralization and complexity of American higher education" (p. 2).

Institutional Accreditation in Higher Education

Accreditation in higher education is in turn both robust and vexing. As Jones (2002) notes, the "primary audience for accreditation initially was the academy itself" (p. 1). This origin also meant that different parts of the academy wanted more precise control over their individual arenas, which has resulted in a complicated and complex assortment of agencies, standards, acronyms, and affiliations. Emblematic of current conditions, universities and colleges can be accredited by one association, departments and schools within those colleges and universities accredited by another association, and

programs within the departments and schools accredited by yet another. Specialized and vocational higher education institutions can be accredited by an entirely different group altogether. A basic typology of formal and informal accreditation can be found in an essay by Brown (1974). Among the types identified are:

1. regional accrediting agencies that review the mission, standards, and planning of whole institutions based on location, or as Harvey (2009) states "institutional accreditation is designed to ensure that institutions of dubious merit do not become established as bona fide higher education institutions" (p. 210)
2. specialized accrediting agencies that review programs and departments in a similar but more narrowly focused vein to the regional agencies
3. franchising agencies, such as an honorary societies or foundations, that perform due diligence on an institution before buttressing a reputation with their name, prestige, and finances
4. government and licensing agencies ranging from a state Board of Education (obvious) to a state Board of Alcoholic Beverages (not as obvious)
5. professional associations and other special interest groups (Brown mentions the American Association of University Professors)
6. auditing agencies for grants, non-profit status, government research, and others
7. statewide coordinating agencies (typically public institutions)
8. legislative and other task forces typically created to address particular concerns
9. courts of law
10. new hires, management consultants, polls and ratings, and guidebooks.

Eaton (2009a) refines this list into four groups, including (1) regional accreditors of public and private mostly nonprofit degree-granting two- and four-year institutions, (2) national faith-related accreditors that review doctrinally-based, mostly nonprofit degree-granting institutions, (3) national career-related accreditors that oversee mainly for-profit, career-based single-focus institutions that may or may not confer degrees, and (4) programmatic accreditors that assess specific programs, professions, and freestanding schools.

To some degree, each association and its process share some qualities regardless of level, location, or focus. According to a meta-analysis of 11 national quality control assurance agencies performed by Hayward (2010, pp. 264-6), these aspects include:

1. The quality of educational services: What do most standards attempt to measure and what do most current accreditation processes measure?
2. Educational level or appropriateness: Are courses challenging but not too challenging? Are courses relevant to both the spirit of the discipline and the practicality of the current job market?
3. Fulfillment of an institution's mission: Is there evidence that the institution is delivering on its mission statement?
4. Accountability: In particular with public institutions, are schools prudent with monies provided to them?
5. Value for money: What is the cost per student and is it appropriate given the perceived value of the institution?
6. Improvement of the institution or system: Are measures in place to check for future improvement?

7. Guarantor of minimum standards: More of a European quality in the past, can the institution meet national/industry/academic standards regardless of structure, function, and/or size?
8. Assuring student learning outcomes: Much in the same vein as No Child Left Behind legislation for younger children, what is the evidence of outcomes for students in an institution's program and are they appropriate for the current state of the workplace?
9. Institutional productivity and efficiency: Arm in arm with accountability, how productive and efficient is an institution given the "squishy" nature of its mission (for example, research or work with young adults)?
10. Relevance of instruction: Do graduates of an institution meet the needs of employers in their chosen field?
11. Consumer protection: Given the rise in "diploma mills," can accreditation serve as a benefit to consumers despite the diversity and quantity of institutions under its umbrella?

In an attempt to make higher education accreditation more ably serve the public interest, Eaton (2006) simplifies this list to five items, including academic quality, value for money, efficiency and effectiveness, student protection, and transparency. She argues that since a degree in higher education has now become "a mass endeavor and essential to more and more of the population," these qualities have moved from a shared commitment held by educators to a critical component of satisfying the public interest (Eaton, 2006). In other words, these shared qualities have both a history of application and the power to be the driving force behind change in what Sandmann et al. (2009) call the "historical 'covenant' between (public) higher education and its stakeholders" (p. 15). Among the

stakeholders included in a review of accreditation as a quality assurance tool were the federal government, state governments, employers, professions, and students and their parents (Jones, 2002).

These aspects reflect current commonalities between accreditation in different countries, but the distinctions between countries can only add another multiplier effect to the breadth of accreditation aspects, given each country's history, culture, and view of pedagogy. In making sense of this range, Brittingham (2009) writes that higher education is different in the United States relative to peer countries in three distinct areas. First, accreditation is a nongovernmental, self-regulatory, peer review system. Per Eaton (2009a), "external quality review of higher education is a nongovernmental enterprise" (p. 2). Second, nearly all of the work is done by volunteers. Last, accreditation relies on the candor of institutions to assess themselves against a set of standards, viewed in the light of their mission, and identify their strengths and concerns, using the process itself for improvement. These three areas of difference are by no means insignificant, when one considers that accrediting agencies in the United States are responsible for assuring the public and elected officials that American higher education has the capacity to prepare its students for success in a more competitive world. Importantly, these agencies also influence the expenditure of roughly 100 billion dollars in federal financial aid to help all citizens potentially benefit from this capacity (Eaton, 2006).

Since 1996, higher education accreditation has been coordinated in the United States by CHEA. CHEA provides a voice and clearinghouse of ideas for its members, but it also provides the service of "accrediting the accreditors" (Eaton, 2009a, p. 9), reflecting the idea of Argyris's (1976, 1977, 2004) double-loop learning. Eaton argues

that accrediting agencies are accountable to the institutions and programs they accredit as well as to the public and government that invest in higher education. However, the agencies undergo a third process titled "recognition" to triangulate this metaevaluative phenomenon. Eaton (2009a) describes this as a process similar to accreditation in which each agency desiring recognition undertakes a self-evaluation based on criteria created either by CHEA or the United States Department of Education (USDE). Broad standards for CHEA include "advance academic quality, demonstrate accountability, encourage purposeful change and needed improvement, employ appropriate and fair procedures in decision making, continually reassess accreditation practices and sustain fiscal stability" (Eaton, 2009a, p. 6).

The USDE standards are slightly different and are focused on grasping whether or not an agency can be trusted with accrediting schools that in turn will qualify for federal funds for student financial aid, among other things. USDE standards include gauging success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution's mission, curricula, faculty, facilities (including equipment and supplies), fiscal and administrative capacity as appropriate to the specified scale of operations, student support services, recruiting and (re)admissions practices (including academic calendars, catalogs, publications, grading and advertising), measures of program length and the objectives of the degrees or credentials offered, record of student complaints received by or available to USDE, and record of compliance with the institution's program responsibilities under Title IV of 2008's Higher Education Act based on the most recent student loan default rate data, the results of financial or compliance audits, program reviews and any other information provided (Eaton, 2009a, p. 8). Either or both CHEA and USDE will make a

site visit to the accreditor, then award or deny recognition (Eaton, 2009a).

Within the recognition cycle, CHEA (review every 10 years) and USDE (review every 5 years) may periodically review agencies in "off years" to maintain recognition (Eaton, 2009a). Thus, in addition to any actions taken by the accrediting agencies themselves or the schools and programs they accredit, the process of accreditation in United States higher education has the potential for multiple points of feedback (since many schools receive federal funds, both USDE and CHEA would look to provide recognition) in addition to the complementary aspect of "competing" accreditation processes on the institutional, department, and programmatic levels. Despite this overlapping, there are various perceived deficiencies in American higher education accreditation – which lead to calls for greater transparency and less bureaucracy (USDE, 2006).

Literature on accreditation as a feedback tool in higher education – aside from the "recognition" process – are largely prescriptive and policy-driven. There is varied research on accreditation at the program level, but a good part of it is of debatable merit. At the macro level, the discussion regarding accreditation in Europe is slightly different given the distinctive aspects of the process across multiple countries with differing levels of governmental involvement with education. Harvey and Williams (2010) provide a meta-analysis of the past 15 years of literature on the concept of "quality" in higher education with a largely European focus. They observe accreditation to be merely one component of the discussion of quality. Within this framework, the review finds accreditation lacking with regard to quality enhancement, despite its focus on quality control. Furthermore, there is a sense that European accreditation – aside from some

established systems in Eastern Europe – is in a more nascent stage than its American counterpart.

Kristensen (2010) echoes many of the concerns noted by Harvey and Williams (2010), but places special emphasis on the underdevelopment of internal structures in European institutions to meet standards of quality and ensure future improvement. One aspect of Kristensen's analysis is that many of these institutions have feedback loops in place, but they have yet to close them in a way that will be fruitful. Last, Van Kemenade et al. (2008) discuss attempts to improve quality in European higher education, but ultimately lament the perception that the external check that accreditation can provide is seen more as a tool of control rather one of improvement (similarly mentioned by Harvey, 2004).

Program Accreditation in Higher Education

While program-specific accreditation is not uniformly identical in process and outcome to institutional accreditation, the two types of accreditation share enough in common to warrant showcasing research regarding perceptions of the process. To that end, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) provides a helpful view into program-specific accreditation. The AASCB is well-established; as Lowrie and Willmott (2009) note, the AASCB describes itself as "the world's leader in the advancement of management education" (p. 412).

Roller, Andrews, and Bovee (2003) surveyed 122 deans of business schools accredited by the AASCB (411 were asked to participate, a 29.6% response rate) and two other competing business school accrediting agencies. The survey's explicit purpose was to examine the deans' perceptions of the costs and benefits of accreditations and to

understand better the deans' reasons for pursuing accreditation. The scale ranged from 1 ("of no benefit") to 5 ("of great benefit"). By far the strongest perceived benefit of accreditation was "accountability for program improvements" (mean of 4.31, SD of .81 which was the lowest). "Opportunities to share techniques/successes/challenges with other institutions facing similar issues" was the second highest (mean of 3.95, SD of 0.86), while "increased bargaining leverage for university resources" (mean of 3.36, SD of 1.31) and "increased bargaining leverage for faculty compensation" (mean of 3.01, SD of 1.25) were rated the two lowest. In comparison, deans rated their own internal goals higher on a five-point scale with a smaller standard deviation on average. The authors performed a factor analysis and identified three perceived factors of the accreditation process from the deans' perspective: the benefit of external reputation and competitiveness, the benefit of resource leverage, and the benefit of program development.

Also of interest in Roller et al.'s (2003) research were the reasons for not seeking accreditation. Twenty-four percent of respondents were not seeking accreditation, and as a whole they rated the perceived benefits lower than their accredited counterparts. The expressed goals of all the institutions were substantially similar, perhaps indicating that those schools not seeking accreditation must not feel as though accreditation will help them reach their goals. Other reasons for not pursuing accreditation included cost, effort, and lack of (internal or external) stakeholder pressure to do so.

Roberts, Johnson, and Groesbeck (2004) surveyed 221 professors from 30 recently accredited AACSB schools to determine faculty perceptions regarding the impact and value of accreditation. Respondents answered 40 questions on a Likert scale

(ranging from -2 "strongly disagree" to 2 "strongly agree") to ascertain their perceptions and five other questions to add descriptive professional data. In general, faculty were positive about the overall benefits of accreditation (mean of 1.06, SD of 0.94), the effort involved having been worth it (mean of 0.78, SD of 1.08), and their willingness to recommend it (mean of 0.66, SD of 1.08). Interestingly, these general categories were among the most positive responses with far more negative reactions to more focused questions. Among the positive responses involved: helping the business school compete for financial resources (mean of 0.73), quality of students (mean of 0.83), appropriate faculty (mean of 0.77), and a quality program (mean of 0.72). The overall benefit to students was also perceived positively (mean of 0.60).

Professors had negative perceptions about a number of facets of accreditation, including: faculty-administration relationships (mean of -0.23, again on a scale of -2 to 2), improvement of the overall working environment (mean of -0.23), the effort put into courses I teach (mean of -0.31), the effort I put into university service (mean of -0.35), the effort I put into helping members of the public (mean of -0.46), the effort I put into upgrading my credentials (mean of -0.22), the reward of my job (mean of -0.29), a better working relationship with other faculty (mean of -0.21), a better working relationship with administrators (mean of -0.28), and classroom instruction being generally better (mean of -0.25) were all below a mean of -0.20. There were further negative perceptions around the effects on and differences between faculty hired before and after AACSB accreditation. Robert et al. surmise that though the AACSB accreditation process has moved to a theoretically mission-driven model, there is still a disconnect between attitudes of academics and desired effects.

Other research on the AASCB includes Lowrie and Willmott (2009) and Brennan and Austin (2003). Lowrie and Willmott (2009) explore the deficiencies of its accreditation process. As the AASCB moves to a more global stature and accredits worldwide, they express concern that the mission-driven foundation of the AASCB process is at odds with the reality of its conservative peer review system that cannot incorporate differences found outside of American business education.

Brennan and Austin (2003) discuss some of those same pitfalls in a qualitative study describing their attempt to merge three autonomous business schools into one that in turn becomes accredited by AASCB. With the help of a total quality management system to guide the integration and maturation toward accreditation status, the end result was a positive one. Obstacles listed for administrators and faculty to achieve AASCB accreditation (and ostensibly generalizable to other processes) included inertia from both groups' perception of the complexity of the project across multiple campus locations, structural issues particular to the schools that inhibit decision-making and reporting, the increase in workload for faculty, the expected rise in overall and individual accountability for faculty, consistency across disciplines, and the adherence to the accreditation after the initial push has waned.

There are other studies relating to internal perceptions of the benefit of program accreditation that are worth mentioning, namely Seamon (2010) and Prather (2007). Specific to programs in mass journalism, they performed a meta-analysis on literature exploring the benefit of being accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism & Mass Communications (ACEJMC). The ACEJMC accredited roughly 25% of available journalism and mass communications programs. Seamon concludes

that (1) some studies find the accreditation process detrimental to class hours in the discipline, (2) a stated goal of increasing diversity did not help in terms of the applicant pool but did help with other expectations such as recruiting faculty, (3) the quality of newswriting is unaffected whether accredited or not, and (4) overall the perception of ACEJMC accreditation benefit exceeds its actual benefit. Given that only 25% of available programs pursue accreditation in the first place, the author questions whether or not the tools to measure effectiveness are in place to fulfill "the hollow promise of a superior education" (p. 18).

Prather (2007) examines the perception of value in the specialized accreditation by the Aviation Accreditation Board International (AABI). His dissertation explores why so few collegiate aviation programs are accredited by the only accrediting body in the discipline (the AABI). Prather had 99 potential responding institutions with an overall response rate of 56%, both representing those accredited by AABI (n=21) and non-accredited ones (n=35). When AABI-accredited institutions were asked why they pursue accreditation, respondents replied that the status and prestige of earning the accreditation seal was paramount, with particular agreement that attracting and keeping quality students and faculty along with meeting high standards were also benefits (p. 57). Non-accredited institutions, when asked why they had not pursued accreditation, indicated that the cost in terms of time, effort and money was not worth the overall benefit (p. 59). Among schools that had begun the process of initial accreditation, factors that were typically either the prestige/credibility or a mandate from administration (p. 62). Among all responding institutions, there was a perception that AABI accreditation was a benefit to the accredited institution and that it would be beneficial if more programs were

accredited. Last, there was general disagreement among and between students, faculty, and employers as to their level of awareness about the AABI and the perceived value of its accreditation.

A review of the perceptions specific faculty regarding accreditation in higher education was performed by Harvey in 2004. Surveying 53 faculty and administrators mostly from the United Kingdom (but with a number from the United States) and supplementing with the limited available literature on perceptions of higher education accreditation, Harvey provides a qualitative review from the eyes of internal constituents. The first finding was a belief that professional accreditation was important not necessarily because the faculty saw it as such, but because better students feared not having it would limit their job opportunities. There was some discussion as to whether accreditation provides uniformity within subject areas and also whether or not such uniformity was a desirable outcome.

The tension between academia and practitioners was another subject that arose, with specific emphasis on the notion that practical concerns from employers and government officials left the "tail wagging the dog" (p. 216). Use of accreditation as a platform to innovate was praised, but tempering that excitement was a sense of having a "watchdog" and a "hoop to jump through" for sake of compliance even when the requirement served no public interest (p. 217). The chemistry and qualifications of the visiting team proved to be a point of great variance, as was the perception of accreditation requirements, seen in the best cases as bureaucratic and in worst cases as unnecessary control. These negative opinions were greatly influenced by the inefficiencies of the overlapping and unoptimized multiple accreditation processes earlier discussed by Brown

(1974). Harvey ends by summarizing the pervasive sense among academics that accreditation bears to bear the abstract notion of a formal authorizing power in both benign and more overbearing forms (Harvey, 2004, p. 222).

Independent Schools

As mentioned above, a review of a portion of the research on accreditation in higher education is necessary because the amount of research regarding independent schools is small; regarding accreditation in independent schools, the total is nearly nonexistent. Since there are parallels between both the complexity of either type of institution as well as the issues they share, it then follows that such a review would be prudent. However, there is literature on independent schools that will be helpful to examine. Independent Schools are part of a larger group called "non-public schools" (USDE, 2007) that include Catholic institutions (often called "parochial schools" denoting a tie to a parish, although not all Catholic schools are tied to a parish and not all parish schools are Catholic) along with other religious and sectarian schools. What follows reviews the history of independent schools, their characteristics, and what is available regarding accreditation within them.

History of Independent Schools. Independent schools enjoy a long and rich history in the United States, a history nearly as old as the country itself (Collegiate School, 2014, "About Us: History" para. 1). Their atmosphere and quality of education have become the object of myth, though a majority of independent schools today would argue that while they share many of the positive attributes allotted to independent-school lore, the reality of what is in practice is far different than what the public perceives (NAIS, 2006). One thing is certain: independent schools, in a quiet manner, have

produced an inordinate amount of America's finest statesmen, military officers, businessmen, actors, doctors, and other professionals (Kane, 1992a; Khalsa, 1994).

There can be confusion about what makes an independent school "independent." Powell (1999) notes that independent became a descriptor came about in the 1930s and 1940s, for two primary reasons. The first reason provided a means of separation, since in the past, every school that was non-public was private, with both terms still synonymous today (Powell, 1999). However, leaders of the more elite schools wanted to separate themselves from this multitude, which was ever-dominated by a growing pool of parochial schools with which they felt little kinship. The second reason came about because of connotations of the word "private," including wealth and exclusivity, in Depression-Era America; these associations proved to be a death knell, so "independent" became the term of choice to emphasize these institutions' place in the world of education (Powell, 1999).

"Independent" was the logical choice for several other reasons as well. First, it promoted the safe virtue of freedom, a historically American ideal (Powell, 1999). Principally, though, it drew a direct line to the style of governance that nearly all of these schools practiced: an autonomous board of trustees headed independent schools, a body that held final authority over all matters pertaining to the school (NAIS, 2012a). Public schools had to answer to appointed, and now often elected, local boards, and Catholic schools were responsible to either a diocesan or parochial board, save for the rarity of a totally independent Catholic institution (Haney, 2010).

The irony of the move to adopt the label of "independent" is that while these schools may have crowded together beneath its umbrella as a means of survival, they

have since become as diverse in style and curriculum as might be imagined, given their chosen moniker (NAIS, 2012a). What had been a collection of older, well-established, single-gender boarding schools, joined with occasional day schools, has now become as wide an array of types and methodologies as exist in the world of education.

Like other schools, independent schools can be found in urban, suburban, and rural locations alike. Otherwise, there is little similarity at quick glance. Independent schools are relatively small in comparison to public schools, with an average of 502 students per NAIS-member school (NAIS, 2013a). Schools can be sectarian or non-sectarian. Within denominations, they can be Roman Catholic, Amish, Baptist, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Quaker, Presbyterian, Seventh-Day Adventist, Jewish, Islamic, non-sectarian Christian, and many other faith orientations (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). They can have lower, middle, and upper schools in nearly every combination, save lower and upper together. The schools, based on their missions, can vary by types of curriculum and extracurricular activities, the needs and developmental abilities of the children they serve, backgrounds and credential of teachers, and admissions policies to optimize these and other characteristics, all "without state mandates regarding curriculum, textbooks, and testing" (NAIS, 2012a). Since independent schools often follow in the footsteps of established colleges, they tend to respond more to colleges' progressive curricula, as was the case for broadening educational subjects in independent schools to include non-western cultures and works by women and minorities (Kane, 1992b).

Furthermore, the trend within independent schools over the last three decades has been toward change. Prior to the mid-1960s, 62 percent of independent schools were

single-gender. Since then, through school merges and changes of mission, the numbers have altered drastically: now 84 percent of independent schools are co-educational (NAIS, 1999c). The number of minority students and faculty has also grown over this time period, reaching a high of 27.6 percent of students and 13.8 percent of faculty in the 2012-13 school year (NAIS, 2013a), as has the percentage of international students from 2.1% (NAIS, 2005) to 3.2% in 2013 (NAIS, 2013a). Finally, the number of students receiving need-based financial aid has grown to roughly 23%, with a median grant amount of $11,599 (NAIS, 2013b). Yet these changes have not affected enrollment in the least. In fact, over the last two decades, enrollment in NAIS schools has jumped from 315,000 to over 544,000 (Archer, 1999; NAIS, 2013a) while the overall non-public school population in terms of raw numbers and percentage has declined over the same time period (Ewert, 2013). As Pearl Kane (1993) summarizes,

> An observer would quickly note that the complexions of the students were no longer uniform and discover that the children represent various religious groups and socioeconomic strata . . . as a result they are becoming increasingly important in American education. As the schools become more relevant and influential, one might reasonably argue that the golden age of independent schools is not past; it has arrived (pp. 4-5).

Powell (1999) goes further, positing that as a result of the aforementioned changes in independent schools, "(public) school reform today embraces most of its elements, from highly visible successes . . . to the explosive charter school movement. Even reformers suspicious of excessive decentralization . . . find the independent school story applicable" (p. 43). Powell's school reform elements include, but are not limited to,

higher expectations, more requirements, focused institutional missions, smaller schools and class sizes, schools viewed as communities, extension beyond the classroom into students' private and familial lives, school-site management, and decentralization of decision-making.

Characteristics of Independent Schools. Within this divergence of tradition, style, curriculum, location, and influence, there are six characteristics that define all independent schools: self-supporting, self-governing, teaching self-defined curricula, educating self-selected students, employing self-selected faculty, and having small school size (Kane, 1992b; NAIS, 2007). Since all of these are either directly or indirectly within the purview of accreditation, each should be examined in greater depth.

Independent schools are supported financially through various means. All NAIS independent schools hold IRS not-for-profit, tax-exempt status, IRS code 501 (c)(3), and rely primarily on tuition to finance the annual budget. In the 2012-13 school year, the median tuition at boarding schools was just under $46,800, while the day-school median was approximately $20,612 (NAIS, 2013a). Annual giving from alumni, corporate matching, parents, foundations, and grants supplement the cost of an education, with tuition paying for 80% of a day-school education, 74% of a day-boarding combination, and merely 52% of a strictly residential one (NAIS, 1999b). Within annual giving, alumni account for 30%, parents 30%, organizations 14%, and others comprise the rest. Trustees alone provide nearly 13% of annual gifts. Because independent schools draw revenue from variable sources of income, they have a high level of accountability to their primary sources of money, namely parents and alumni: "Independent schools must satisfy their clients, and they are obliged to demonstrate successful outcomes" (Kane,

1992b, pp. 8-9).

A self-defined curriculum is an asset of independent schools, as it is one place where a school's mission can truly be applied in its day-to-day operations. Because most schools aim to send their students to the most competitive colleges and universities, curricula are generally highly academic and rigorous, even in so-called second-chance schools whose students have already encountered academic or disciplinary setbacks at another institution (Kane, 1992b; Kraushaar, 1972). Otherwise, curriculum can be influenced by a school's denomination, if applicable, tradition, location, headmaster, parent body, and on occasion, state mandates.

With regard to curriculum, faculty are often perceived to have great leeway and autonomy to adapt it how they see fit, as evidenced by a NAIS (2000d) paper suggesting that 74% of independent-school teachers participate in most of the important decisions in their school, whereas only 58% of public school teachers responded similarly. Two other facets of a curriculum can usually be found in independent schools: character and physical development (Kane, 1992b; NAIS, 2013b). It is not unheard of find schools promoting three or four pillars of education in marketing literature, which are almost invariably intellectual, moral, and physical, with the fourth being spiritual at denominational institutions.

Having self-selected students is often a point of contention with public schools, where all who attend must be served (Choy, 1997). Independent schools are able to create admissions standards and thereby choose whom to accept and not to accept as pupils, but this is a two-way street. Students and their families, in turn, can choose their school, creating a schooling marketplace (Choy, 1997). As might be imagined, students

who are able to select a school tend to have more invested in the school they choose. To that end, attrition averaged 9.93%, with the most common reason given for leaving a school being geographic location (NAIS, 2004). Self-selection of students also means having to endure economic downturns that affect the affordability of an independent-school education. Last, student self-selection forces schools to reap what they sow, or bear the brunt of a drop in applications if the public begins to question an institution's value (NAIS, 2004).

The independent-school characteristic of self-selected faculty is also a two-way street. Teachers tend to come from highly selective undergraduate institutions, and most if not all teachers of younger students are certified while many teachers of older students are not (NAIS, 2000d). NAIS markets that independent-school faculty "usually teach in their areas of expertise and are passionate about what they do," while in return they can teach students who have a greater likelihood "completing a bachelor's degree or graduate degree" than peer students (NAIS, 2012b). Independent-school teachers typically earn less pay than their public school counterparts, but they have smaller classes, more autonomy, perceived stronger faculty cooperation, and greater stake in school decisions (Choy, 1997; NAIS, 2000d). Even with less pay, NAIS faculty report spending more time on their jobs (NAIS, 2000d).

Probably the most widely known characteristic of independent schools is their size. Independent schools have a smaller student body – the average enrollment is 502 students and the median is 396 students (NAIS, 2013a) with public schools being over twice as large in terms of these statistics. Regardless of its influence on academics, a smaller school encourages close connections with students (NAIS, 2012b). As evidence

of these characteristics of independent schools, NAIS espouses the theory that mutual selection of school and student combined with small school size creates increased opportunity for a close-knit community (NAIS, 2012b).

Regarding the sixth characteristic, self-governance, the Independent School Association of the Central States's *Primer for Trustees* (1993) summarizes:

> Though an independent school may have a religious affiliation, it is the independence of the board of trustees that distinguishes the form of governance from that of other schools. The trustees choose a chief administrator, to whom are delegated all aspects of the day-to-day operation of the school. In an independent school, the absence of bureaucracy allows a fluid organization in which the roles of administrators and teachers are not rigidly prescribed. Many administrators also teach, and many teachers do administrative work as department heads, admissions officers, or college counselors. The blurring of responsibilities between administrators and teachers may help to explain why most independent-school teachers are not unionized (p. 2).

There is an old, uncredited saying about recruiting trustees: each should provide at least two of the "three Ws," which are work, wisdom, and wealth. Kiki Johnson (NAIS, 1999a) also mentions the "three Ts:" time, treasure, and talent. Using either saying underlies the points of self-governance at independent schools. NAIS's *Trustee Handbook* (DeKuyper, 2007) is the preeminent prescriptive piece on independent-school trustees, and it condenses into one list the issues of self-governance. The list includes maintaining the school's mission and serving as fiduciaries of the school; stewardship of resources and fiscal responsibilities; the relationship with the headmaster and his or her selection,

support, nurturance, and evaluation of staff; board development, including recruitment, retention, recognition, and assessment; board organization, and the conduct of individual trustees. Furthermore, DeKuyper (2007) says there are three duties of conduct that are critical to both individual and collective success: The duty of care boils down to making good decisions with reasonable care, such as hiring the right people to execute the school's programs and mission, avoiding financial pitfalls, and guaranteeing school-wide safety; the duty of loyalty simply reminds the trustees that the institution itself comes before anything involved in the business of the school; and last, the duty of obedience requires trustees to remain true to the school's mission, thereby securing the integrity of the school and its board.

As is normally the case with any nonprofit organization, the independent-school board as a corporate body and as a collection of individual trustees is legally responsible for what the school does or does not do. Each trustee is liable for the actions of the board, regardless of whether or not they were present when a decision was made (DeKuyper, 2007). These decisions can be diffuse, since the board has a number of areas actively to oversee, including corporate law, internal policies and procedures, third-party contracts, regulations from all three levels of government, the school's financial and physical resources, and risk management. As DeKuyper (2007) encapsulates, trustees take on responsibility as caretakers for both the school and its goodwill when they join the board, whether they fully comprehend this duty or not. They must be ever-vigilant in their role as keepers of the school mission.

Accordingly, the perceived benefits of the accreditation process are important to independent schools, particularly with regard to the characteristics of being self-

supporting and self-governed while having a self-defined curriculum and self-selected faculty. Accreditation may be the best, and occasionally perhaps the only, way that schools can take objective measure of whether or not they are living up to what makes them both high quality and independent.

Accreditation in Independent Schools. NAIS membership can also be earned through accreditation by one of six regional accreditors that accredit public schools (NAIS, 2014). These include AdvancEd-member associations Southern Association of Schools and Colleges (SACS), the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA), and the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (NWCCU), as well as the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges (MSA) and aforementioned NAIS Council on Accreditation (CoA) member NEACS. However, accreditation of independent schools by regional accreditors is extremely uncommon: Recalling that NEACS is one of the 19 CoA associations, it is estimated that only 1-2% of NAIS schools are not accredited by at least one of the 19 CoA associations; for example, SACS – the largest of the 19 in terms of member schools – has only one school in its region that is a member of NAIS but not their association (NAIS official, personal communication, July 2012).

In order to provide some level of consistency and quality across accreditation processes, these 19 bodies comprise the NAIS Commission on Accreditation (again, CoA), the primary purpose of which is to "provide a vehicle by which member associations can cooperate and improve independent-school accreditation practices nationally ultimately enhancing the quality of education for children in our schools, and

to establish a credible assurance of the quality of these practices upon which NAIS and the public can rely" (NAIS, 2008a, p. 1). Members of CoA agree to abide by the NAIS Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices (NAIS, 2011) found in Appendix B, the NAIS Model Core Standards (NAIS, 2009) found in Appendix C, and other criteria mentioned in the membership application (NAIS, 2008a) found in Appendix E. Among the other membership criteria include (NAIS, 2008a, p. 1):

1. holding member association status in NAIS
2. having at least three years of experience as a fully functioning accrediting association
3. having an accrediting process with the primary purpose of reviewing and accrediting nonprofit independent elementary schools with minimally three consecutive primary and/or middle grades (defined as between grades one through eight) and/or independent secondary schools with minimally four consecutive grades
4. accrediting minimally 20 NAIS member schools
5. successfully completing a full review by the CoA

NAIS has created a treatise entitled *A Guide to Become a School of the Future* (NAIS, 2010) that sees NAIS accreditation moving toward even more qualitative measures to assess evidence of a thoughtful process and use of research to drive student learning within the mission of the school. Last, and critical to the essence of independent schools discussed below, NAIS (2011c) espouses an accreditation process that "respects differences in institutional populations, missions, and cultures, and fosters institutional change grounded in the judgment of practicing educators."

Given the critical relationship of accreditation to both NAIS and its accrediting agencies, there is a surprising lack of public dialog regarding either the necessity of or

work toward allowing the process to form a double feedback loop as described by Kim and Senge (1994) and advocated by Argyris (1976, 1977, 2004). The CoA does require its members to engage in the reflective work of "regular evaluation and review of its standards and accreditation process and solicits reports from schools and visiting teams on their experience with the process" (NAIS, 2008b, p. 2) within its "Criteria Checklist for Candidate Members" (found in Appendix F). However, the degree to which this occurs is at best uneven. Aside from indications of proprietary surveying and information-gathering done by some of the regional accrediting agencies, which varies greatly in terms of depth and subsequent utility (SAIS official, NJAIS official, AIMS official, personal conversations, October 2011 – March 2012), there is little evidence of research demonstrating that independent schools have considered creating a feedback loop to evaluate their evaluation. This marks a point of dissonance with public statements that effective accreditation systems are continuously being upgraded and improved (AdvancEd, 2011b). There is evidence that the CoA has had substantive discussions on how better to measure and improve the "value proposition" of accreditation within its own membership (NAIS official, personal conversation, March 2012), but the conversation has only recently resulted in an ad hoc committee to consider the question further.

As the only published research on independent-school accreditation, NEACS (2005) surveyed its member schools to "examine the impact of accreditation on the quality of education at member institutions." The survey asked representative leaders of all member institutions, including regional public schools, colleges, independent schools, vocational schools, and select international schools, to respond to questions regarding

their attitudes toward the NEACS accreditation process. The survey consisted of 31 close-ended and five open-ended questions with the expressed purpose of measuring the impact of accreditation on the quality of education at member institutions. The survey also intended to discern if there were differences in short-term versus long-term advantages as a result of the process, as well as to see if there were differences between various demographic types under a similar heading (for example, small versus large independent schools).

Key findings were not broken down by respondent category, so they represent the findings for all kindergarten through twelfth grade institutions surveyed. However, statistics for the independent-school sample are available within each set of key findings, so when they differ, an explanation will follow in italics. The key findings of the study are as follows (NEACS, 2005):

1. Over 90% of school leaders surveyed believe that participation in the accreditation process enhanced the overall quality of education at their school. Over three-quarters of the respondents believe that participation in accreditation improved the quality of classroom instruction. More than three-quarters of respondents agreed that participation in the accreditation process will improve teaching and learning at their school in the future (p. 4). *Independent-school responses were in line, although lowest agreement and by far the highest disagreement were with "participation in accreditation has improved the quality of classroom instruction."*
2. Over 80% of school leaders report that accreditation impacted school improvement in both the short-term and the long-term (p. 4).
3. Over two-thirds of school leaders indicated that they "would worry that the

educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in New England" (NEACS, 2005, p. 4).

4. More than two-thirds of school leaders surveyed agreed that participation in accreditation led to improvement in (p. 4-5):
    a. professional development training for teachers
    b. classroom and non-classroom environments, as well as the work environment
    c. school organization management
    d. school leadership.
5. More than 80% of school leaders surveyed believed that participation in accreditation resulted in better staff communication. Over two-thirds of these respondents agreed that participation in accreditation led to greater staff teamwork (p. 5).
6. Over 85% of school leaders surveyed agreed their school was fairly evaluated and the visiting team's recommendations were valid and thorough. Also, more than three-quarters of school leaders agreed their school received sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit. Most respondents also reported that their school was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit (p. 5).
7. When asked how accreditation impacted the quality of education provided at their schools, school leaders most often answered, from most to least frequently cited, that accreditation (pp. 8-11):
    a. improved instruction
    b. enabled schools to identify strengths and weaknesses
    c. improved organizational effectiveness and long-term planning
    d. fostered teamwork and collegiality

e. improved school resources

f. improved professional development

g. made school accountable

h. exposed school to new learning trends and innovations

i. increased community support for school initiatives

j. increased community and parental involvement

k. raised staff morale

l. led to better staffing decisions

m. resulted in more continuity and consistency, and

n. provided staff with exposure to peer evaluators.

Independent-school responses were much lower with "improved instruction" but considerably higher with "enabled schools to identify strengths and weaknesses"

8. Three-quarters of respondents from kindergarten through twelfth grade schools believed that participation in the accreditation process improved the quality of school resources, including technology, multimedia, and library resources (p. 11).

Overall, the report concludes that the NEACS has a positive impact on the quality of education at member schools. The survey does note that the number of qualitative responses is lower than the available quantitative responses. Furthermore, there is no available check on worth of the responses relative to the actual process; in other words, responses are clearly the perceptions of one person involved in a process that even NEACS (2011a) notes "engages the entire educational community in structured analysis, self-reflection, and planning."

Verges' (2005) research on the perceived benefits of accreditation to Catholic

schools as they " become full and respected partners in American education" (p. 47), despite comprising a separate but discrete subsection of the non-public school universe, provides some insight as well. 482 educators at Catholic schools within the southeastern United States (all members of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) were surveyed. Among the strongest responses was agreement with perceptions that accreditation improved the prospect of data to drive decisions and that it improved school facilities. The perceptions of the effects of accreditation on teaching were less acute. Faculty who had participated in accreditation elsewhere were likely to be more positive about the process than teachers who had not. Further, administrators tended to be far more positive about the process fostering school improvement and being worth the resources involved than the faculty. Of interest was the inverse relationship between level of education and perception of school improvement; the more educated a respondent was, the less school improvement was perceived. Also, there was a perception that accreditation helped strengthen the Catholic identity of the respondent's school, although there is no immediate explanation for this finding.

Gow (2011) explores the accreditation process in independent schools based on observations and centers the discussion on what would happen if the mythical Hogwarts School of Wizarding and Witchcraft in the famous *Harry Potter* series were put through such a process. He writes that accreditation is "often regarded as hollow drudgery and something of a proforma exercise" (Gow, 2011, p. 78), but that the process may hold the greatest potential for substantive innovation and change if educators allow the feedback loop to reflect on their own work and trials, much as it does on their students.

Gow's (2011) remarks crystalize the dilemma within the independent-school world. Institutional independence is historically and culturally celebrated, both between schools and within schools. Conversely, rational thought, organizational best practice, and the forces of a free market all demand some level of reflection, review, and improvement for the sake of being effective in carrying out the implicit and explicit mission of the school. The process of accreditation exists in the education industry to perform just this task, and presumably, it can be done in such a way as to keep the integrity of independence for each school. Yet it appears that there is a less-than-perfect fit between theory and practice. First, it is notable that the process of accreditation is not recognized as an evaluative panacea for the associations, schools, and institutions that are so reliant on it. It is worthy of this review because there is no readily available second option for external evaluation. Furthermore, use of a tool – either the single or double feedback loop – that could best improve this "fit" between independent schools and accreditation is, at least in the eyes of academic research, functionally nonexistent.

Without proper literature to illuminate this disconnect between theory and practice and the potential of any remedy, it follows that better understating of how the internal stakeholders at independent schools perceive aspects of the accreditation process would provide a valuable brick in the wall of research. Given the scarceness of research on accreditation in this subsection of education, this brick may very well be one of the first.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

The review of the literature in Chapter 2 demonstrates that there is a dearth of both theoretical and empirical literature regarding accreditation processes or outcomes in independent schools. Given the complexity and multi-faceted nature of any accreditation process in education, there are numerous points of departure for deeper inquiry into the nature of the accreditation process associated with independent schools. As noted in Chapter 1, this study will address the lack of scholarship in this area with the following three research questions, which seek to add to both the descriptive and comparative understanding of accreditation of independent schools.

Question 1: What are the perceptions of internal stakeholders regarding outcomes associated with the accreditation process in both theory and practice?

Question 2: Are there significant differences between the perceptions of internal stakeholder groups regarding outcomes associated with the accreditation process in both theory and practice?

Question 3: Are there significant differences between the perceptions of internal stakeholders at schools less than one year out from their accreditation visit and internal stakeholders at schools past one year but not yet past two years from their accreditation visit regarding outcomes associated with the accreditation process in both theory and practice?

As will be discussed more fully later in the instrumentation discussion, a web-based survey consisting of 15 multi-tiered questions was used to gather data. The data

from the 15 survey questions was analyzed in answering each of these research questions with the expectation that it would provide worthwhile comparative and descriptive detail.

Design

The design of the study was descriptive. Descriptive designs often use quantitative data to describe responses to questions as well as determine trends and distributions (Creswell, 2011). This study employed cross-sectional survey methodology. According to Creswell (2011), "surveys help describe the trends in a population or describe the relationship among variables or compare groups. Instances where surveys are most suitable are to assess trends or characteristics of a population; learn about individual attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and practices; evaluate the success or effectiveness of a program; or identify the needs of a community" (p. 585).

The independent variables within the study were the stakeholder role of respondent (teacher, administrator, or trustee), as well as time frame since the school's visit (one year or less, and more than one year to two years; the cap of no longer than two years removed was used as reasonable assurance that respondents could remember the process). The dependent variables were the perceptions of the respondents regarding the depth of outcomes associated with the accreditation process. The University of Virginia's Institutional Review Board (IRB for the Social and Behavioral Sciences) policies were integrated into the online survey and followed (as found in Appendix G).

Sample

Ideally, survey designs involve a representative sample of the population. In this study, that would have involved representative samples of all stakeholder groups from all NAIS-member schools who had recently undergone accreditation. Complicating matters,

each of the 19 associations provided limited access to where particular schools were in their respective accreditation cycles and no access to the constituencies at member schools, making a simple sampling methodology across NAIS schools untenable. Further, even if an accurate list of schools could have been created, multiple problems still existed due to the unobtainability of direct and accurate access to the population within these schools, including whether the researcher had an acceptable way of reaching all respondents or if there was any opportunity for face-to-face interaction as is recommended (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009).

To solve this issue of access, a convenience sample was identified. The proposed population for this study could have come from any assortment of NAIS-member independent schools, since there is an expectation that all of the schools have undergone an accreditation process following the 26 NAIS Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices. Because of its convenience to the researcher and its exposure to respondents, a single member association of NAIS's Commission on Accreditation (CoA) was used as the sample.

For the sake of negotiating access to respondents, the researcher identified an association that was willing to participate, thus providing limited access to its accreditation cycle and to the heads of school at qualifying institutions. While there was no way to provide evidence that the participating association (Association) was any more or less representative of NAIS as a whole and maintain its anonymity, at the time of this survey, the Association was in the top third of associations in terms of member schools, and its practices and policies were in line with NAIS. Accordingly, it was believed that the Association's heterogeneity (supporting evidence can be found in Appendix H) was

comparable to that of the NAIS membership in general, thus providing a suitable sample. Further, because this regional accrediting body has a wide dispersion geographically, any regional bias that may exist was minimized. As noted above, the focus within this accrediting body was on schools removed two years or less from their accreditation visit, the idea being that those surveyed will have had opportunity for reflection while still being close enough in time to remember the process. Because the time since accreditation was seen as critical in selecting the population of institutions to study, it seemed prudent to see if this variable had any effect of respondent perceptions of the accreditation process within the two-year window used to select institutions.

All NAIS-member schools of the Association within the two-year window (65 total) were chosen, with provisions made to remove any potential institution with which the researcher had a potential conflict (ultimately two schools were removed from the sample). To best describe and compare perceptions of the accreditation process within the broad scope of internal constituencies, all internal constituents from within these 65 independent schools were asked to participate. For purposes of this dissertation, an internal stakeholder was defined as a person who either was employed by the school (such as the head of school, the administration, and the faculty) or who bore the responsibility of its governance (such as the board of trustees), and as such was involved in or affected by any course of action taken by or directed toward the respective institution (see Appendix A). Accordingly, descriptive data were gleaned from three critical groups beneath this broad umbrella: faculty, administration, and the board of trustees. It should be noted that this sample design was not optimal and its limitations are presented later.

Instrumentation

Web-based surveys have become an acceptable means of research in an era of "ubiquitous computing," as online surveys hold the promise of overcoming many of the shortfalls found in face-to-face survey administration (Sue & Ritter, 2012). Accordingly, a web-based survey was composed of stated goals of accreditation generated from public declarations available from at least one of the 19 CoA members. For example, if AdvancED (2011a) stated on its website that parents and students would benefit from accreditation because they would "experience ease in transferring credits from one school to another," then a statement such as "participation in the accreditation process has led to awareness by families that accreditation allows for ease in transferring credits from one school to another" was considered as the basis for a question. A set of 29 such statements was originally compiled.

The process of content validity was partially integrated into the development of the stated goals. After public statements of the benefits and intended outcomes from the 19 NAIS accrediting bodies were compiled, they were put in survey form (found in Appendix I). Directors from four members of the CoA as well as the NAIS Vice President for Government and Community Relations were asked to review all 29 statements to ensure they were accurate measures of the construct in question (attesting emails can be provided if necessary). Each was also asked to provide feedback as they felt necessary which aided in providing statement distinction along with improved question development and survey speed.

Following analysis of distinctions among such statements, further development of the questions, and an appraisal of the speed with which the survey could be completed

with independent-school professionals as well as members of the faculty of the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education, the set was ultimately refined to a list of 15 stated goals (the list can be found in Appendix J). Each of the stated goals was then turned into a three-part question.

The process of refining the list from 29 questions to 15 question sets was straightforward and can be justified as follows: Four issues about the larger set of potential questions were raised by both the accreditation professionals and university faculty. First, they expressed concern that 29 questions were too many. Second, some of the original questions focused on respondent perceptions of their own interaction with the process ("has provided you meaningful involvement, "allowed you to make legitimate contributions," and "justified your time and effort"), making them qualitatively different than the other goals. Questions of this type were removed with anticipation that the new "question set" structure of the survey would likely reveal some of these same data. Third, because of concerns surrounding both clarity of language and perceived overlap between questions, some were collapsed into one question set (for example, discerning between "academic achievement" and "academic environment"). Last, some of the questions were considered too limited in scope even if they were a stated goal (per the earlier example, "awareness by our families that accreditation allows for ease in transferring credits from one school to another").

Two introductory questions were included to collect demographic information needed to answer the research questions: name of school, which identified whether the accreditation was performed either one year or less, or more than one year to two years ago, and role within the school (teacher, administrator, or trustee). Also, an email

address was provided at the end of the survey should any participant wish to contact the researcher to elaborate further on his or her accreditation experience, with the hope that any such information would provide rich qualitative insight into the survey results.

Each of the 15 stated goals had a question set comprised of up to three parts (Part I, Part II, and Part III, see Exhibit 1 below; the entire survey is available in Appendix K). Part I asked the respondents whether or not they agreed "in theory" that a particular outcome was critical to accreditation by selecting either "I agree" or "I do not agree." If respondents chose "I agree," they then moved to Part II which began with the outcome "During my school's recent accreditation" and asked the respondents to answer "This critical outcome was very much achieved," "This critical outcome was only partially achieved," or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved" in relation to the theoretical outcome in Part I. If respondents answered "I do not agree" in Part I, they skipped directly to Part I of the next question. Last, only when a respondent answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved," or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved" in Part II did they move to Part III.

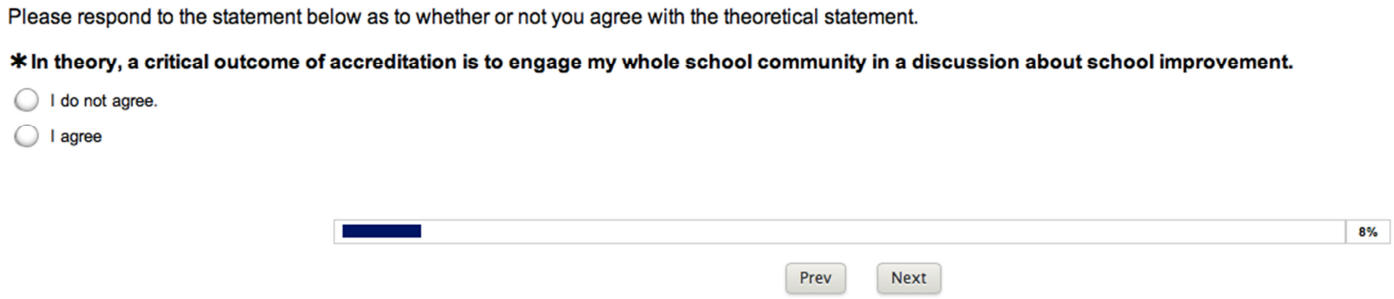
Part III was a response box allowing written comments of up to 500 characters with the expectation that some important qualitative insight might be gained from respondents while they reflected upon why the theoretically important outcome had fallen short of "very much achieved" during the practical application of the accreditation timeline. A question preceded the response box with the question-specific prompt "What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to . . ."

The choice to limit Part III responses to those responding “This critical outcome was only partially achieved” or “This critical outcome was not at all achieved” was made early in the survey’s design and was based on two considerations. First, Part III was added as a way to gain greater insight into why respondents might not perceive a particular stated goal to have been achieved, and, with this intent, it did not make sense to ask respondents who felt that a goal had been “very much achieved” to respond or why a stated goal was or was not critical in the first place. Second, concerns about the length of time required to complete the survey led to the decision to allow those who felt that goals had very much been achieved to skip this response for each question set.

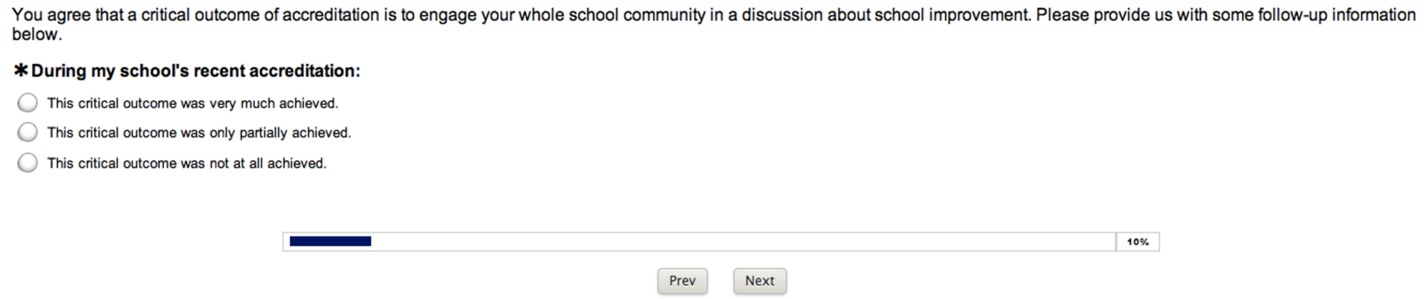
Once all 15 questions were finished, respondents were given an opportunity to withdraw one last time before completing the survey.

Exhibit 1: Question Set for a Sample Stated Goal

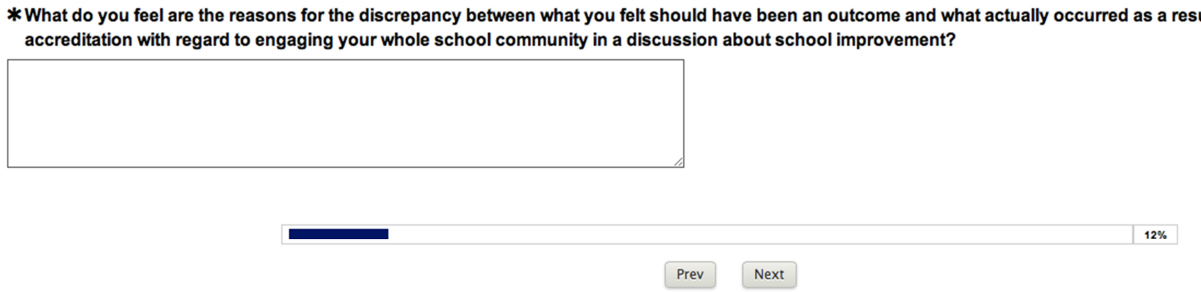
Part I



Part II



Part III



Data Collection Procedures

In an effort to notify potential independent participants of the study and to recruit those schools for participation, a notice was placed in the Association's February 2013 newsletter stating, "Select schools that meet specific criteria may be asked to participate in a university research study examining perceptions surrounding accreditation. If you are selected (via email), please participate." Next, a pre-notification email was sent by an Association official to heads of school within the participating Association to make them aware of the survey and allow them to take initial steps to familiarize their faculty, administration, and trustees. Sue and Ritter (2012) have postulated that this kind of pre-notification helps establish the legitimacy of the project, builds trust in the process and leads to a higher response rate. Furthermore, other methodology as recommended by Sue and Ritter (2012) was used to bolster response rate.

Two weeks later, an official of the Association sent an email co-written by the researcher with a link to the survey (hosted by surveymonkey.com and in no way branded by the Association) along with text that detailed the purpose and rationale of the research to participating heads of school, who in turn were asked to forward the email to their respective trustees, administrators, and faculty. While this was not an optimal design for delivering a survey on the researcher's part, the access to respondents was a notable issue for every association contacted by the researcher and, given the substantive qualities of the Association, was a necessary trade-off for access. This explanatory email, in line with accepted survey methods (Creswell, 2011), addressed the importance of the participant, the purpose of the study, an assurance of anonymity, and connection to the University of Virginia as a Doctor of Education student. Additionally, as a means of

increasing the response rate, the email noted the approximate length of time it would take to finish the survey to reduce abandonment. Furthermore, all communications reminded respondents that they would "make a difference" by taking part in what could be important research upon which future decisions may rest (Sue & Ritter, 2012). An email address was provided to allow participants to contact the researcher anonymously. Two reminder emails were used by the researcher and the Association, and the survey was closed after five weeks once return rates were unaffected by the reminder emails sent by the researcher and representative of the Association.

Data Analysis

Question 1: What are the perceptions of internal stakeholders regarding outcomes associated with the accreditation process in both theory and practice?

Research Question 1 analyzed both theory (Part I) and practice (Part II) of the question sets using the descriptive statistical methods percentage, median, and rank within the 15 stated goals included in the survey.

Question 2: Are there significant differences between the perceptions of internal stakeholder groups regarding outcomes associated with the accreditation process in both theory and practice?

Question 3: Are there significant differences between the perceptions of internal stakeholders at schools less than one year out from their accreditation visit and internal stakeholders at schools past one year but not yet past two years from their accreditation visit regarding outcomes associated with the accreditation process in both theory and practice?

Question 2 looked at variation between the three "relationship to school" groups with each of the question sets (both Parts I and II), and then Question 3 examined the variation between the two "time since accreditation" groups (again, both Parts I and II). The mode of analysis for both questions was Pearson chi-squared. For the purposes of this research, the "test for independence" was used.

Qualitative information gleaned from Part III of each question set was used for purposes of discussion and elaboration in Chapters 4 and 5. Because the qualitative data were limited, a simple qualitative analysis based on Creswell's "six steps in the process of analyzing and interpreting qualitative data" (2011, chapter 7) was used. The data were separated by question set and then by "relationship to school" groups within each question set. Further, the data were separated into "time since accreditation" groups for Question Set 5 due to its significant chi-square "test for independence" result. Coding was used to build themes within subgroups and question sets as they presented themselves. Themes were then used to report findings in narrative form, with direct quotes to underpin each theme. Triangulation through individual and subgroup responses was used for validation. For a full accounting of the open-ended responses, see Appendix M.

Limitations of Research

Any type of non-experimental research shares many of the same limitations. Causation is limited in non-experimental methodology. More specific to the design of this research, since email and website surveys are voluntary, selection bias can be an issue since responses come only from respondents who choose to participate. In the same vein, since this convenience sample is intentional with regard to how participants are

reached, they in turn may be more at risk with response issues. Such potential coverage error can also be affected by convenient Internet access (Sue & Ritter, 2012), although this was not clearly anticipated as an issue with this research. Accordingly, results and generalizations that can be presented to the independent-school community, NAIS, and the accrediting bodies are limited to some degree by the response rate in general and potentially by stakeholder groups in particular. Response bias is also a potential limitation in surveys, as is nonresponse error in both the survey as a whole and its items in particular.

There are a number of dimensions to any evaluation performed, not limited to: the process itself, distinct aspects of the process, the people receiving the evaluation, the people performing the evaluation, the tool of evaluation directing the process, the time span involved in the process, and any feedback loops embedded in the process intended to improve the process. Because accreditation is a type of evaluation, it shares many of these dimensions. This survey reflected only one dimension of accreditation (perceptions of internal constituents who received the survey) on a limited portion (benefits and outcomes attributed to the process) of its process.

Regarding the accreditation process, each of the 19 accrediting agencies are autonomous entities unified by their collective relationship with NAIS. As such, there are allowable and expected differences in processes, qualities, administration, and the maturity of services among the agencies (NAIS, 2009). It should also be mentioned that among higher education faculty and practitioners alike, accreditation itself is not recognized as a perfect tool of evaluation and improvement, whether in independent schools or other areas of education.

In addition, there is always the chance for personal bias since the researcher has worked for schools accredited by no fewer than four of the CoA agencies and has been a participant on visiting teams for one of them. During initial efforts to ensure content validity, some of the experts polled to review the questions noted that while they would not necessarily use the language in the questions themselves, they were at a loss for improved verbiage without substantive consideration on their part (and they understood that a defining aspect of the research was to evaluate current public statements of benefit and outcome). Also, some of the survey questions – while typically broad in scope – asked respondents for their perceptions on qualities that are slow-developing in nature. For example, if qualities of improved introspection are slow to develop, respondents' weak perceptions of them may not accurately represent the qualities over a term longer than two years from the team visit. As mentioned above, since the researcher did not control the entire survey process – he ceded control to each participating head of school who then distributed the survey – there was no assurance that each participating school received information from the researcher and Association with the same consistency. Last, while the survey instrument was put through a process of content validity, it was still a new instrument, and as such, did not have an established record of validity and reliability.

Chapter 4: Results

As presented in Chapter 2, a review of accreditation literature showed that there was a paucity of research regarding the perceptions of independent-school internal stakeholders on outcomes associated with the accreditation process. Given that the internal stakeholders were the people who shouldered the added responsibilities and stress associated with accreditation and potentially stood to benefit greatly from outcomes associated with accreditation and their institution's improvement, it was necessary to know whether or not the internal stakeholders perceived the process as doing what it claims to do. Further, independent schools rely on a number of elements that can be affected by the accreditation process and its outcomes (for example, reputation, admissions, and financial concerns), and the only impetus for school improvement may come from the accreditation process, all of which further entangles the internal stakeholders. The goal of this study was to provide a solid first step in providing a depth of understanding around such perceptions. Accordingly, the goal of this chapter is to provide (1) a description of the sample used in the research, (2) a review of the research questions and how the data will be analyzed through them, and (3) the results of the analyses.

Description of the Sample

As described in Chapter 3, this study used a convenience sample of all schools that had undergone accreditation over a two-year window by an accrediting association within the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). This sample included all internal stakeholders from schools that did not decline the invitation to participate, which following the disqualification of two schools with which the researcher might have

a personal conflict, led to 63 potential participating schools. Two schools then declined to participate via an email from their head of school to the Association. Twenty-four separate schools had at least one respondent, with a total respondent number of 255. It is not known why the other 37 schools failed to have at least one individual participate. However, since the design of gaining access to the participants was non-optimal, this type of outcome was understandable.

Respondents were asked to identify the school with which they were affiliated for the sole purpose of accurately determining whether they belonged to the group of respondents who had experienced their site visit within the past year (82.1%) or in the group that had experienced their site visit between one and two years prior to the survey (17.8%). Respondents were also asked whether they were a teacher (56.8%), an administrator (28.2%), or a trustee (14.9%). While it was impossible to map these numbers against every type of NAIS school, characteristically these numbers indicated an overweighting of administrators and an underweighting of faculty. Further, while the total number of schools was balanced (32 schools within the past year, 29 over one year but not more than two years out), respondents were heavily weighted toward the most recent group (again, 82.1%).

Review of Research Questions and Data Analysis

The research questions guiding this work were as follows:

Question 1: What are the perceptions of internal stakeholders regarding outcomes associated with the accreditation process in both theory and practice?

Question 2: Are there significant differences between the perceptions of internal stakeholder groups regarding outcomes associated with the accreditation process in both theory and practice?

Question 3: Are there significant differences between the perceptions of internal stakeholders at schools less than one year out from their accreditation visit and internal stakeholders at schools past one year but not yet past two years from their accreditation visit regarding outcomes associated with the accreditation process in both theory and practice?

An item-by-item analysis of each question set incorporating Research Question 1 and Research Questions 2 and 3 as applicable was presented. To enhance the analysis, the qualitative feedback from Part III of each question set was integrated into the item-by-item analysis. Respondents were offered an email address should they wish to contact the researcher to elaborate further on Part III; no such emails were received. Respondent identification numbers were assigned to each respondent in the order the response was received and are referenced with any open-ended response cited (e.g., [#00]).

The analysis of Research Question 1 was based on information presented in Tables 1 and Figure 1 below, including both the percentage of respondents who "agree[d] that a particular stated goal [was], in theory, a critical outcome of the accreditation process" (%Agree) within the theoretical part of each question set (Part I in Exhibit 1 above, henceforth "stated goals"), and the percentage of respondents who felt that a stated goal was "very much achieved" (%VMA) in the practice part of each question set (Part II in Exhibit 1 above, henceforth "outcomes"). Additionally, to the degree that they could provide useful context, rankings within each subgroup were incorporated (for example,

Stated Goal 4 ranked *x* out of the 15 stated goals in terms of agreement). Last, the difference between the rank of the stated goal in terms of the percentage who agreed that it was a critical outcome of accreditation, and the rank of the outcome in terms of the percentage or respondents who felt that the outcome was very much achieved, was calculated and reported in Table 1; the four largest spreads were discussed.

The analysis of Research Questions 2 & 3 was based on information contained in Table 2 below, highlighting the Pearson chi-square test results from each item subsection in addition to Table 1. Because the study's low return rates resulted in low expected cell frequency ($n < 5$), two categories from Part II of each question set – "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved" – were collapsed into one. These two categories were already differentiated within the research, as answering either of these two choices directed respondents to Part III (a prompt with comment box), whereas the response "This critical outcome was very much achieved" pointed respondents to Part I of the next item. A number of items had cell frequencies that were too low to permit the calculation of a meaningful test statistic, and despite having collapsed categories none of them produced a significant result.

Each survey item had two components – the stated goal and the outcome – that were both further divided by a respondent's "relationship with school" (teacher, administrator, or trustee) and the "time since visit" of the accrediting team (either up to one year, or more than one year but no more than two). Accordingly, there were four chi-square results per survey item (60 in total). Because so many tests were run, there was a greater opportunity for a Type I error. A Type I error occurred "when the null hypothesis [was] rejected by the researcher when it [was] actually true" (Creswell, 2011). While

every question set with a significant result was analyzed, careful consideration was given to the possibility of a Type I error.

Table 1: Agreement Results

Question Set	*%Agree/% VMA overall*	*Rank within 15 stated goals or outcomes*	*Stated goal & outcome ranking spread*	*%Agree/% VMA among teachers*	*%Agree/% VMA among admin*	*%Agree/% VMA among trustees*	*%Agree/% VMA whose visit ≤ 1 year*	*%Agree/% VMA whose visit > 1 year, ≤ 2 years*
Stated Goal 1: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to engage my whole school community in a discussion about school improvement.	95.9%	4	-6	96.3%	97.0%	91.7%	95.5%	97.7%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	76.7%	10		77.8%	79.0%	70.6%	77.0%	76.2%
Stated Goal 2: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve teacher learning and teaching at my school.	84.6%	11	-4	83.7%	86.9%	84.8%	86.0%	79.1%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	60.9%	15		65.4%	40.4%	82.8%	62.8%	52.9%
Stated Goal 3: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen teamwork at my school.	82.3%	14	2	78.6%	90.0%	81.3%	84.3%	73.2%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	72.4%	12		64.6%	73.1%	96.3%	72.0%	73.3%
Stated Goal 4: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve student achievement at my school.	83.3%	13	-1	82.1%	86.8%	80.6%	82.9%	84.6%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	65.1%	14		64.6%	56.5%	80.0%	66.0%	60.6%

Stated Goal 5: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen and refine my school's culture.	83.6%	12	3	81.8%	90.6%	80.0%	82.6%	87.2%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	79.9%	9		76.8%	79.2%	92.0%	82.7%	67.6%
Stated Goal 6: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve the way that my school allocates resources.	77.0%	15	2	76.6%	73.1%	83.3%	76.8%	76.9%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	70.7%	13		65.9%	68.4%	88.0%	72.2%	63.3%
Stated Goal 7: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve communication at my school.	88.1%	9	-2	88.0%	90.4%	83.3%	87.7%	89.7%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	72.5%	11		68.9%	72.3%	84.0%	72.3%	68.6%
Stated Goal 8: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to compel my school to engage in strategic planning.	94.0%	6	-2	94.0%	94.2%	93.3%	92.5%	100.0%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	87.3%	8		83.5%	89.8%	96.4%	86.6%	89.7%
Stated Goal 9: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to demonstrate to the public at large that my school is a "quality" institution.	94.0%	6	0	96.6%	88.5%	93.3%	93.8%	94.9%

Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	90.5%	6		90.2%	91.3%	89.3%	91.4%	86.5%
Stated Goal 10: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to reinforce that my school complies with high educational standards.	97.5%	2	1	98.3%	94.2%	100.0%	96.9%	100.0%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	93.4%	1		90.4%	98.0%	96.7%	92.6%	97.4%
Stated Goal 11: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is for my school to reflect a commitment to institutional improvement.	96.5%	3	1	96.7%	98.0%	96.7%	95.6%	100.0%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	93.3%	2		91.9%	92.0%	100.0%	94.1%	89.7%
Stated Goal 12: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to make sure my school's mission is inherent in all aspects of its work.	92.5%	8	1	91.4%	98.0%	90.0%	93.1%	89.7%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	87.6%	7		85.8%	90.0%	88.9%	88.6%	82.9%
Stated Goal 13: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to reassure parents that their investment in my school has been a prudent one.	87.5%	10	5	91.4%	84.3%	76.7%	87.5%	87.2%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	91.4%	5		93.4%	83.7%	95.7%	88.6%	82.9%

Stated Goal 14: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to provide my school with accurate commendations and recommendations, as executed by our visiting team.	95.0%	5	1	95.7%	92.2%	96.7%	95.0%	94.9%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	91.6%	4		90.1%	89.5%	100.0%	90.8%	94.6%
Stated Goal 15: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is for my school to produce a detailed self-study and, in turn, secure an objective evaluation.	98.5%	1	-2	98.3%	98.0%	100.0%	98.1%	100.0%
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	92.9%	3		92.1%	90.0%	100.0%	92.4%	94.9%

Table 2: Pearson Chi-Square "Test for Independence" Results

Question Set	*Chi-Squared "test for independence" @ two degrees of freedom (5.991 or larger, $p \leq .05$) "relationship with school"*	*Chi-Squared "test for independence" @ one degree of freedom (3.841 or larger, $p \leq .05$) "time since visit"*
Stated Goal 1: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to engage my whole school community in a discussion about school improvement.	1.827	.438
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	.978	014
Stated Goal 2: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve teacher learning and teaching at my school.	.321	1.202
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	**15.963**	1.146
Stated Goal 3: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen teamwork at my school.	3.310	2.805
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	**10.570**	.022
Stated Goal 4: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve student achievement at my school.	.732	.064
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	3.904	.336
Stated Goal 5: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen and refine my school's culture.	2.459	.474
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	2.867	**3.853**
Stated Goal 6: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve the way that my school allocates resources.	1.121	.000
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	4.629	.921
Stated Goal 7: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve communication at my school.	.894	.130
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	2.269	.306
Stated Goal 8: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to compel my school to engage in strategic planning.	.027	3.092
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	3.752	.278

Stated Goal 9: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to demonstrate to the public at large that my school is a "quality" institution.	4.150	.065
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	.088	.826
Stated Goal 10: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to reinforce that my school complies with high educational standards.	3.303	1.242
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	3.896	1.301
Stated Goal 11: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is for my school to reflect a commitment to institutional improvement.	.576	1.768
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	2.514	.942
Stated Goal 12: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to make sure my school's mission is inherent in all aspects of its work.	2.829	.514
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	.594	.852
Stated Goal 13: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to reassure parents that their investment in my school has been a prudent one.	5.214	.003
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	4.235	.852
Stated Goal 14: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to provide my school with accurate commendations and recommendations, as executed by our visiting team.	1.141	.001
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	3.234	.556
Stated Goal 15: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is for my school to produce a detailed self-study and, in turn, secure an objective evaluation.	.560	.742
Outcome: During my school's recent accreditation this critical outcome was very much achieved.	2.990	.298

*Note. Numbers **underlined in bold** are statistically significant*

Item-by-Item Analysis of Research Question 1

Analysis of Question Set 1. The stated goal of involving the entire school community in a conversation about school improvement was perceived to be an important one, ranking 4th out of 15 goals. Its outcome was ranked 10th, making this the largest negative and the largest absolute spread among the 15 question sets.

Among the reasons given more than once in the comments section for earning a lower outcome achievement score was time ("there was so much 'busy work' that there was not as much time as I would have liked for meaningful discussion" [#3], and "Lack of follow-through, especially with scheduling TIME for collaboration, planning, etc. so that teachers can design new curriculum, discuss nuts and bolts changes that would result in changes" [#10]), school size ("we are such a large school--it is difficult to engage the whole teaching community" [#23], and "Because of our size, I feel that the community as a whole was largely removed from the process" [#126]), predetermination of outcome in theory ("I'm not sure any school completely reaches every goal it sets" [#37]) or in practice ("On the committee to which I belonged, we were presented with a plan and then urged to debate its merits--but with the outcome predetermined" [#1]), lack of effective community representation ("the people chosen to be involved in the process were hand picked. They did not represent all of the various stakeholders" [#133], "Representative committees did most of the work rather than a grass roots approach, [#101], and "Conversation occurred only between administration and department heads. There was little dialog about this at the teacher level" [#117]), and sustained engagement ("There is such a time gap between the beginning of the gathering of information until the actual site visit, that sometimes the goals or information may have changed or even become

obsolete" [#67], and "Intial [sic] feedback regarding strengths and recommendations was good, but followup communication, discussioin [sic] and planning sometimes stalls at an administrative level" [#77]).

Given the spectrum and uniformity of responses across all three stakeholder groups (teacher, administrator, or trustee) it was clear that involving the entire school community in a conversation about school improvement as currently practiced had too many opportunities for disappointment. Respondents clearly valued the concept of community engagement, which along with a head of school search process or a critical capital campaign can be a galvanizing event in this regard. The responses pointed to a wide array of issues that came from not regularly engaging a community or on a scale necessary to do so effectively.

Analysis of Question Set 2. The stated goal of improving teacher learning and teaching was perceived to be less critical to most other goals, ranking 11th. Furthermore, among those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical goal, it was ranked last (15^{th}) within the outcomes. The absolute difference of four places between stated goal and outcome rankings was the third largest spread among the 15 (Table 1) and its percentage drop in agreement rate (23.7%) was the largest percentage spread of any item.

With regard to the critical outcome of accreditation improving teacher learning and teaching, there was relative agreement between subgroups in terms of stated goal percentages, but the Pearson chi-square test found significant results in the outcome relative to the "relationship with school" groups. While teacher %VMA was slightly higher than expected, trustee %VMA was notably so (82.8% observed versus 61.0% expected), leaving administrator %VMA markedly lower than expected (40.4% observed

versus 61.2% expected). This result was significant at a 0.1% level. This implied that among those who agreed that improving teacher learning and teaching is a critical goal of accreditation, trustees' perceptions were far more positive about the worth of the accreditation process in producing such an outcome, while administrators' perceptions were very negative about these tangible benefits of the process.

Because the questionnaire was designed to elicit open-ended responses of those individuals who did not feel that a goal had been very much achieved, and because so many trustees (82.8%) felt that this goal had been very much achieved, there were few open-ended responses for trustees. It could be imagined that trustees expect this outcome to be real and do not fully understand the complexities of achieving results in improving teacher learning and teaching. Unless trustees are involved in the school to an almost inappropriate degree, enabling them to hear the minutiae of teacher/administrator grumbling, this is not an issue they will distill from their regular interactions unless otherwise informed by the head of school.

Administrators, on the other hand, contributed the lowest outcome achievement score of any subgroup and therefore had more opportunities to provide open-ended responses. While some of their commentary revolved around process ("How much can really happen in a two and a half day visit?" [#125]), most of the discussion concerned the average teacher's ability to embrace self-improvement ("There are staff members who will always believe there [sic] way is the only way" [#129], "Teachers are often reticent to hear any critique of their teaching and even more reticent to embrace change" [#92], and "the need for teacher buy-in from all teachers" [#51]) and the lack of a strong, consistent plan to push along teacher learning and teaching post-accreditation

("Structures and priorities for teacher learning not in place, little consensus on type of teacher learning that is needed" [#111], and "improving teacher learning and teaching is an outcome of the accreditation process, but it is not a critical outcome. So, we had good, robust discussions about the teaching and learning process but both were improved but not significantly" [#5]). In short, administrators appeared highly doubtful that the accreditation process could provide the needed impetus and momentum necessary to make a substantive change for the better in teacher learning and teaching.

Adding faculty commentary in examining the question of a large negative spread in rankings and the lowest outcome achievement score of the 15 sets, one of the refrains changed. Whereas teachers agreed with the administrators regarding the process ("Abstract principles and resolutions were not reduced to pragmatic steps which could be implemented" [#1], "I feel that the accreditation process focuses on so many different facets of our school that teacher learning and teaching takes a bit of a back seat to some of the other institutional issues" [#59], and "I think our accreditation focused a lot more on our school community than the teachers. It was more about our relationship with our parents and community than improving our teachers" [#62]) and the lack of a strong plan ("There is more of a push for professional development but it seems to be more form than substance. It seems that we are "checking off boxes" rather than working together for overall teacher improvement" [#65], and "I have always felt that for the accreditation process, we all put our best foot forward--super-cleaning the facilities, show casing our best achievements, and putting on a show. When it is all over, it's back to business as usual" [#67]), it should come as no surprise that faculty comments did not reflect the theme that teachers were unable or unwilling to embrace self-improvement (although

some responses appeared to dance around the idea).

Faculty remarks focused on the issue of time, professionally ("I think there was insufficient time to prepare materials necessary to submit, and insufficient time to reflect on our teaching strategies and student outcomes in order to revise them an improve them" [#139]), and personal ("We are so busy with managing our varied teaching, dorm, and/or coaching responsibilities. Then, we have need to enjoy a personal life outside of school. This leaves very little remaining time to devote to improving learning and teaching . . ." [#25]), as well as a sense that time spent on the accreditation process itself could have been better used on faculty development ("I am not sure I think it is such a part of the process, but think that it is supposed to be. I think there are other better ways to improve teaching if that is the objective" [#19], "Scrambling to produce documentation precluded action in many cases" [#21], and "Teacher learning can be impeded by the amount of time and resource accrediation [sic] required" [#3]).

It is likely that those involved in independent-school accreditation will be surprised that teacher learning and teaching was ranked relatively low as a stated goal (11^{th}), particularly since it was mentioned by most of the CoA members in their literature as a reason for accreditation. However, the dissonant viewpoints of administrator's concerns regarding the capacity of accreditation to overcome any inertia associated with faculty's need and willingness to improve, versus faculty's own perceptions regarding their acceptance of the need and willingness to improve yet with lack of time and resources to do so efficaciously (which often leads to a finger pointed back at administrators) are long-standing ones, and were not seen as revelatory.

Analysis of Question Set 3. The stated goal of strengthening teamwork at an

accredited school was perceived to be less critical than most others, ranking 14th. Among those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical goal, it was the 12th ranked outcome.

Regarding the critical outcome of accreditation strengthening teamwork, there was relative agreement between subgroups in terms of theoretical agreement percentages, but the Pearson chi-square test found significant results at a 1% level in the outcome relative to the "relationship with school" groups. Teacher scores were lower than expected (64.6% observed versus 71.9% expected) while trustee scores were higher than expected (96.3% observed versus 71.9% expected). As above with Stated Goal 2, among those who agreed theoretically that a critical outcome of accreditation was to strengthen teamwork at their school, the trustee perceptions were far more positive regarding the worth of the accreditation process. In contrast to Stated Goal 2, teacher perceptions were more negative about the tangible benefits of the process in this instance.

As mentioned earlier, trustees responses were few because by the design of the survey, comments were only solicited when a respondent did not agree that an outcome was "very much achieved." In fact, there was only one cryptic response given by a trustee ("TBD" [#2]). Also, similarly to Stated Goal 2, it can be imagined that trustees expect this outcome to be real**,** and barring evidence to the contrary, assume it to be so. In this circumstance, it may be that trustees already assumed more daily teamwork amongst faculty and staff (including administrators) than might have actually existed, since any trustee acting in good practice wouldn't be found in a situation with contradictory evidence. Additionally, trustees are removed from the day-to-day operations of their school, and may therefore lack the global school knowledge to normalize appropriate teamwork which teachers and administrators should have gained

through working and visiting.

Faculty responses in Question Set 3 were among the most consistent by stakeholder group in the study, pointing to a need for scheduled meeting time:

> I am new to the school, and if teamwork is a desired outcome, I have not experienced an atmosphere of teamwork within my department. I am aware that great things are going on in each classroom, but we are not discussing those things/learning from each other/working across disciplines, etc., at present [#42]

and:

> We worked to together to develop goals and plans for the school's accreditation procress [sic]. Unfortunately, during the course of the year the schedule and work load limits teamwork. No time is set aside for meaningful teamwork and collaboration between educators throughout the school year [#58].

The need for time was felt both at the "local" level ("Because we have no real time carved out in our schedules to collaborate and learn from the professionals that we actually work with" [#85]) and:

> The departments are still fragmented--we are only now coming to some key decisions about scope and sequence that should have been sorted out a while ago. The English departments only recently became its own department, so struggling with scope and sequence throughout the grades is a real struggle, and there is not clear consensus [#86]

as well as at the whole school level ("Not enough gatherings for us to work together as a school" [#50], and "There was good collaborative work across divisions and departments during the time of the study, but again, there is limited carry-over and continued

collaboration" [#118]).

Comparatively, there was not much consistency in administrator responses, but a few echoed faculty sentiments:

> I think we continually have to be intentional about this and create time for this to happen. We have begun to be creative in our approach to scheduling time for teachers to meet. This is an ongoing commitment, process, and at some divisions in our school a culture shift [#122]

and "Allocation of time for vertical, horizontal, and heterogeneous teams to undertake real initiatives" [#111]. In terms of perception, there was a very clear line here: teamwork comes at the expense of classroom, prep, and tutorial hours. To strengthen teamwork beyond the machinations of the accreditation process is to make a strategic decision to decrease the other hours and hope that the collective gain exceeds the loss of time on task.

Analysis of Question Set 4. The stated goal of improving student achievement was perceived to be less critical than most others, ranking 13th. Its outcome ranked 14th among those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical outcome. As noted above, for this particular question set to be ranked in this spot given the national focus on student achievement over the past decade was worthy of substantive reflection.

In addition to a handful of "I don't know" responses, three threads seemed to come from the comment box answers. First, a strong "it needs more time" element could be discerned, hinting more at a perception that real work was done in this area but has yet to show itself for appropriate reasons (as opposed to using time as a cover or stall tactic). Among the responses were "This is a work in progress. Teachers are being challanged

[sic] to be innovative in their classrooms and being mentored and supervised in a more routine fashion. We are really addressing grade inflation and alternate assessment stratagies [sic] for students" [#77], "I believe the improvement will be seen in 5 to 10 years if we stay the course and don't jump ship and go with some other ideas for improving student achievement before we've seen this first one through to the end" [#98], and, from a trustee, "I am not sure how to measure this outcome as a result of accreditation. My answer is more a statement of uncertainty than a statement that the outcome was not achieved" [#116].

The second common line of thought was asking whether or not accreditation was suited to address student achievement effectively, including commentary like "The focus of the visiting committee did not seem to be on student achievement - at least not directly" [#125], "Since student achievement is our overall focus, everything we do should be in order to improve that. I personally do not have concrete evidence here, but there would have been indirect benefit" [#46], and, the more accusatory, "The process requires us to go through a wonderful self evaluation but it seems to stop there. We shelve the information until the next time" [#65]. Curiously, a sentiment shared by a few respondents placed their opinions on the backs of students and their parents, such as:

> "*[institution]* must continue to push ahead with academic rigor despite apathetic students and parents who desire to see their child get strong grades apart from strong work. This will be an ongoing challenge, but one in which *[institution]* is making strides" [#42]

as well as "Student achievement has a whole lot more to do with students' willingness to work and native abilities than with anything the accreditation process can accomplish"

[#49], and "In my opinion, no training can guarantee that students will WANT to learn more. This desire comes from within mostly" [#69].

It came as a surprise that the faculty themselves were not mentioned more often – positively or negatively – as being central to these perceptions around student achievement. It was interesting that the most discussed aspect of American education (again, "student achievement") over the past decade ranked 13th out of the 15 stated goals among those surveyed. In that vein, it appeared that the reasons behind a lower perception of accreditation's effect on student achievement as an outcome was in line with the national discourse on the subject: improved achievement often requires patience, the best interventions to improve achievement are unclear, and there are varying degrees of engagement amongst those charged with improving student achievement.

Analysis of Question Set 5. The stated goal of strengthening and refining school culture was perceived to be less critical than most others, ranking 12th. It was ranked ninth among outcomes by those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical goal, an absolute difference of three (one or two places greater than the majority of stated goal/outcome pairs).

There was relative agreement between subgroups in terms of theoretical ("in theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen and refine my school's culture") agreement percentages. The Pearson chi-square test revealed significant results at a 5% level in the outcome relative to the "time since visit" groups, making it reasonable to be concerned about a false positive (Type I error). Respondents from the pool of schools visited in the past year were slightly higher than expected (82.7% observed versus 79.9% expected) while those in the pool visited from one to two years

out were lower than expected (67.6% observed versus 79.7% expected). Because there were only two groups for this test, for one group to be above the expected distribution meant that the other must be below. In this instance, among those who agreed that a theoretically critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen and refine their school's culture, it was the group more than a year out from their visit which was more negative than expected in their perception of the worth of the accreditation process related to its effect on school culture.

The commentary needed to show some clear concerns around time in order to shed light properly on significance related to "time since visit." Interestingly, it did not. As with other outcome response sets, there was a strong "it needs more time" theme, but nothing that would provide a meaningful explanation of the chi-square result. A simple theory is that visiting teams typically attempt to reflect their own sense of a school's culture back to the school when delivering the recommendations and commendations. Respondents within a year of their visit might simply have a better recall of that moment (and any momentum associated with it), and those over a year out have seen this memory abate. Also, as mentioned above, this could be a Type I error and as such shouldn't necessarily have qualitative evidence to adequately explain it.

Beyond attempting to align the commentary with the results of the chi-square test, there was one major thread within the responses provided. Many respondents viewed "improve school culture" as a call to change and/or expand their culture in terms of who is within it rather than refine it in less tangible ways. Among respondents' suggested changes were to consider the school's international aspects ("We needed to increase the exposure of our International community at the upper school in the middle and lower

schools" [#73], or conversely "Not really addressed, admin thinks that our international students are the only culture we need" [#75]), its diversity ("THere [sic] isn't much diversity at our school, so it's harder to be [sic] strengthen school culture when there isn't much to work with" [#54]), and its willingness to develop ("Refining the school culture is difficult when many current faculty, staff, students and families don't want to see a change" [#98], or more darkly "School culture has become one of unwritten rules and policies so everyone can be treated differently and not equitably" [#133]). As with Outcome 13 above, it may be that respondents who perceived "improving school culture" as a critical goal of accreditation did not penalize its outcome %VMA score as might have occurred with other outcomes, when they perceived a success in an element of an outcome**,** or progress with or without full achievement of the outcome.

Analysis of Question Set 6. The stated goal of improving resource allocation was perceived to be the least critical of all, ranking 15th. Its outcome ranked 13th among those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical outcome.

The stated goal associated with this outcome was the lowest ranked of the 15 in terms of agreement so it had the fewest potential respondents move on to Part II. Two compelling themes emerged from the commentary: unfamiliarity with resource allocation was mentioned again and again, which made it difficult for respondents to acknowledge accurately whether or not it had been achieved. Among the responses, "Again, the gap between the process and its implementation. I am a teacher. How should I know how the allocation of resources has--or has not--changed?" [#1], "Cannot accurately respond to this because the allocation of resources is not generally publicized" [#8], "We are on a learning curve and the intent is to focus on the proper allocation of resources" [#130], and

"This aspect is rarely addressed in the accreditation process" [#143]. Whether because of role at school, communication of allocation, or centrality to the accreditation process, a lack of awareness was a critical factor.

The other compelling issue involved respondent perceptions reflecting resentment – fair or not – around hires and programming observed to be less/non-academic. To wit, "I was trained that resources should be determined by mission. In other words, money allocated to support mission. Probably lie [sic] every other school, we support what will bring students, not necessarily what is mission critical" [#124], "Someone will be hired in DEVELOPMENT rather than to support teaching and learning, etc." [#136], and "Too much money to administrators especially the top and not enough budget cuts from unnecessary items" [#75]. A quote from a teacher may combine the two themes acutely:

> "The financial statements are not open and easily accessible to members of the community. For example, I would like to see the expenses for football. I know that teachers are expected to drastically reduce copying expenses, but then I see an expensive glossy marketing advertisement for the *[institution]* music program. I don't see a concerted effort to manage the budget and rein in expenses in a logical way. The hiring of the Admissions Head comes to mind. After contracting to a national search team and flying various candidates to *[city]*, the school hired the local spouse of a staff member" [#25].

It is easy to imagine that similar perceptions can be found in many faculty lounges around NAIS schools, with a mediating outcome found hypothetically in stated goal 7.

Analysis of Question Set 7. The stated goal of improving communication in school was perceived to be less critical than others ranking ninth. Its outcome ranked

11th among those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical outcome.

Of the outcomes, the comments associated with "improving communication" were ironically the most obtuse and least classifiable of the group. An exemplar of the comments was "Communication is recognized as a problem. It continues to be a problem." There seemed to be some coalescing around the intersection of time and method for communication, such as "Only by email, or IF time and schedules allow it…" [#85], "Based on the accreditation, we have added modes of communication which are great, in theory. In practice, these are more technological but not necessarily more effective" [#65], and "Communication and teamwork suffers daily because the schedule and work loads limits meaningful collaborations. We converse through emails and by phone, but finding the time to pursue the goals of the communication is a challenge due to scheule [sic] and work loads" [#58].

The strongest theme was around inter- and intra-division communication within schools, an ever-present issue in multi-division independent schools, but probably not high on the speculative list of conclusions related to this stated goal. In other words, whereas "Communication within and between the divisions is always an issue. I do not see it getting better at this time although I think there is a need for better communication, especially between the transition years of 4th to 5th, and 8th to 9th" [#100] and "We know we have failure to communicate between divisions, and even though we have instituted changes to help improve communication, there are still some people so stuck in a rut of doing things their own way, that communication still has a long way to go" [#67] were common thoughts, yet broad community-based communication (communicating with parents, alumni, graduates) was probably more in the spirit of the stated goal's aims.

Analysis of Question Set 8. The stated goal of engaging in strategic planning was perceived to be a critical one, ranking in a tie for sixth. Its outcome ranked among those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical outcome, making it the median score. Not surprisingly, strategic planning was perceived by most respondents to be theoretically important to accreditation and, despite a wide range of what such planning can entail (and thus more opportunity for perceived failure), a relatively achievable outcome.

There were two themes on strategic planning that arose from the comments provided by teachers and administrators (there was only one trustee response: "no comment" [#137]). The first – an acknowledgement that planning may be occurring but not with their input either by process or desire – was exclusive to the faculty. Representative of this were comments like "I am sure there was strategic planning, I just haven't heard much about it" [#65], "I think that we are engaging in strategic planning as a result of the accreditation. With time, I am sure that it will be communicated" [#132], and "The accreditation-related decisions of which I have knowledge were made at the administrative level and then presented to the school community" [#1]. Further in this vein, but not an overriding theme in its own right, was the sentiment that "I feel the voice of the teachers are not always heard" [#47].

The other theme on strategic planning was less common but no less obvious. The clear separation of their school's strategic planning and its accreditation process was mentioned by both faculty ("effective strategic has occurred at my school. I am not sure it was really related to the accreditation process" [#117], and "our strategic planning is already a work in process [sic], but there is always room for improvement" [#120]) and

administrators ("We were already fully enagaged [sic] in strategic planning" [#125]). What was less clear is whether they were trying to credit their own institutional governance or downplay the effectiveness of the accreditation process in strategic planning.

Analysis of Question Set 9. The stated goal of demonstrating "quality" to the public at large was perceived to be a critical one, ranking in a tie for sixth. Its outcome also ranked sixth among those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical outcome. As the only question set earning an identical ranking within both stated goals and their outcomes, it was clear that respondents saw the outward demonstration of quality as both reasonably critical and reasonably attainable relative to the other stated goals.

A good deal of the commentary touched on the "work in progress" theme seen with some of the other question sets. One minor thread among faculty relayed a lack of knowledge about how the demonstration of quality had been communicated ("It is possible that I am simply not aware of how this information was shared with "the public at large" [#139], and "Not sure that the word always gets out properly to the community" [#49]). Another thread among all three groups was whether or not the public at large knows to perceive the Association's accreditation as a sign of quality. A trustee wrote "I am not sure that parents/consumers focus that much on the TYPE of accreditation that a school gets" [#138] while an administrator noted "our constituency needs to better understand the accreditation process and its' value" [#104]. Maybe the poignant comment came from a faculty member who wrote:

> . . . I don't know what the public at large thinks of my school. Nor do I know what the public at large thinks of accreditation from an association that they don't

> know the details of. I am not aware of the perception of [the Association] among the public. For all they know, it could be similar to the BBB which means almost nothing in the reality of business [#34].

Analysis of Question Set 10. The stated goal of reinforcing compliance with high educational standards was perceived to be a very critical one, ranking second. Its outcome ranked first among those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical outcome, making it from respondents' perception the most "accomplished" of the stated goals when put into practice. No question set had a higher combined ranking than Stated Goal 10, not surprising given that in many ways the accreditation process is synonymous with the concept of compliance with high educational standards.

Because this item had a relatively high outcome achievement score, there were fewer responses to review. There appeared to be no common theme through the responses, with answers jumping from idiosyncratic ("I tend to disagree with some definitions of high standards" [#8]), to lack of clarity ("I never heard what standards we were aiming for and which we achieved" [#28]), and even to broader venting ("many classes are too easy; students lack initiative and respect; students cannot read well enough to tackle demanding work. We have not addressed the reading problem effectively. We need a single, unified approach from teachers and admin throughout the school" [#10]).

Analysis of Question Set 11. The stated goal of reflecting a commitment to institutional improvement was perceived to be a critical one, ranking third. Its outcome ranked second among those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical outcome. Whether or not respondents factored in the "voluntary" aspect of accreditation or valued the "commitment" to improve as much as improvement itself was beyond the scope of

this question. Respondents perceived accreditation as a vehicle for school improvement in theory and in practice.

Like Question Set 10, because this item enjoyed a relatively high outcome achievement score, there were fewer responses to review. Responses only came from faculty and administrators and their comments forged a very strong thread over concerns that accreditation was simply "lip service" ("mostly lip service to jump through the hoops" [#75], and "I think a lot of what occurs with accreditation is 'lip-service'" [#117]). What was slightly less clear is whether this comes as a result of lacking the ability to follow through on institutional improvement ("we want to improve, but we don't develop serious initiatives to tackle priority issues" [#10], and "again, the disconnect between the objective and the reality of school life is at work here" [#128]) or intention to do so in the first place ("the accreditation is seen by many as a short-term hurdle to overcome and then the process is put on a shelf for a few years" [#39], and "the accreditation process has the feel of just going through the motions. Some good arises out of it, to be sure, but I don't feel that it is as much about institutional improvement as it is about showing the world that we are good at what we do" [#1]).

Analysis of Question Set 12. The stated goal of the school's mission being inherent in all aspects of its work was perceived to be a moderately critical one, ranking eighth (the median rank). Its outcome ranked seventh among those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical outcome. Because a school's mission is open to layers of interpretation, any perception of how effective accreditation can be promoting integration of a school-wide mission is ripe for disappointment. Nonetheless, respondents perceived Stated Goal 12 as both critical and achievable.

Two issues arose on the subject of mission, but neither was attributable to accreditation's interaction with mission. One group of respondents had concerns about their schools' mission going into the process, whether individual respondents were faculty ("the mission to make a positive difference in the world is so ambiguous as to be virtually meaningless" [#8]), administrators ("there has been some discussion about the validity of our present mission statement. This makes it difficult to say that we have this outcome" [#35]), or trustees ("the mission was slightly unclear and is being better defined/clarified at the current time" [#116]). The other group were more concerned about their schools' ability to live *into* its mission, such as "too many competing programs, too little adherence to mission-driven decisions" [#124], "It is very difficult to get all on board as it relates to our mission, but that is what we strive for" [#37], and "our mission statement has not been upheld this year. Class size has increased exponentially, but not much if anything has been done to lower the students teacher ratio as a whole; therefore, individual attention is suffering" [#61].

As with Question Set 8, there was some pushback from faculty as to whether accreditation deserved credit for a positive outcome, in this case pushing the school to have its mission inherent in all aspect of its work ("we are committed to what we do, but I don't believe that the accreditation process is what makes *[institution]* try to ensure that its mission is universal in what it does" [#1]). The stated goal of this question set was to "make sure" that the mission was inherent, not for accreditation to *cause* the mission to be inherent. Nonetheless, it was not surprising that respondents might have read the question this way. One respondent attempted to articulate the tenuous nature of accreditation, mission, and normal course of business as follows:

> when *[institution]* goes thru the accreditation process, we are looking for specific areas in which to improve our school looks at it as a chance for self reflection some areas in need of change are discovered by us in gathering information for the report, others are pointed out. some areas outsiders may identify a "problem" that we do not see as a specific problem *[institution]* has always encouraged suggestions for growth, improvement, and improving overall quality we are a private school relying on tuition if we did NOT do those things, we go out of business the fact that our applications are far above those in the past would indicate, that despite a poor economy, we are offering what you are asking about because of the internal structuring of *[institution]* we will continue to evolve [#102].

Analysis of Question Set 13. The stated goal of reassuring parents that their investment in their school had been a prudent one was perceived to be less critical than most others, ranking 10th. However, its outcome ranked fifth among those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical outcome. The absolute difference of five places between theoretical and practical rankings was the second largest spread among the 15 sets (Table 1). In terms of ranking position, the gain of five spots was the largest positive spread of the 15 items.

This stated goal was not considered particularly critical in comparison to other such goals, but was also found to be comparatively achievable among those who considered it to be theoretically important. Comment boxes aggregated data from lower outcome achievement scores, which lead to two issues in applying the comments to this spread. First, because this item enjoyed a relatively high outcome achievement score,

there were fewer responses to review. Second, the responses reflected reasons why an outcome was not achieved, which was dissonant with the large move "up" in outcome rank in this case. Nonetheless, responses reflected two themes in addition to typical "I don't know" and "we are working on it" categories. The first involved tuition as an entity disassociated with accreditation: "Our tuition continually rises, and we load all kinds of expenses on parents. Will our school be filled by the richest children or children whose parents choose to sacrifice their financial stability to send their children to *[institution]*?" [#25] and "A lot of parents still struggle to pay tuition, even if they believe in the quality of the school. In this economy, it's just not afforadble [sic] for all" [#16]. A slightly different spin on the same idea was found in another comment:

> . . . I don't know what the parents think about accreditation. I believe most parents at my school would still send their children here without accreditation because of the value they see in it. For some parents, the accreditation might be crucial [#34].

Others mentioned that "it is worth the price, but parents often have to make decisions based on other factors" [#87] and that parents' "confidence is vulnerable to how their children feel and how the economy is behaving. Not all of that is under the school's control" [#99].

The second theme was how accreditation is marketed to parents in the first place, value proposition or not: "Some e-mails have been sent out but this is an ongoing process and it is too soon after to tell how effective we are at this" [#28], and "I am not convinced that we market the results of our accreditation as much as we should. We had a good outcome but it seems to be mentioned only in passing, the strategic plan and its goals seem far more important. And perhaps they are" [#100]. It seemed possible then that the

high %VMA score may have been a result of a convergence of these two themes. If the perception of respondents to Part II was that the reassuring of parents has often been achieved, it was likely that accreditation did play a role in that process, just not a major one. With some question as to the effect of the cost of tuition and parents' fundamental understanding of accreditation in the first place, it followed that what one respondent may not have perceived as theoretically critical enough to move forward to Part II, others may have agreed critical enough in its role as one of many factors involved in prudent parental decision-making.

Analysis of Question Set 14. The stated goal of providing accurate commendations and recommendations (as executed by the visiting team) was perceived to be critical, ranking fifth, as was its outcome (where it ranked fourth). Because both this goal and Stated Goal 15 are deeply associated with the accreditation process, it should come as no surprise that both were perceived by respondents to be critical and practicable. In this light, it may be more surprising that providing commendations and recommendations was not ranked even higher in either category.

A review of the open-ended responses from those who did not feel this goal had been very much achieved, there were a few responses that indicated that the faculty may not have been made aware of the recommendations and commendations ("I don't know what the commendations and recommendations were" [#1], and "don't know for sure. Only part of the report has been shared with everyone" [#75)], including by one administrator ("some aspects were not shared with the faculty at large" [#92]). The larger topic focused on the perceived accuracy of the recommendations and commendations, whether affected by visiting team agenda ("the viositing [sic] team seemed to have some

agendas that did not coincide with the vision and culture of our school. They were easily distracted almost searching for something to report" [#125]), the facts provided during the visit or in the self-report ("a few of the recommendations were based on incorrect facts" [#126], and "as I said before, I think the team took direction from the administrators about what recommendations they'd like to see in the report. I imagine that the commendations were more genuine, but they probably also grew mostly form reported successes" [#76]), or because of the limited span of the visiting team stay ("we showed them our best. Had we desired honest recommendations, we might have shown them our problems. Their visit was too short to immerse in our school culture" [#111]).

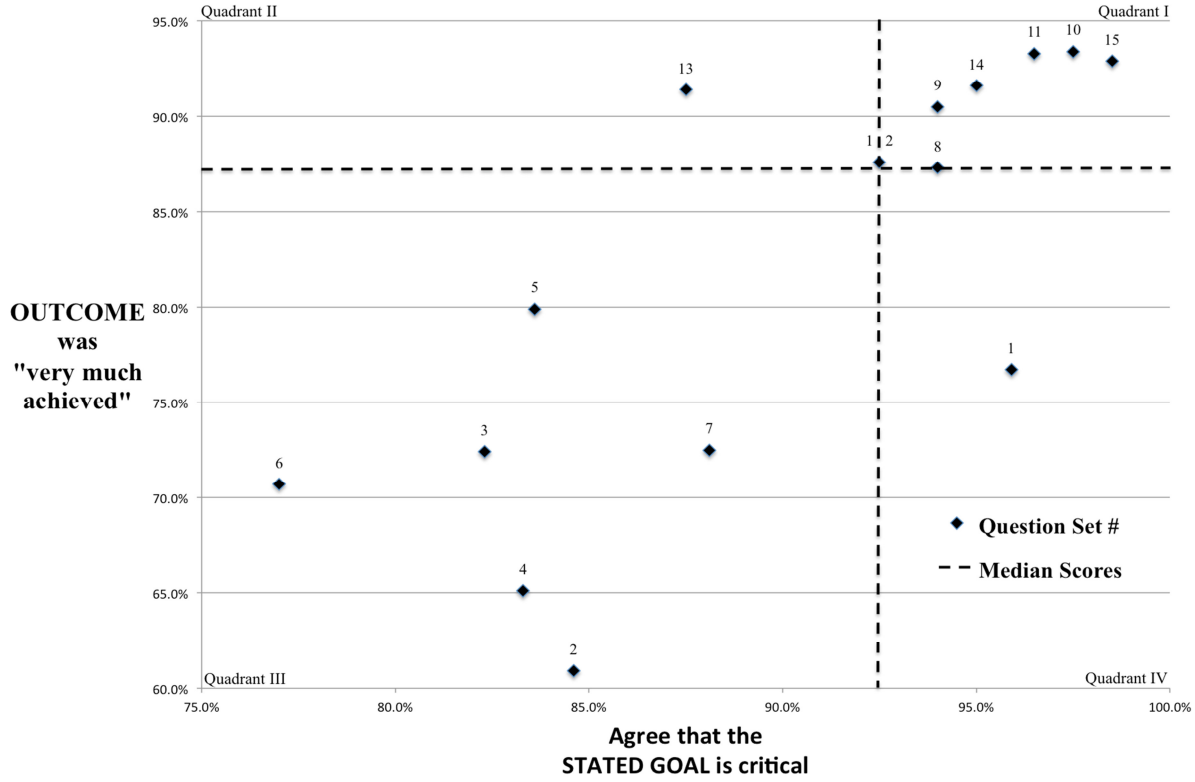
Analysis of Question Set 15. The stated goal of producing a detailed self-study and, in turn, securing an objective evaluation was perceived to be most critical, ranking first out of the 15 goals. Its outcome ranked third among those who deemed it to be a theoretically critical outcome. As with Stated Goal 14 above, it should be expected that the goal of producing a detailed self-study and objective evaluation was perceived to be critical and attainable because of its obvious connection to accreditation and, moreover, an element of this goal (i.e., producing a detailed self-study) *must* be achieved in order to receive accreditation. Unlike Stated Goal 14, however, there was no question of its prominence among respondents in terms of ranking.

As with other question sets, because this item enjoyed a relatively high outcome achievement score, there were fewer responses to review. Among the responses, some faculty questioned the objectivity of the process ("as noted above, the accreditation committee to which I belonged did not approach its task objectively: the decisions were made for us" [#3], "admin no [sic] interested in hearing the truth just in keeping their

over paid jobs" [#75], and "coming up with a truly objective evaluation is most likely not possible" [#98]). The more pronounced issue was around the thoroughness of the self-study and the subsequent evaluation. In some cases the issue was caused by a lack of resources ("the self-study didn't seem as thorough as under previous accreditation models. It involved fewer people, less overall time. The accreditation process seemed like a rubber-stamp rather than a serious look at what we do and how we do it" [#101], and "I think the process has multiple problems. Schools need the accreditation and put their best foots [sic] forward. I'm not sure with all the other items on the reviewers plate how much digging is done . . ." [#141]), while with others time was a factor ("too many agendas and too little time visiting the school" [#125]). As one administrator summarized on both counts:

> I feel that it is very hard for a small group of people to get a true pulse of the institution in a few short days of visiting. I do understand that it is hard to dedicate more resources to the process, and I am not sure that a few more days on campus would improve the awareness significantly. Also, I feel that the process is flawed since the groups for interaction are pre-selected and the statements and papers put forth for review are carefully prepared with he objective of achieving accreditation as the main goal - true critical review and a true improvement plans are hard to develop from this process. Although, I think the process can be improved by having the visiting team randomly choose those to interview and to randomly visit classrooms, I am not sure if a much better process can be put together under the time and resource constraints [#39].

Figure 1: Question Set Spread



Analysis of Research Question 1

There were five question sets, as shown in Figure 1, that exceeded the median scores in both the stated goals and their subsequent outcomes (in terms of a coordinate plane, quadrant I). They are listed below in order of set number:

Stated Goal 9: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to demonstrate to the public at large that my school is a "quality" institution.

Stated Goal 10: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to reinforce that my school complies with high educational standards.

Stated Goal 11: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is for my school to reflect a commitment to institutional improvement.

Stated Goal 14: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to provide my school with accurate commendations and recommendations, as executed by our

visiting team.

Stated Goal 15: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is for my school to produce a detailed self-study and, in turn, secure an objective evaluation.

It can be argued that an interdependent accreditation thread passes through each of these stated goals. That is, each of these sets can be more strongly linked with the accreditation process in education, than with education in general. Organized self-study, high educational standards (standards often being associated with the lexicon of accreditation), a commitment to improve, commendations and recommendations, and the imprimatur of accreditation as a sign of quality are all more often connected to the accreditation process itself than to education beyond the accreditation cycle. Restated, it is worth considering whether any of these stated goals are perceived to exist in meaningful ways in independent education (and education in general) as the norm *without* accreditation.

Further, it was not surprising to learn that respondents perceived outcomes most closely associated with the process itself worthy of a high outcome achievement score since either respondents may have had an intuitive sense of this connection or outcomes most aligned with accreditation would likely have more refined outcomes specific to the process after decades of practice (or some other less obvious option). Last, it could also be argued that even the median questions sets shared some degree of interdependence with accreditation. Stated Goal 8 – strategic planning – is often comingled with the accreditation process. Stated Goal 12 – assuring the school's mission is inherent in all aspects of its work – may be marginally less associated with accreditation, but still notably so.

There were six question sets, as shown in Figure 1, that fell below the median scores in both the stated goals and their subsequent outcomes (in terms of a coordinate plane, quadrant III). They are listed below in order of set number:

Stated Goal 2: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve teacher learning and teaching at my school.

Stated Goal 3: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen teamwork at my school.

Stated Goal 4: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve student achievement at my school.

Stated Goal 5: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen and refine my school's culture.

Stated Goal 6: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve the way that my school allocates resources.

Stated Goal 7: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve communication at my school.

As a group of six question sets, there was no discernable thread among the corresponding goals. Two involved the core of education (student achievement and teacher learning and teaching) while three others invoked qualitative aspects of school life (communication, teamwork, and school culture), and one focused on "back office" work of school (resources allocation), but to draw any more connections than those is specious. To the extent it is worth mentioning, all these stated goals were included in the first half of the survey. This could be a function of question order, a sign that respondents were more critical early in the survey, or random chance.

It is worth pointing out that the two sets concerning the core of education – student achievement and teacher learning and teaching – are as fundamental and important to the domain of education as any two aspects can be. That they were two points farthest away from the median axis in Figure 1 was very surprising and has to be considered troubling. Further, however subjective they may be, the three "school life" sets are often the type of goal that the *process* of accreditation seeks to improve. By working through a structured and established process that relies on bringing people in a community together as its foundation, assumptions can be made that aspects such as communication, teamwork, and school culture cannot help but improve. The "trade of education" point will be addressed again in Chapter 5.

Question Set 1 and Question Set 13 each separately occupied their own quadrant. Question Set 1 ("engage the whole school community in a discussion about school improvement") scored above the median rank in terms of whether it was a critical goal but below the median rank with regard to whether the outcome was "very much achieved," placing it in quadrant IV. It comes as no surprise that through the sheer force of process that accreditation would earn the perception that engaging the whole community is a critical goal. More surprising is that respondents did not perceive its outcome to be highly achieved despite many similar question sets associated with accreditation scoring uniformly in quadrant I. Over 23% of respondents who perceived this goal to be critical also did not perceive a high level of outcome achievement, a full 10% lower that the next "peer" question set (#12, the median). Such a result leads to the question of whether internal constituents believed that such a goal was possible to achieve.

Question Set 13 ("reassure parents of their investment ") was above the median rank in terms of perception that the outcome was "very much achieved" but below the median rank with regard to whether it was a critical goal in the first place, placing it in quadrant II. Because its outcome achievement score was relatively high, there was less feedback than with other outcomes. However, the research did not ask respondents why they perceived a stated goal not to be critical, so there is even less to explain why this set was an outlier. Nonetheless, unlike Question Set 1, this result has a more immediate explanation. Many respondents perceived this goal as critical to accreditation, but not at the levels of most of the other stated goals. Among those who did see it as critical, its outcome was highly achieved, most probably because the structure of the question leads to a binary outcome. If a parent needs to be reassured of their investment in the school through successful accreditation, either the school is or is not accredited. Compared to many of the other outcomes, this is as simple as it can be.

Analysis of Research Question 2

Only two of the 30 analyses yielded results that were significant at levels less than 5%. Both Stated Goal 2 "in theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve teacher learning and teaching at my school" and Stated Goal 3 "in theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen teamwork at my school" had unexpected outcomes. In both cases, trustees perceived these goals to have been very much achieved in proportions much higher than expected, contributing in large part to the only two highly significant observed among the 60 chi-squared analyses. These results necessitate further exploration into what about the trustee engagement with accreditation might explain such results.

Analysis of Research Question 3

Only one item – Stated Goal 5 – yielded statistically significant results (at a 5% level). As noted in the item-by-item analysis of Stated Goal 5 ("improve school culture"), there was no qualitative evidence to back up the chi-square result. Further, because of the possibility of a Type I error, there was a chance that this result showed as a false positive. Accordingly, the two subgroups (time since visit was "up to one year" and "over one year and up to two years") did not offer much in terms of substantive differences in their respective perceptions of the question sets. While this was not part of Research Question 3, it was hard to ignore the very large difference in the percentage of total responses favoring the "up to one year out" group by over 4.5 times of the "more than one year and up to two year" group (82.2% and 17.8% respectively). While there was no framework set up to test such a theory, the result suggested drastically less involvement among stakeholders with the process the further in the past the accreditation site visit is.

Summary

Within the three statistically significant results from the Pearson chi-square testing, two indicated that trustees may be more optimistic with regard to their preconceptions of outcomes than would be expected, although one ("in theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve teacher learning and teaching at my school") was possibly the result of a more pessimist perspective on the part of practitioners (i.e., teachers and administrators) on accreditation's ability to achieve this outcome. The third presented a slight indication that there may have been a perception of diminishing positive effect on school culture as time passed away from the accreditation visit,

although its qualitative data did not represent this as well. Nonetheless, these results suggested that there was more to examine with trustee engagement. Question Set 1's ("engage the school community") location in quadrant IV may further bolster this discussion.

An argument could be made for each stated goal that it is seen as appropriately critical to independent-school accreditation. For example, despite its ranking as the lowest stated goal, "resource allocation" nonetheless earned a 77% agreement percentage among all respondents. In other research, a 77% agreement rate might be considered very high. It might be further argued that having 15 stated goals that are critical to accreditation may be a general good for accreditors and schools alike; it reminds professionals that accreditation is necessary if for no other reason than the complexity of educational institutions. However, given some of the critical feedback provided in this research on the topic of "too much to do, too few to do it, too little time to get it done," having so many goals in one process is not in the best interest of all the parties it serves.

In both the stated goal and outcome groups the spread between the median agreement percentage and the highest agreement percentage were almost equal (6.0% and 6.1% respectively). However, the spread below the median was much larger among the outcomes than with the stated goals, indicating that respondents perceived aspects of accreditation more difficult in practice than their theoretical underpinnings might otherwise suggest. Additionally, outcomes that earned lower achievement scores also have multiple perceived opportunities for disappointment, at least in terms of the limited qualitative feedback.

Further, there appeared to be three additional issues that arise from the data. First

was that many of the highest-ranked question sets also happened to be goals often more closely linked to the accreditation process. Second, three of the goals that were perceived to have been achieved the least should have been greatly aided by the recent process of accreditation if not by accreditation itself. In other words, not only were these goals of accreditation, but the process itself encouraged their achievement. Last, and most vexing, two of the lowest ranked question sets involve student achievement and teacher development. Despite the concern that there were too many high scoring stated goals and outcomes mentioned above, that *these* two goals ranked where they do in quadrant III (that is, below the median both in terms of how critical the goal was perceived to be and in terms of whether the goal was very much achieved, as seen in Figure 1) presented potentially upsetting results for educators and accreditors alike. It is hard to grasp that teacher development and student achievement would be the weakest of the sets, especially given that the respondents were surprisingly positive overall and had to choose *not* to see either of these sets as critical or as very much achieved.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter summarizes the study's findings and presents its conclusions. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section reviews the purpose of the study. The second reviews the methodology. The third provides a discussion of the findings and presents implications for practice, based on the study's results. The concluding section presents limitations, issues surrounding the study, and recommendations for further study.

Purpose

At a practical level, there is always a concern that schools engage in the accreditation process because they "have to" rather than because they "want to," or that "accreditation is most valued by those who are closest to not having it (the marginal)" (Harvey, 2004, p. 220). However, it should be an expectation that such a critical and wide-ranging exercise will engage those who stand to benefit from it into deeper conversations about fundamental aspects of school life.

If the accreditation process is an accepted means of holding schools and school systems accountable, and better accreditation leads to better schools, then it follows that accreditation research should be evident in the literature. This is particularly true with independent schools that, as a result of their mission-based independence, lack other external evaluative mechanisms. Sadly, very little such research on the accreditation process and its improvement exists. Evidence that feedback loops exist and can be improved – as well as clues to where and how such improvement might occur – are critical to a process like accreditation.

This descriptive study endeavored to explore internal stakeholders' (teacher,

administrator, or trustee) perceptions regarding 15 critical outcomes – in both theory and practice – associated with the accreditation process within their independent schools. Further, the research attempted to gauge whether or not these perceptions were influenced by respondents' roles within the school or time since the accreditation visit occurred. All respondents were from schools that had undergone a site visit within the past two years, with the belief that they would likely still have an accurate memory of the process.

Methodology

Fifteen question sets reflecting the stated goals of accreditation were made into a web-based survey. Each question set contained three questions about 15 stated goals of the accreditation process; an "in theory" section, an "in practice" section, and a section allowing for a comment on why the theoretically important outcome had fallen short of "very much achieved" during the practical application of the accreditation timeline. Skip logic was incorporated in the survey reducing respondent exposure to every question.

The sample used for the research included 255 individuals from 24 separate schools within one of the largest National Association of Independent School-affiliated regional accrediting associations. Sixty-one schools were potential participants, of which 24 produced at least one respondent. For one set of independent variables, respondents were either those who had experienced their site visit within the past year (82.2%) or those who had experienced it in over a year, but not more than two years prior (17.8%). The other set of independent variables was determined by whether respondents were teachers (56.8%), administrators (28.2%), or trustees (14.9%).

Percentages, medians, and ranks were used to analyze the data for Research

Question 1. Pearson's chi-squared was used to test for independence of responses with the independent variables in Research Questions 2 and 3. A limited amount of qualitative data were collected to contextualize quantitative analysis with all three research questions.

Discussion

While this discussion will cover a number of topics, there are three basic findings that it will highlight from this study, in this order: (1) concerns regarding trustee engagement, (2) concerns regarding both the number of goals perceived as critical and the perceived difficulty of certain outcomes to be achieved**,** and (3) concerns regarding student achievement and teacher learning and teaching and their respective rankings. Another subsection will follow the three findings to discuss other aspects of the study.

Trustee Engagement. The variables examined in Research Question 2 and the results associated with them present a nuanced question: Had the perceptions of relationship depth between the "association with school" groups and the accreditation process been explored in the research, would they have revealed differences – however small – between the groups? Theoretically, each group appears to have equal claim of partnership with accreditation. As the largest group, teachers have the greatest exposure to the process and its results. Administrators have typically engaged in the most discussion and planning regarding accreditation. Last, as the corporate leaders of the institution, trustees have a vested interest in the outcomes. Considering that Verges (2005) found administrators to be more positive about the process fostering school improvement and being worth the resources involved than the faculty, it is the researcher's experience that the answer to this question would reveal that administrators

are perceived by each group to be most at ease with the lexicon and goals of accreditation. Further, it has been the researcher's professional observation that teachers and trustees generally expect administrators, as part of their day-to-day responsibilities, to do the majority of planning, self-study, and execution of recommendations elicited from the accreditation process. Either conviction elucidates a closer relationship in practice between the accreditation process and administrators, than between the process and either teachers or trustees.

Given the two statistically significant results associated with the responses of trustees with higher-than-expected level of agreement scores for Question Sets 2 and 3, it bears asking whether or not trustees are sufficiently engaged in this critical function – both in terms of better understanding the goals of accreditation and determining whether or not those goals are being achieved – of their school's overall cycle of growth and improvement. These two results, without more, do not indicate that the answer to this question is yes. However, trustee comments such as "my participation was limited; therefore, do not put too much weigh in my response" [#56] and multiple "no comments" and one 'TBD" (all curious responses in the first place) heighten the issue. In light of the demonstrated importance of accreditation to independent schools, coupled with the trustees' link to two of the three significant chi-square scores, it is not unreasonable to envision trustees having a different view of many critical aspects of their school than do teachers and administrators, whether examined by accreditation or not. Therefore, though it is interesting that administrators appear to be more intimately attuned to accreditation, for purposes of this and future research, it is more noteworthy that trustees do not appear to be.

If true, this finding impedes effective trustee governance as defined by principles of good practice established by NAIS and other non-profit associations. As discussed in Chapter 2, DeKuyper (2007) lists three duties of conduct for independent-school trustees: the duty of care, the duty of loyalty, and the duty of obedience. The National Association of Independent Schools' model care standards (2009) provide tangible standards for visiting teams and associations to use in assuring that aspects of these duties of conduct are being upheld by trustees. However, many of the aspirations for these duties of conduct are in spirit rather than in law. It is difficult enough to measure the degree to which a school board in general and trustees in particular are meeting these three duties within the standards set forth by NAIS and permutations of these standards throughout the CoA agencies. Measuring their capacity and willingness to engage other aspects of accreditation that are not directly attributable back to them (official standards) while fulfilling their obligations to trustee conduct is untenable, yet critical.

For example, one of the NAIS model core standards is "procedures are in place to assess and communicate effectively individual student progress toward meeting the goals of the program" while another is "the board delegates the operational and educational functions of the school to the head of school." This would indicate that trustees should stay out of the business of setting and managing these procedures. Yet, the trustee duty of care requires a trustee to make "reasonable" efforts to ensure that these procedures follow best practice and are being handled by highly competent professionals. Recalling the quote referenced in Chapter 2 from DeKuyper (2007) about independent-school trustees needing "work, wisdom, and wealth," the wisdom is needed in situations such as these to discern when and how to act without crossing any lines, clear or not. Correspondingly,

the accreditation process is one of the few ways a trustee can properly and effectively meet their duties of conduct.

The goal of demonstrating to the public "that the school is a 'quality' institution" (Question Set 9) may not be just a stated goal for purposes of this study but may also be one implicit in the thinking of all three internal groups in a time when accountability in independent schools can equate with doing what is necessary to keep the marketplace interested. Because trustees straddle the line between internal and external more than the other two groups and thus have more exposure to perceived concerns about the school from "the outside," they may be the most susceptible to internalizing this goal well before they realize it is a goal of accreditation. As such, this desire to demonstrate the school's quality could influence their responses in other sets. While there was no significant statistical result regarding trustee perceptions in the results from Question Set 9, there is a difference between accreditation itself acting as a mark of quality versus aspects of accreditation acting in the same capacity. For instance, if trustees perceive teamwork (Question Set 3) and professional development (Question Set 2) to be important badges of quality to the public, and they also perceive their school to be stronger in these regards than any comparable institutions immediate to them, then they may perceive a stronger outcome based on aspiration. This is merely conjecture to explain the significant results in Question Sets 2 & 3; undoubtedly exploration into trustee perceptions and attitudes is ripe for further attention. More to this point, the implication for accreditors, educators, and trustees is that if accreditation is to be one – if not the best – means through which trustees are to meet their duty of care to the independent school then they must be tasked with a high level of engagement during the complete accreditation process.

The Number of Goals Perceived as Critical and the Perceived Difficulty of Certain Outcomes to be Achieved. The perception of the complexity of an accreditation process can lead to inertia before the process even begins (Brennan and Austin, 2003). Accrediting agencies can and do make value judgments regarding what stated goals are perceived to be critical and efficacious. It would be convenient to decide first on a rubric to determine the "best" stated goals and outcomes from results of a study such as this, and then simply move forward with that list. Unfortunately, as is often the case, the numbers do not tell the whole story.

For example, consider the lowest agreement score for both the stated goals and outcomes. Among stated goals, the lowest agreement score was associated with "in theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve the way that my school allocates resources" (from Question Set 6). Resource allocation is typically an integral part of any independent-school accreditation; depending on the accrediting body, there are multiple standards around this aim for a visiting committee to evaluate when on campus despite being rarely considered by internal stakeholders. In that sense, resource allocation is a critical goal. However, it ranked last among 15 stated goals in terms of how important stakeholders saw it as an outcome of the accreditation process.

On the other hand, the outcome with the lowest level of agreement was "in theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve teacher learning and teaching at my school" (from Question Set 2). This had the largest absolute or negative percentage spread in the study, despite its poor ranking (13^{th}) as a stated goal. Accordingly, when looking at the results of the study – on the merits of its level of outcome agreement alone – one could reasonably decide this should be the first stated goal to be thrown out in

order to refine and improve the overall process. Yet it is *highly* improbable that accrediting agencies and the schools they serve would even consider moving forward with any process that did not see teacher development as mission-critical to their work.

Given these two examples of numbers not telling the whole story, the implications when all the stated goals scored at least a 77% agreement level overall are seemingly unclear. First, what level of agreement with a stated goal classifies it as more important than other goals? Eight of the 15 stated goals earned above a 90% agreement score overall; was the goal ranked 8th (at 92.5%) perceived as qualitatively more critical than the goal ranked 9th (at 88.1%)? While there was a larger spread within the overall outcome agreement scores and thus a more suggestive drop, the same question could be asked with outcomes as well. Second, as mentioned earlier, what does it say about the process that over the course of each accreditation cycle, there are at least 15 stated goals for which adequate achievement is the aim? Schools are undeniably complicated institutions, and it follows that there should be an adequate number of goals to cover the needs of the accreditation process. However, at some point, a large number of goals to be achieved imply too many moving parts for something to be done well. The results of this research are not out of line with the other limited research either. Independent school heads of school in the NEACS (2005) survey had an agreement rate of 60% or better regarding 14 of 31 measures of impact.

Further, reading through the qualitative responses exposed a need for a better way to manage the expectations of internal constituents with regard to outcomes. Representative of this problem, when certain outcomes did not appear to be achieved to respondents' satisfaction, accompanying commentary made reference to many different

ways respondents considered it possible to fall short of achieving the relevant stated goals (see Stated Goals 1 and 4). Care must be taken not to put too much emphasis on the qualitative responses since: one, they represent only one aspect of a survey that was investigating perceptions about limited yet broader aspects of independent-school accreditation, and two, the validity of themes across question sets (as opposed to within, examined in Chapter 4) could be affected by a few respondents whose judgments are made known across question sets but who are not representative of all respondents. Nonetheless many of respondents' comments expressed various shades of what one administrator succinctly noted: "It's not possible to fully implement all the issues that were discussed" [#17].

Student Achievement and Teacher Learning and Teaching. As mentioned in Chapter 4, both Question Sets 2 ("improve teacher learning and teaching") and 4 ("student achievement") earned the lowest combined rankings of the 15 stated goals of accreditation. This is troubling for many reasons, not the least of which is that for decades these two goals have been perceived by educators and politicians alike as fundamental focus areas in attempts to improve the American educational system. Eaton (2011), discussing accreditation in higher education, speaks on behalf of every level of American education when she states, "there is a *de facto* national consensus about doing more about student achievement" (p. 14). Buttressing her point, Eaton further acknowledges that there is a "*de facto* international consensus" (p. 14). Hayward (2010) remarks that one of the 11 common qualities of higher education accrediting agencies is "assuring student learning outcomes." To highlight the importance of teacher learning and teaching, AdvancED lists five" standards for quality" that guide their entire

accreditation process, the third of which is "Teaching and Assessing for Learning" (AdvancED, 2011b). It is difficult to minimize the importance of "teacher learning and teaching" when one of the five standards of the whole accreditation process starts with the word "teaching."

Given this, both of these question sets occupy the most poorly anticipated – if not least appropriate – positions in Figure 1: Stated goals that earned the lowest rankings in terms of terms of being perceived as "critical" paired with outcomes that earned the lowest rankings in terms of being perceived as "very much achieved." How can this be? One plausible answer is that respondents may consider these goals as so fundamental to education that linking them to accreditation could potentially limit their prominence. This theory is made dubious by the fact that the NEACS survey (2005), despite not asking about achievement and development specifically, notes that K-12 school leaders mentioned "improved instruction" more often than any other outcome of accreditation that enhanced the quality of their school (although independent-school leaders were not as supportive as others within this group).

Another answer could be that with all the attention given to accountability in education (such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) and the prominence of "teacher learning and teaching" and "student achievement" within that tumult the low rankings may be a subconscious response reflecting cultural fatigue with the national discourse. Also, independent-school communities are often wary of their public school counterparts in terms of bureaucracy and directives (ISACS, 1993; Powell, 1999), so it is possible the low rankings are a response to a perception that these two goals should not be measured and regulated or that they should be advanced by means other than accreditation.

Independent schools tend to recognize and put a premium on the profound qualitative nature of these two goals, whereas their public school counterparts lack the resources or institutional freedom to do so.

Last, it could be as simple as internal stakeholders not perceiving accreditation as an effective vehicle to improve certain educational goals regardless of their prominence and/or centrality. In her study of educators in Catholic K-12 schools within a regional accreditation association (and thus similar to this research), Verges (2005) found that three of the four areas of school improvement expected to result from accreditation that were perceived to be least successful (low "agree" and "strongly agree" scores) and most unsuccessful (high ""disagree" and "strongly disagree") were "teaching methods," "professional development increase," and "professional development quality." It is unclear whether this is an issue of efficacy or something else. In any event, this result invites further study.

Additional Discussion. There are two other areas worthy of mention. First, the researcher's attempts to find an accrediting agency willing to provide some data, send no more than a handful of emails on behalf of the researcher and themselves, and participate in a process resembling an evaluation was far more difficult than expected. The researcher understood that NAIS Commission on Accreditation members work with limited resources, yet even with assurances that the researcher would do the vast majority of the work, it was evident that agency members either did believe knowing how their constituents perceive the accreditation process was a priority, or they did not want to bother their member schools with any more encumbrances than are already necessary. This institutional reluctance to get involved was apparent despite reminders that an

association's participation might result in reduced or more efficacious work down the line. While many of the agencies publicly expressed a desire to improve their process, a partial review found the most robust approach to receiving feedback consisted of a post-visit survey of 15 or fewer questions sent to a select number of persons involved in the accreditation, focusing on the demeanor and role articulation of the professionals most likely to contribute to the process. Outside of the participating Association, any desire to shine the brighter light of an unbiased third-party viewpoint appeared circumspect; moreover, though there is no data to quantify the curious reasons given for non-participation, in the eyes of the researcher, the struggles to find a participating association cast a shadow over the industry's purported predisposition toward self-improvement.

Reflective of further shortcomings of the accreditation process, it was also apparent that there was no opportunity for people involved in the process to tease out such issues with an eye towards its improvement. When attitudes such as "I once had a former head of school tell me, 'All I want from [the accrediting agency] is a C.' He said that openly" [#99] and "there was so much 'busy work' that there was not as much time as I would have liked for meaningful discussion" [#3] exist, accreditors must find ways to make the process indispensible. This awareness leads one to question what would be the best starting point if associations wish to begin feedback loops into their processes.

Nothing is more fundamental and important to the mission of an accrediting body than each accreditation it oversees and the beneficial outcomes of that work. Accordingly, an online education module explaining the philosophy behind accreditation and the process at hand could be required for all internal stakeholders. More importantly, it could clarify the goals of the process with regard to stakeholders, as well as their

responsibilities and expectations of how properly to meet each goal. The accrediting agency is free to decide whether goals can be met by achieving certain established standards, or with the school's strategic plan or self-study.

The implication here is as much, if not more, to compel agencies towards better self-assessment and improvement of processes than it is to determine what the process should entail. Reflecting the spirit of Stufflebeam's (2001b) list of tasks associated with evaluation review, each agency can manage expectations, increase engagement, and improve its evaluative feedback loop by providing in the module (1) an informed list of goals associated with every accreditation that is true to the mission, purpose, and broader goals of the accrediting body and (2) a systematic way for stakeholders to perceive the goals' primacy to the process in terms of outcomes. Requiring internal stakeholders to complete an agency's education module makes goals clear and invites stakeholders further into the process. Just as critical, a sample group should be asked to participate in a post-visit survey measuring perceptions of these agency goals and their outcomes. Doing so engages other components of Stufflebeam's list, and current technology provides convenient ways for accrediting bodies to employ the module.

Limitations

This research was undertaken in conjunction with a large regional accrediting association. While the Association is a member of the CoA and all member schools invited to participate are NAIS members as well, readers should be cautious about the generalizability of this research. Of greatest concern in this regard is the issue of sample size. As explained in Chapter 3, the methodology employed a sound convenience sample, but access to respondents within this sample was severely limited and thus unequivocally

non-optimal. For purposes of establishing a basic understanding of independent-school accreditation, the methodology was adequate. However, an accrediting agency that wishes to follow up with a similar examination of its own association will have to be more heavy-handed about participation.

Additional observations and findings invite follow-up with further research. First, as noted earlier in this chapter's discussion, there was a heavy weighting of low agreement scores in the first half of the survey items and (not surprisingly) a similar weighting of high agreement scores in the back half. Though it can be assumed that this occurred as a matter of chance, further examination of this phenomenon would be worthwhile. Was there an unintentional typology of stated goals in either half? In terms of survey design, were respondents likely to respond more positively as the survey moved toward completion?

Next, as referenced earlier in discussion of Question Sets 2 and 4, some stated goals considered foundational to almost any school had low outcome achievement scores. It would be interesting to examine whether there is any latent negativity towards a goal because of its perceived complexity. For example, 15.4% of respondents did not agree with the statement "in theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve teacher learning and teaching at my school," thereby signifying that they do not perceive this to be a critical goal of accreditation. Is it possible that any of these respondents judged the stated goal based on his or her anticipation of an unfulfilled or unsatisfactory outcome when theory would be turned into action, and not on whether or not the goal itself was critical? Or is it that they do not believe that accreditation can or should achieve this important goal? And if it is that they expect an unsatisfactory outcome, do they in any

way contribute to achieving such an outcome?

Another set of limitations arose from choices made early in the study design, particularly, to seek additional information as to why people felt a stated goal was not at all achieved or somewhat achieved, but not from people who felt that a goal was very much achieved. In retrospect, the information collected from Part III of each question set turned out to be more integral to the study than originally expected. These response boxes asked "What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to . . ." In essence, these questions asked respondents to explain why they thought the outcome fell short of the stated goal. Similar opportunities for feedback existed with regard to examining why an outcome *was* "very much achieved" or why a stated goal *was not* perceived as critical to accreditation. In an attempt to simplify the survey and analysis that would follow, however, these questions were not asked. Qualitative data from these questions would surely have been illuminating. In retrospect, it appears that not asking these questions limits this study in ways that highlight opportunities for deeper inquiry into this subject. Because so many of the outcomes earned relatively high "very much achieved" scores, the amount of qualitative data was even more limited than originally expected because of their inverse relationship (very much achieved scores meant less qualitative data could be collected).

As mentioned previously, there is a concern that so many of the question sets in first have of the survey yielded aggregate results that fell below the median in both the percentage of stakeholders who felt the stated goal was an critical outcome of accreditation, and in the percentage who felt the goal was very much achieved, whereas

so many in the second half of the survey yielded aggregate results that fell above both of those medians. Last, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the stated goals were vetted through the process of content validity. However, future research of this type would demand more exacting validation of this or a similar instrument.

Conclusions

Despite the questions that arise from the discussion and the study's limitations, there are important conclusions from this research. First, two outcomes found to be statistically significant indicate that trustees, who are typically insulated from the day-to-day operations of a school, may have perceived a higher level of achievement than the other two stakeholder groups, which raised concerns about ensuring the highest appropriate level of trustee engagement over the span of the accreditation process.

Second, given all of the moving parts associated with accreditation, to have so many goals that are perceived to be critical only harms to process in terms of efficacy and achievement. Further, the process appears to be weakened by stakeholder criticism that the goals of accreditation are too complex and cannot always be quantified, and therefore cannot be shown to have been attained

Last, and perhaps most importantly, the two goals of improving student achievement and teacher development and their respective outcomes were perceived as among the least important and the least achieved of the stated goals of accreditation, which is surprising and concerning given the national attention to both, their fundamental status in education, and in connection to this research the positive outlook on all the goals in general.

Implications

A number of questions have either arisen from this research or been intensified by it. In asking them, these questions often point out limitations not explicitly mentioned above in the process of exploring implications. One such question is: what motivates accreditors to improve their process? Other studies discuss the opinions of internal constituents (NEACS, 2005; Roller et al., 2003; Roberts et al., 2004) but there is no clear consensus about what forces drive improvement, beyond government intervention and competition between accreditation associations as a function of the marketplace. In other words, would accreditation improve if institutions seeking accreditation could more easily access two or more reputable associations to compete for the school's business based on membership price and the nature or services provided? As with independent schools themselves, sometimes the threat of the marketplace alone gives comfort to those concerned that an institution left to its own devices with no competition will do nothing for self-improvement.

This study also raises further questions on some complementary aspects of what motivates accreditors to improve. Specifically, what motivates schools and their constituents to seek or demand improvement of the accreditation process? So many other questions tumble out of this one, including but not limited to: do internal stakeholders at independent schools think they need to improve? Do they think they need help in improving? Do they perceive the accreditation process as the best option available to them if the improvement questions above are answered affirmatively? In a slightly different tact, what is the optimal amount of goals that in turn will produce the optimal accreditation?

There are many ways to approach a study of stakeholder perceptions of the goals and outcomes of accreditation in independent schools. Had respondents been asked to list the goals they perceive to be critical themselves, instead of being given a goal and asked if they agree that it was critical, it is very likely that this study would have derived a different perspective on the goals and outcomes of accreditation. Similarly, if the study had also focused on the perceptions of accreditation association officers, and they too had been asked to list the goals of independent accreditation without prompts, one might expect even different perspectives, and possibly different conclusions. Furthermore, these questions do not begin to touch on whether or not the current institution-to-institution model between agencies and schools is the most effective or fruitful method of independent-school accreditation. It almost goes without saying that when little research exists within a particular area of scholarship, the first forays into the field may produce more questions meriting further study than answers.

Nonetheless, there is a great deal more to be learned about how accreditation and independent schools can assist one another. It would be particularly helpful to see further research explore the perceptions around why so many goals were perceived to have been critical and why so many outcomes were perceived to have been very much achieved, neither of which was pursued here. Independent schools would benefit from understanding better ways to portray accreditation in a simple and engaging way and one path to this end would be more clarification around what it really means to be critical for internal stakeholders. In a similar vein, accreditors would benefit from an improved value proposition that could be gained if they better understood what it takes to achieve an outcome, both in terms of the characteristics of what it takes in the perception of

internal stakeholders and as to whether or not the accreditors themselves agree that said characteristics are appropriate.

The results of this study deserve consideration and concern from educators and accreditors alike, whether the issue is participant engagement, focused and applicable goals, manageable outcomes, the centrality of student achievement and teacher development, or the implications of any other finding. If the stated goals of accreditation are meaningfully tied to the improvement of educational institutions, then ongoing efforts, inquiry, and evaluation in this vein can only benefit education in the near term and ultimately lay a foundation for process evaluation in the longer term. Those engaged in the work and improvement of education have an obligation on the nation's behalf to care about these conclusions and implications, and action of any sort is not only welcome, but essential to the ongoing relevance of independent schools as a meaningful sector of American education and to accreditation as an effective way of not only assuring, but improving the quality of educational outcomes, whatever the level or sector.

References

AdvancED. (2011a). *What is accreditation?* Retrieved from http://www.advance-ed.org/what-accreditation

AdavncED. (2011b). *Standards for quality schools.* Retrieved from http://www.advanc-ed.org/new-standards-quality

Akiba, M., Cockrell, K. S., Simmons, J. C., Han, S., & Agarwal, G. (2010). Preparing teachers for diversity: Examination of teacher certification and program accreditation standards in the 50 states and Washington, DC. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 43*, 446-462. doi: 10.1080/10665684.2010.510048

American Council on Education (2011). *History of accreditation.* Retrieved from http://acics.org/accreditation/content.aspx?id=2258

Argyris, C. (1976). Single-loop and double-loop models in research on decision making. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 21*, 363-375.

Argyris, C. (1977). Double loop learning in organizations. *Harvard Business Review, 55*(5), 115-125. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2391848

Argyris, C. (2004). Double□Loop learning and organizational change. In J.J. Boonstra (Ed.), *Dynamics of Organizational Change and Learning* (pp. 389-402). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Baldwin, R. & Hughes, J. (1995). *Boards at their best.* Danbury, CT: Connolly-Cormack.

Berlak, A. (2003). Who's in charge here? teacher education and 2042. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 30*, 31-40.

Bickman, L. (1997). Evaluating evaluation: Where do we go from here? *Evaluation*

Practice, *18*(1), 1-16.

Brennan, L. L., & Austin, W. W. (2003). Addressing the need for management processes for higher education accreditation. *Innovative Higher Education, 28*(1), 49-62. doi: 10.1023/A:1025415618658

Brittingham, B. (2009). Accreditation in the United States: How did we get to where we are? *New Directions for Higher Education*, *145*, 7-27. doi: 10.1002/he.331

Broughman, S., Swaim, N., & Hryczaniuk, C. (2011). *Characteristics of private schools in the United States: Results from the 2009-10 private school universe survey* (NCES 2011-339). Washington, DC.; National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Brown, D. G. (1974). Taking advantage of external evaluation. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 1974*, 81-93. doi: 10.1002/ir.37019740108

Choy, S. P. (1997). Public and private schools: How do they differ? *Findings from "The Condition of Education, 1997," 12*. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/97983.pdf

Collegiate School. (2014). *About us: history*. Retrieved from http://www.collegiateschool.org/podium/default.aspx?t=114023

Cooksy, L. J., & Caracelli, V. J. (2005). Quality, context, and use. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *26*, 31.

Cooksy, L.J., & Caracelli, V.J. (2009). Metaevaluation in practice. *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation*, *6*(11), 1-15.

Creswell, J. W. (2011). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.) New York: Allyn & Bacon. [Kindle version]. Retrieved from

http://www.amazon.com/Research-Design-Qualitative-Quantitative-Approaches-ebook/dp/B00DYWBXXE/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1391461635&sr=8-1&keywords=Research+design%3A+Qualitative%2C+quantitative%2C+and+mixed+methods

DeKuyper, M. (2007). *Trustee handbook: A guide to effective governance for independent school boards* (9th ed.). Washington, DC: National Association of Independent Schools.

Dika, S. L., & Janosik, S. M. (2003). The role of selection, orientation and training in improving the quality of public college and university boards of trustees in the united states. *Quality in Higher Education, 9*(3), 13. doi: 10.1080/1353832032000151139

Dillman, D., Smyth J., & Christian L. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Eaton, J. (2006) Accreditation, Professional Interest and the Public Interest: Conflict or Convergence. *Inside Accreditation with the President of CHEA, 2*(6), October 31. Retrieved from www.chea.org/ia/IA_103006v2.htm

Eaton, J. (2009a). An overview of US accreditation. *Council for Higher Education Accreditation*. Retrieved from http://chea.org/pdf/Overview%20of%20US%20Accreditation%2003.2011.pdf

Eaton, J. (2009b). Accountability: An old issue in a new era. *Inside Accreditation*, CHEA, *5*(1). Retrieved from http://www.chea.org/ia/IA_103006v2.htm.

Eaton, J. (2011). U.S. accreditation: Meeting the challenges of accountability and student achievement. *Evaluation in Higher Education*, June 2011, 1-20. Retrieved from

http://www.chea.org/pdf/EHE5-1_U%20S%20_Accreditation_Meeting_the_Challenges_of_Accountability_and_Student_Achievement-Judith_S%20_Eaton.pdf

Ewell, P. T. (2002). A delicate balance: The role of evaluation in management. *Quality in Higher Education, 8*, 159-171. doi: 10.1080/1353832022000004359

Ewert, S. (2013). *The decline in private school enrollment* (SEHSD Working Paper Number FY12-117 January, 2013). Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/hhes/school/files/ewert_private_school_enrollment.pdf

Guba, E. G. & Stufflebeam, D. L. (1970). *Evaluation: The process of stimulating, aiding, and abetting insightful action*. Bloomington, IN: School of Education, Indiana University.

Gow, P. (2011). Harry potter and the accreditor's nightmare. *Independent School*, *70*(4), 76-81.

Haney, R. M. (2010). Design for success: New configurations and governance models for catholic schools. *Catholic Education*, 14, 195-211. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce/vol14/iss2/4

Harvey, L. (2004). The power of accreditation: Views of academics. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 26*, 207-223. doi: 10.1080/1360080042000218267

Harvey, L., & Williams, J. (2010). Editorial: Fifteen years of quality in higher education, *Quality in Higher Education*, 16, 3-36. doi: 10.1080/13538321003679457

Hayward, F. M. (2010, December). *Rethinking standards for quality assurance and accreditation: thoughts from the field*. Paper presented at the 3rd International Conference on Assessing Quality in Higher Education. Lahore, Pakistan.

Independent School Association of the Central States (1993). *ISACS primer for trustees part I.* Retrieved from http://www.isacs.org/uploads/file/Monographs/Board%20of%20Trustees/ISACS%20PRIMER%20for%20TRUSTEES%20Part%20I.pdf

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. (1994). *The program evaluation standards: How to assess evaluations of educational programs*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jones, D. P., & Council for Higher Education Accreditation (US). (2002). *Different perspectives on information about educational quality: Implications for the role of accreditation* Washington, DC: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Kane, P. (1992a). *Emerging issues in K-12 independent school governance* (AGB Occasional Paper No. 14). Washington, DC: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

Kane, P (Ed.). (1992b). *Independent schools, independent thinkers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kane, P. (1993, Spring). So you want to be a trustee . . . . *Independent School*, 13-17.

Kim, D. H., & Senge, P. M. (1994). Putting systems thinking into practice. *System Dynamics Review, 10*, 277-290. doi: 10.1002/sdr.4260100213

Khalsa, S. (1994). *Ways independent school heads work with their boards of trustees to govern their schools* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Dissertation Abstracts International. *55*, 08A.

Klingenstein Center. (2014) *Frequently asked questions*. Retrieved from

http://www.klingenstein.org/content/frequently-asked-questions#3

Kraushaar, O. (1972). *American nonpublic schools: Patterns of diversity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kristensen, B. (2010). Has external quality assurance actually improved quality in higher education over the course of 20 years of the 'quality revolution'? *Quality In Higher Education*, *16*, 153-157. doi:10.1080/13538322.2010.485732

Lipsey, M., Crosse, S., Dunkle, J., Pollard, J., & Stobart, G. (1985). Evaluation: The state of the art and the sorry state of the science. In D. S. Cordray (Ed.), *Utilizing prior research in evaluation planning (New Directions for Program Evaluation*, No. 27, pp. 7-28). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. doi: 10.1002/ev.1398

Lowrie, A., & Willmott, H. (2009). Accreditation sickness in the consumption of business education: The vacuum in AACSB standard setting. *Management Learning, 40*, 411-420. doi: 10.1177/1350507609335851

Mathison, S. (Ed.). (2005). *Encyclopedia of evaluation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412950558

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (2011). *The history of the middle states association*. Retrieved from http://www.middlestates.org/History.html

Miller, J. D., & Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. (1998). *A centennial history of the southern association of colleges and schools, 1895-1995*. Decatur, GA: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Murray, F. B. (2001). From consensus standards to evidence of claims: Assessment and accreditation in the case of teacher education. *New Directions for Higher Education, 2001*(113), 49-66. doi: 10.1002/he.4

National Association of Independent Schools. (1999a). *Diversity in independent schools: A statistical sketch*. Washington, DC: Author.

National Association of Independent Schools. (1999b). *Fund-raising at independent schools*. Washington, DC: Author.

National Association of Independent Schools. (1999c). *Single-sex independent schools*. Washington, DC: Author.

National Association of Independent Schools. (2000a). *Accountability of independent schools*. Washington, DC: Author.

National Association of Independent Schools. (2000b). *Financing an independent school education*. Washington, DC: Author.

National Association of Independent Schools. (2000c). *Teachers at independent schools*. Washington, DC: Author.

National Association of Independent Schools. (2000d). *Independent school admission*. Washington, DC: Author.

National Association of Independent Schools. (2004, June 25). *NAIS 2002 attrition study.* Retrieved from http://www.nais.org/Series/Pages/NAIS-2002-Student-Attrition-Study.aspx

National Association of Independent Schools. (2005). *Facts at a glance*. Retrieved from https://www.nais.org/Statistics/Documents/NAISmembers2005Reviewed1.pdf

National Association of Independent Schools. (2006e). *2006 National public opinion poll.* Washington, DC: Author.

National Association of Independent Schools. (2007, May 26). *A primer for trustees.* Retrieved from http://www.nais.org/articlePrint.cfm?print=Y&ItemNumber=146757

National Association of Independent Schools. (2008a). *Commission on accreditation: application for membership 2008-09.* Washington, DC: Author

National Association of Independent Schools. (2008b). *Criteria checklist for candidate members 2008-09*. Washington, DC: Author

National Association of Independent Schools. (2009, December 26). *Model core standards.* Retrieved from http://www.nais.org/about/article.cfm?ItemNumber=146658

National Association of Independent Schools. (2010). *A guide to become a school of the future*. Washington, DC: Author.

National Association of Independent Schools. (2011a, January 12). *Teachers at independent schools.* Retrieved from http://www.nais.org/articlePrint.cfm?print=Y&ItemNumber=145299

National Association of Independent Schools. (2011b, August 2). *Criteria for effective independent school accreditation practices*. Retrieved from http://www.nais.org/about /article.cfm?ItemNumber=152790

National Association of Independent Schools. (2011c, March 29). *Accreditation.* Retrieved from http://www.nais.org/about/index.cfm?itemnumber=145844&sn.ItemNumber=1482&tn. ItemNumber=10241

National Association of Independent Schools. (2012a, September 10). *The Name "independent" schools.* Retrieved from http://parents.nais.org/Articles/Pages/The-Name-Independent-Schools.aspx

National Association of Independent Schools. (2012b, September 10). *The independent schools advantage.* Retrieved from http://parents.nais.org/Articles/Pages/The-Independent-School-Advantage.aspx

National Association of Independent Schools. (2013a). *Facts at a glance*. Retrieved from https://www.nais.org/Articles/Documents/NAISFactsAtAGlance201213.pdf

National Association of Independent Schools. (2013b, October 29). *The Financial aid outlook, 2013-2014.* Retrieved from http://www.nais.org/Articles/Pages/The-Financial-Aid-Outlook-2013-2014.aspx

National Association of Independent Schools. (2014, January 10). *School membership.* Retrieved from http://www.nais.org/Articles/Pages/School-Membership.aspx

New England Association of Colleges & Schools. (2006, July). *The impact of accreditation on the quality of education: results of the regional accreditation and quality of education survey, NEACS 2005*. Retrieved from www.NEACS.org/downloads/SURVEY REPORT IN FULL.pdf

New England Association of Colleges & Schools. (2011a). *Accreditation: a process of systematic improvement*. Retrieved from http:// www.NEACS.org/executiveoffice/ about_accreditation/process.

New England Association of Colleges & Schools. (2011b). *Benefits of accreditation*. Retrieved from http://caisa.NEACS.org/about_accreditation/benefits_of_accreditation.

Patton, M. Q. (2011). *Essentials of utilization-focused evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Peabody School of Education and Human Development. (2014). Vanderbilt to offer new master's for independent school leadership [press release]. Retrieved from http://news.vanderbilt.edu/2014/01/independent-school-leadership/

Powell, A. (1999, October 20). Reflections on a century of independent schools. *Education Week*, *19*(8), 42-44.

Prather, C. D. (2007). Specialized accreditation in collegiate aviation: An analysis of the perceived value of specialized accreditation by the aviation accreditation board international. *Open Access Theses and Dissertations from the College of Education and Human Sciences,* Lincoln, NE

Roberts, W., Johnson, R., & Groesbeck, J. (2004). The faculty perspective on the impact of AACSB accreditation. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 8*, 111-125.

Roller, R. H., Andrews, B. K., & Bovee, S. L. (2003). Specialized accreditation of business schools: A comparison of alternative costs, benefits, and motivations. *The Journal of Education for Business, 78*, 197-204. doi: 10.1080/08832320309598601

Sanders, J. R. (1994). *The program evaluation standards: How to assess evaluations of educational programs*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Sandmann, L. R., Williams, J. E., & Abrams, E. D. (2009). Higher education community engagement and accreditation: Activating engagement through innovative accreditation strategies. *Planning for Higher Education, 37*(3), 15-26.

Scriven, M. (1975). *Evaluation bias and its control*. Berkeley, CA: University of California.

Scriven, M. (1991). *Evaluation thesaurus*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Scriven, M. (1994). The final synthesis. *Evaluation Practice*, *15*, 367-382. doi: 10.1177/109821409401500317

Seamon, M. C. (2010). The value of accreditation: An overview of three decades of research comparing accredited and unaccredited journalism and mass communication programs. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator, 65*, 10-20. doi: 10.1177/107769581006500103

Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Leviton, L. C. (1991). *Foundations of program evaluation: Theories of practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Smith, N. L. (1981). Criticism and meta-evaluation. *New Perspectives in Evaluation*, 2, 266-274.

Smith, N. L. (1990). Cautions on the use of investigative case studies in meta-evaluation. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 13, 373-378. doi: 10.1016/0149-7189(90)90022-O

Synder, T. D. (ed.). (1993). *120 years of American education: A statistical portrait*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Statistics.

Stakeholder. (2012). In *Merriam-Webster.com*. Retrieved from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stakeholder

Stufflebeam, D. L. (2001a). The metaevaluation imperative. *American Journal of Evaluation, 22*, 183. doi: 10.1016/S1098-2140(01)00127-8

Stufflebeam, D. L. (2001b). Evaluation models. *New Directions for Evaluation*,

2001(89), 7-98. doi: 10.1002/ev.3

Sue, V., & Ritter, L. (2012). *Conducting online surveys*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Wellman, J. V. (2003). Accreditation and the credit hour. *New Directions for Higher Education, 2003*(122), 57-69. doi: 10.1002/he.110

Wood, A. L. (2006). Demystifying accreditation: Action plans for a national or regional accreditation. *Innovative Higher Education, 31*, 43-62. doi: 10.1007/s10755-006-9008-6

Worthen, B. R., & Sanders, J. R. (1987). *Educational evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. White Plains, NY: Longman

United States Department of Education. (2006). *A test of leadership: Charting the future of American higher education*. A Report of the Commission Appointed by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. Washington, DC: Author.

United States Department of Education. (2007). *Choosing a school for your child*. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/parents/schools/find/choose/pub_pg5.html.

United States Department of Education. (2014, January 31). *Accreditation in the united states*. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg2.html

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (2011). *A guide to evaluating crime control of programs in public housing,* Retrieved from http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/guide/documents/benefits_of_evaluation.htm

Van Kemenade, E., Pupius, M., & Hardjono, T. W. (2008). More value to defining

quality. *Quality in Higher Education, 14*, 175-185. doi: 10.1080/13538320802278461

Verges, M. (2005). The accreditation process as a tool for school improvement and catholic identity. *Momentum, 36*, 46-50.

Appendix A: Definition of Terms

- Board of Trustees: Synonymous with "board of directors" or "school board," the independent-school board of trustees carries the responsibilities listed in Appendix B.
- Independent school: An independent school is one that is independently governed by a board of trustees and is financially self-supported. Terms such as private school and nonpublic school are often held to be synonymous with independent school, but the former two terms refer to a wider population of schools that include parochial/religious, Montessori, and for-profit institutions as well.
- Internal Stakeholders: Merriam Webster (2012) defines a stakeholder as: one, a person entrusted with the stakes of bettors, two, one that has a stake in an enterprise or, three, one who is involved in or affected by a course of action. Within an independent school, a stakeholder could be defined by either of the second two definitions. Many groups associated with a particular school could be said to have a stake in the enterprise or are involved in or affected by a course of action. Since there are other stakeholder groups within schools (e.g., students, parents, community, alumni, et al.) that could be said to have a stake in the enterprise, "internal" will further refine the definition to those involved in or affected by a course of action. An internal stakeholder is defined as a person who either is employed by the school, such as the head of school, the administration, and the faculty, or who bears the responsibility of its governance, such as the Board of Trustees, and as such is involved in or affected by any course of action taken by or directed toward their institution.
- National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS): According to their own

website, the National Association of Independent Schools is a membership organization and the national voice of independent education. NAIS represents approximately 1,400 independent schools and associations in the United States, and affiliates with independent schools abroad as well. Members are independently governed by a board of trustees, practice non-discriminatory practices, are accredited by an approved state or regional association, and hold not-for-profit status, IRS regulations for 501 (c)(3) nonprofits. The NAIS represents 472,967 students, 48,385 teachers and support personnel, and 9,931 administrators in the United States.

Appendix B: National Association of Independent Schools Commission on Accreditation Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices

(Revised August 2011)

Criteria for Regional and State Associations

1. The association holds schools accountable to a comprehensive set of standards related to the educational program and issues of institutional health.

2. The association, recognizing that accreditation is a peer review process, institutes policies and procedures that ensure fairness and impartiality and that are free of conflicts of interest, both in appearance and in fact.

3. The accreditation process consists of a continuing cycle: self-study by the school, visit and report by a team of trained peers, action by the association, and follow-up by the school and the association.

4. The association monitors the school's compliance with standards and its progress in addressing the recommendations of the self-study and of the visiting team report. The association also regularly solicits reports from schools on substantive institutional change and reviews the school's accreditation status in the light of those changes.

5. The decision-making and appeal processes regarding accreditation status and /or changes in the accreditation cycle are clear and understandable. Policies and procedures are available for public review.

6. The association offers formal and comprehensive preparation and training for all participants in the accreditation process, including team chairs and members, heads of school, self-study coordinators, and association boards and commissions.

7. The association engages in regular evaluation and review of its standards and

accreditation process and solicits reports from schools and visiting teams on their experience with the process.

8. The association designates a decision-making body charged with overseeing the evaluation and accreditation process and making final decisions regarding accreditation.

9. The accreditation process will examine the whole school, including all divisions and programs.

10. The association has a procedure to handle complaints that accredited schools are not meeting standards.

Criteria for Standards

The accreditation process rests on comprehensive standards which schools must meet:

1. The standards address all areas of school life, including the following: mission, governance, finance, program, community of the school, administration, development, admissions, personnel, health and safety, facilities, student services, school culture, and residential life (where applicable).

2. The standards require schools to conduct a thoughtful assessment of individual student progress consistent with the school's mission. (amended 2/09)

3. The standards require a school to provide evidence of a thoughtful process, respectful of its mission, for the collection and use in school decision-making of data (both internal and external) about student learning. (adopted 2/09; to be implemented by 2/11)

4. The standards require a school to demonstrate that its educational programs, instructional practices, and institutional culture are informed by relevant research regarding how students learn and the knowledge and capacities they will need to lead

purposeful and constructive lives. (adopted 2/11; to be implemented by 2/13)

Criteria for the Self-Study

1. A broad cross-section of the community, (including all faculty and staff, as well as members of the governing body and others in the community, as appropriate) participate in preparing the self-study.

2. The self-study is evaluative as well as descriptive, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and assesses both the school's compliance with standards and the congruence between its program and mission. The school will also provide all required documents in a timely fashion.

3. The self-study process is deliberative, and the self-study report reflects the considered judgment of the school's professional community.

Criteria for the Visiting Team

1. The accrediting association appoints a visiting team chair who shall be responsible to follow the accrediting association's guidelines, to ensure the visiting team's effectiveness, and to protect the integrity of the process.

2. The accrediting association appoints a visiting team to conduct a site visit while school is in session.

3. The association is mindful of the circumstances of the school and the full range of the standards in determining the size and selecting the members of a visiting team.

4. The visiting team receives advance materials in a timely fashion and arrives at the school fully prepared.

5. The team observes the program and interviews school staff, trustees and others as appropriate. It validates the self-study, evaluates the school's compliance with standards,

and writes a report with commendations and recommendations which is sent to the association and to the school in a timely fashion. The report is confidential, except as authorized by the school.

6. The length of the visit is sufficient to accomplish the above.

7. The members of the visiting team hold confidential the information they receive and their discussions during the accreditation process.

Criteria for the Association Review

1. The association, or a representative committee, receives and reviews the self-study, and visiting team report, determines the accreditation status of the school, prescribes appropriate actions, and sets up a schedule for future reports and visits. The school is given an opportunity to respond to the report of the visiting committee in advance of the association taking action on its accreditation.

2. The association notifies the board chair, as well as the head of school, concerning decisions related to a school's accreditation.

Appendix C: NAIS Commission on Accreditation Model Core Standards

Introduction

Model Core Standards are those which define the culture of independent schools and relate directly to the first of the Criteria for Effective Accreditation. While they do not serve as a template, these standards reflect the core elements of our schools and their operation and should be represented in some form in a regional or state association's accreditation instrument. Associations are expected to check that these areas are covered in their own standards and report on any discrepancies.

Mission

1. The school has a clear statement of educational mission. The stated mission and philosophy define the school's admissions, program, planning and decision-making.
2. The mission of the school is congruent with principles of academic scholarship: permitting and encouraging freedom of inquiry, diversity of viewpoints, and independent/critical thinking.

Full Disclosure

The school makes full, accurate and truthful disclosure of its mission, policies, expectations, programs and practices.

Governance

1. The governing body consistently exercises its fiduciary responsibility.
2. The governing board of the school is a deliberative body with clearly defined roles and responsibilities that are communicated to all constituents. It provides for

    a. continuity of mission;

    b. stability in transitions of leadership;

c. establishing and monitoring needed school policies;

d. comprehensive strategic and financial planning;

e. financial oversight, accountability and stability;

f. evaluation and support of the development of the head of school;

g. clearly defined and regularly applied procedures to orient, educate, and evaluate the governing body;

h. a model of inclusive decision making for the school community; and

i. adequate risk management policies.

3. The board delegates the operational and educational functions of the school to the head of school.

Program

1. The educational program stems from the school's beliefs about teaching and learning which are regularly reviewed and which are consistent with the mission of the school.

2. All school programs (including early childhood, residential, extended care, etc.) demonstrate consideration for the appropriate intellectual, social, physical, aesthetic, emotional and ethical development of students in all aspects of school and student life.

3. The school has sufficient resources to support the program of the school and the needs of the students and professional staff.

4. Instructional materials and equipment are of sufficient quality, quantity, and variety to provide effective support to the goals and methods of the program.

5. The school has in place a procedure for follow-up on graduate success, and utilizes resulting data to assess its goals and programs.

6. Requirements and expectations for students, parents, faculty, trustees, and employees clearly reflect the values and mission of the school.

7. Procedures are in place to assess and communicate effectively individual student progress toward meeting the goals of the program.

Fiscal Responsibility

1. There is evidence of efficient and effective management of resources sufficient to advance the mission of the school.

2. There are effective policies and procedures for management of operating and capital funds in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles and practices.

Professional Staff

1. Faculty and staff are well prepared through education and training and/or experience to fulfill the responsibilities of their positions.

2. Faculty, administration and staff members are sufficient in number to accomplish the work for which they are responsible.

3. The administration actively supports the professional development of faculty and staff through allocation of time and resources.

4. The school implements clearly defined programs for regular performance evaluation of the administration, faculty and staff.

5. Personnel practices provide ethical treatment among all faculty, administration and staff with respect to compensation, workloads, and working conditions.

Culture and Climate

1. In keeping with its mission, the school promotes an equitable, just, and inclusive community that inspires students to respect and value diversity.

2. The school promotes a culture of global understanding and commitment to preserving the environment for current and future generations.

Health & Safety

The school has a process to ensure that it demonstrates compliance with all state, local and federal regulations.

Appendix D: NAIS Commission on Accreditation Member Associations

The following list indicates state, regional, and international independent school accrediting associations that are members of the NAIS Commission on Accreditation:

- Association of Colorado Independent Schools (ACIS)
- California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS/CA)
- Canadian Accredited Independent Schools (CAIS/CAN)
- Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS/CT)
- Council of International Schools (CIS)
- Florida Council of Independent Schools (FCIS)
- Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS)
- New Jersey Association of Independent Schools (NJAIS)
- New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS)
- Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools (PAIS)
- Virginia Association of Independent Schools (VAIS)
- Association of Independent Schools in New England (AISNE)
- Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS)
- Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS)
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEACS)
- Pacific Northwest Association of Independent Schools (PNAIS)
- Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS)
- Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES)
- The Association of Independent Maryland & DC Schools (AIMS)

The following list indicates regional accrediting associations serving public and

private schools in the United States and American Schools Abroad:

- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSACS)
- Commission on Secondary Schools and Commission on Elementary Schools
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEACS)
- North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS)
- Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS)
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

Appendix E: COE Application for Membership

Commission on Accreditation: Application for Membership

2008-09

The primary purpose of the Commission is to provide a vehicle by which member associations can cooperate and improve independent school accreditation practices nationally ultimately enhancing the quality of education for children in our schools, and to establish a credible assurance of the quality of these practices upon which NAIS and the public can rely.

The activities of the Commission, in furtherance of its purpose, include the following: assuring the highest standards for independent school accreditation by requiring compliance with the *Criteria of Effective Independent School Accreditation* as a matter of Commission membership; developing *Model Core Standards* for accreditation to serve as a reference for Commission members' accreditation programs; disseminating models of successful accreditation policies and procedures; engaging in research that will inform accreditation practice; promoting through advocacy efforts public understanding of and credibility for independent school accrediting programs; giving structure and oversight to peer review of member associations; and providing leadership, with the NAIS Board of Trustees, in matters of accreditation practice and policies.

MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Commission on Accreditation members must meet the following criteria:

- Hold member association status in NAIS.
- Have at least three-years of experience as a fully functioning accrediting association.
- Have an accrediting process with the primary purpose of reviewing and accrediting nonprofit independent elementary schools with minimally three consecutive primary and/or middle grades (defined as between grades one through eight), and/or independent secondary schools with minimally four consecutive grades.
- Accredit minimally 20 NAIS member schools. (International associations accredit minimally 20 NAIS international independent school subscribers)
- Comply with the Commission's *Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices.*
- Successfully complete a full review by the Commission.

APPLICATION FOR COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION MEMBERSHIP

- Accrediting associations that currently hold member association status in NAIS may apply for candidate membership on the NAIS Commission on Accreditation. Applicants must meet the first five membership requirement criteria noted above to be considered for membership. Upon review and approval by the Commission and endorsement by the NAIS Board of Trustees, successful applicants will be classified as *candidate members,* generally for no more than two years. After the association has completed the full review process and been issued a letter acknowledging compliance with the *Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices,* the association will receive *full membership* status.

- Should an applicant be denied membership on the Commission, it may appeal the decision to the NAIS Board of Trustees.

Please contact Jefferson Burnett, NAIS Vice President for Government and Community Relations, at burnett@nais.org or 202 973 9714 for more information about the Commission or any aspect of the membership application or appeal processes.

DOCUMENTATION: Please provide an electronic copy of each of the following (or four copies of each if electronic is not available):

- A cover letter giving a brief history of the association's accreditation program and explaining why the association is seeking membership on the Commission and how your association will be an asset to furthering the Commission's primary purpose as noted in the preamble above;
- A completed "Membership Application Information Form";
- A completed "*Criteria* Compliance Checklist for Candidate Members", indicating whether the association is in compliance, not in compliance, or unsure about compliance for each of the *Criteria*. Comment is required to explain how the criterion is met or why it is not.
- A list of the association's current membership (specifically, a list of accredited schools, their grade levels, location, year of last accreditation and next accreditation or interim review, and NAIS member status);
- A list of the association's Board of Trustees (and if applicable, those with accreditation program oversight);
- A copy of the most recent budget showing financial support for the accreditation program; and
- A copy of the association's accreditation manual and standards.

Once the application materials have been received, the Commission on Accreditation Membership Committee may request a meeting in person or telephonically to review and clarify information before presenting the application to the full Commission. The expense of an onsite visit, if deemed important, will be the responsibility of the applicant association.

An association that has achieved candidacy status may attend and participate in Commission

meetings, but without a vote. Candidacy status does not constitute membership on the Commission.

Appendix F: Criteria Checklist for Candidate Members

COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION

Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices

***CRITERIA* CHECKLIST FOR CANDIDATE MEMBERS**
2008-09

- Please review the following criteria relative to your accreditation program and indicate whether it complies or does not comply with each criterion or if you are unsure; comment as to how it complies or why not.

	CRITERIA	STATUS	COMMENTS
1.	The association holds schools accountable to a comprehensive set of standards related to the educational program and issues of institutional health.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
2.	The association, recognizing that accreditation is a peer review process, institutes policies and procedures that ensure fairness and impartiality and that are free of conflicts of interest, both in appearance and in fact.	Comply Do Not Comply	Comments:

		Unsure	
3.	The accreditation process consists of a continuing cycle: self-study by the school, visit and report by a team of trained peers, action by the association, and follow-up by the school and the association.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
4.	The association monitors the school's compliance with standards and its progress in addressing the recommendations of the self-study and of the visiting team report. The association also regularly solicits reports from schools on substantive institutional change and reviews the school's accreditation status in the light of those changes.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
5.	The decision-making and appeal processes regarding accreditation status and /or changes in the accreditation cycle are clear and understandable. Policies and procedures are available for public review.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:

6.	The association offers formal and comprehensive preparation and training for all participants in the accreditation process, including team chairs and members, heads of school, self-study coordinators, and association boards and commissions.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
7.	The association engages in regular		Comments:

	evaluation and review of its standards and accreditation process and solicits reports from schools and visiting teams on their experience with the process.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	
8.	The association designates a decision-making body charged with overseeing the evaluation and accreditation process and making final decisions regarding accreditation.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
9.	The accreditation process will examine the whole school, including all divisions and programs.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
10.	The association has a procedure to handle complaints that accredited schools are not meeting standards.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:

Criteria for Standards

11.	The accreditation process rests on comprehensive standards which schools must meet. The standards address all areas of	Comply	Comments:

	school life, including the following: mission, governance, finance, program, community of the school, administration, development, admissions, personnel, health and safety, facilities, student services, school culture, and residential life (where applicable).	Do Not Comply Unsure	
12.	The standards require schools to conduct a thoughtful assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:

Criteria for the Self-study

13.	A broad cross-section of the community (including all faculty and staff, as well as members of the governing body and others in the community, as appropriate) participate in preparing the self-study.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
14.	The self-study is evaluative as well as descriptive, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and assesses both the school's compliance with standards and the congruence between its program and mission. The school will also provide all required documents in a timely fashion.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
15.	The self-study process is deliberative, and the self-study report reflects the considered	Comply	Comments:

	judgment of the school's professional community.	Do Not Comply Unsure	

Criteria for the Visiting Team

16.	The accrediting association appoints a visiting team chair who shall be responsible to follow the accrediting association's guidelines, to ensure the visiting team's effectiveness, and to protect the integrity of the process.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
17.	The accrediting association appoints a visiting team to conduct a site visit while school is in session.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
18.	The association is mindful of the circumstances of the school and the full range of the standards in determining the size and selecting the members of a visiting team.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
19.	The visiting team receives advance materials in a timely fashion and arrives at the school fully prepared.	Comply Do Not	Comments:

		Comply Unsure	

20.	The team observes the program and interviews school staff, trustees and others as appropriate. It validates the self-study, evaluates the school's compliance with standards, and writes a report with commendations and recommendations which is sent to the association and to the school in a timely fashion. The report is confidential, except as authorized by the school.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
21.	The length of the visit is sufficient to accomplish the above.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
22.	The members of the visiting team hold confidential the information they receive and their discussions during the accreditation process.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:

Criteria for the Association Review

23.	The association, or a representative committee, receives and reviews the self-study, and-visiting team report, determines the accreditation status of the school, prescribes appropriate actions, and sets up a schedule for future reports and visits. The school is given an opportunity to respond to the report of the visiting committee in advance of the association taking action on its accreditation.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:
24.	The association notifies the board chair, as well as the head of school, concerning decisions related to a school's accreditation.	Comply Do Not Comply Unsure	Comments:

Appendix G: Informed Consent Agreement (surveymonkey.com form)

UVa SAIS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD CONSENT FORM

***Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.**

Purpose of the Research Study:
The purpose of this study is to determine internal stakeholders' perceptions regarding their acknowledgement of outcomes associated with the accreditation process in independent schools, as determined through declarative statements of benefit, purpose, and reason by the 19 NAIS accrediting agencies, and to gauge whether or not these perceptions are influenced by respondents' roles within the school or time since the accreditation visit occurred.

What You Will Do in the Study:
You will take a 15-20 minute survey that will ask to reveal your role (teacher, administrator, or trustee) at your institution, when your institution underwent accreditation within a time band (less than one year, or more than one year but no more than two), then answer 15 questions regarding your perceptions of the recent accreditation process.

Time Required:
The study will require about 20 minutes of a your time.

Risks:
There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits:
There are no direct benefits to participating in this research study other than the knowledge that you are making a difference with schools and the associations that serve them as they strive to improve their craft. The study may help build understanding of how internal stakeholders within an accreditation process view elements of the process. Also, the data will be analyzed for relationships dependent upon roles within the institution or when the process occurred at the institution.

Confidentiality:
The information gathered during the study will be anonymous. Names will not be collected or linked to the data. However, your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. You will be asked to identify the institution with which you have a relationship, but that will only provide the researcher with information on time of your specific accreditation visit and not be used in any way to identify you.

Voluntary Participation:
Participation in the study is completely voluntary. There is no payment for participating in the study.

Right to Withdraw from the Study:
Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you would like to withdraw from the study, you may choose "Withdraw" once the survey questions have ended. There is no penalty for withdrawing. Because the data is anonymous, you may not withdraw once you have submitted your survey.

If you have questions about the study, contact:
Researcher's Name:
C. H. Jones
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903
Telephone: 803-403-3031
Email address: chj2t@virginia.edu

Faculty Advisor's Name:
Dr. Mark Hampton
Bavaro Hall 137A
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903
Telephone: 434-982-2092
Email address: mhampton@virginia.edu

If you have questions about your rights in the study, contact:
Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.,
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: 434-924-5999
Email address: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb

By checking this box, I acknowledge to have read the consent form above, and voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

◯ Yes, I agree to participate

2%

Next

Appendix H: Convenience Association

Regarding the suitability of the willing association to act as a cluster sample, the association must abide by the NAIS Commission on Accreditation's *Model Core Standards* (Appendix D) and *Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices* (Appendix C). Beyond these requirements and other functions mentioned in the application process (Appendix H), one of the Directors of the association in question notes, "other than size and the expectations that come with it, there is nothing materially different in how we and NAIS serve our respective memberships" (personal communication, May 2012). Furthermore, as a function of typical metrics used by both associations, here is a comparison based on 2011-2012 numbers.

Indicator	NAIS	Convenience Association
Median Enrollment	@500	@625
Median Class Size	15	16
Median Tuition Day School	$19,820	$15,760
Median Financial Aid as % of Budget Expense	12.1%	9.1%
Median Student/FTE Total Staff Ratio	5.0	5.8
Total Faculty as % of Total Staff	50.2%	52.0%
Total Administrative Staff as % of Total Staff	15.4%	13.7%
Median Salary Expense per Student	$11,593	$9,126

Appendix I: Original 29 Stated Goals

The following questions were gleaned from the publically available materials of the CoA accrediting agencies and were reviewed for content validity by five directors within the CoA in the format below. They were later refined to the final list of 15 stated goals in Appendix J.

Are you confident you could provide at least one clear, concrete example that:

1. The accreditation process has provided you meaningful *involvement* in your institution's accreditation?
2. The accreditation process has allowed you to make legitimate *contributions* to your institution's accreditation?
3. The accreditation process and the resulting outcomes have justified your time and effort?
4. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improved introspection at your institution?
5. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in professional development for teachers at your institution?
6. Participation in the accreditation process has led to more teamwork among staff at your institution?
7. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in student academic *achievement* at your institution?
8. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic *environment* for students at your institution?
9. Participation in the accreditation process has improved organization and

management of your institution?

10. Participation in the accreditation process has improved the use and allocation of resources at your institution?
11. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the work environment for the staff at your institution?
12. Participation in the accreditation process has led to the opportunity for improved intra-school communication at your institution?
13. Participation in the accreditation process has led to a more effective strategic plan at your institution?
14. Participation in the accreditation process has led to awareness by our families that accreditation allows for ease in transferring credits from one school to another?
15. Participation in the accreditation process has led to awareness by our families that accreditation allows for admission of international students?
16. Participation in the accreditation process has led to awareness by our families that accreditation allows for greater access to programs (federal loans, scholarships, postsecondary education, and military programs . . .) that require students attend an accredited institution?
17. Participation in the accreditation process has testified to the local community that your institution offers an education of quality?
18. Participation in the accreditation process has provided a credential to your institution that is essential in fundraising?
19. Participation in the accreditation process has testified to substantial compliance with established qualitative standards at your institution?

20. Participation in the accreditation process has testified to integrity in statements to the public describing your institution's program?
21. Participation in the accreditation process has testified to an institutional commitment to improvement at your institution?
22. Participation in the accreditation process has testified to sufficiency of institutional resources at your institution?
23. The accreditation process has proven to be one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement at your institution?
24. The accreditation process has provided certainty that the school's written mission truly informs every aspect of school life?
25. The accreditation process has provided reasonable assurance that a school meets or exceeds relevant government regulations (typically health, fire, safety, sanitation, . .)?
26. The accreditation process has prevented over-involvement by state and/or federal governmental agencies?
27. The accreditation process and your institution's possession of accredited status can be very reassuring to parents?
28. The Visiting Team Report served to guide staff, board and administration in establishing priorities and developing action plans?
29. The accreditation visit provided a detailed, objective evaluation conducted by fellow professionals who have been trained in the evaluation process and who are familiar with evaluation standards and the nature and concerns of independent schools?

Appendix J: Stated Goals

The NAIS Commission on Accreditation was established by the NAIS board of trustees in 2001 and is comprised of 19 members from independent school accrediting associations (17 in the United States and 2 international). The commission's work is intended to affirm the quality of independent school accrediting programs offered by CoA members. The following stated goals (synonymous with "survey question" here) were gleaned from the publically available materials of the CoA accrediting agencies and have been reviewed for content validity by five directors within the CoA.

Stated Goal 1: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to engage my whole school community in a discussion about school improvement.

Stated Goal 2: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve teacher learning and teaching at my school.

Stated Goal 3: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen teamwork at my school.

Stated Goal 4: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve student achievement at my school.

Stated Goal 5: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen and refine my school's culture.

Stated Goal 6: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve the way that my school allocates resources.

Stated Goal 7: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve communication at my school.

Stated Goal 8: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to compel my school to

engage in strategic planning.

Stated Goal 9: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to demonstrate to the public at large that my school is a "quality" institution.

Stated Goal 10: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to reinforce that my school complies with high educational standards.

Stated Goal 11: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is for my school to reflect a commitment to institutional improvement.

Stated Goal 12: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to make sure my school's mission is inherent in all aspects of its work.

Stated Goal 13: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to reassure parents that their investment in my school has been a prudent one.

Stated Goal 14: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to provide my school with accurate commendations and recommendations, as executed by our visiting team.

Stated Goal 15: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is for my school to produce a detailed self-study and, in turn, secure an objective evaluation.

Appendix K: Complete Survey (Redacted)

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD CONSENT FORM

***Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.**

Purpose of the Research Study:
The purpose of this study is to determine internal stakeholders' perceptions regarding their acknowledgement of outcomes associated with the accreditation process in independent schools, as determined through declarative statements of benefit, purpose, and reason by the 19 NAIS accrediting agencies, and to gauge whether or not these perceptions are influenced by respondents' roles within the school or time since the accreditation visit occurred.

What You Will Do in the Study:
You will take a 15-20 minute survey that will ask to reveal your role (teacher, administrator, or trustee) at your institution, when your institution underwent accreditation within a time band (less than one year, or more than one year but no more than two), then answer 15 questions regarding your perceptions of the recent accreditation process.

Time Required:
The study will require about 20 minutes of a your time.

Risks:
There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits:
There are no direct benefits to participating in this research study other than the knowledge that you are making a difference with schools and the associations that serve them as they strive to improve their craft. The study may help build understanding of how internal stakeholders within an accreditation process view elements of the process. Also, the data will be analyzed for relationships dependent upon roles within the institution or when the process occurred at the institution.

Confidentiality:
The information gathered during the study will be anonymous. Names will not be collected or linked to the data. However, your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. You will be asked to identify the institution with which you have a relationship, but that will only provide the researcher

with information on time of your specific accreditation visit and not be used in any way to identify you.

Voluntary Participation:
Participation in the study is completely voluntary. There is no payment for participating in the study.

Right to Withdraw from the Study:
Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you would like to withdraw from the study, you may choose "Withdraw" once the survey questions have ended. There is no penalty for withdrawing. Because the data is anonymous, you may not withdraw once you have submitted your survey.

If you have questions about the study, contact:
Researcher's Name:
C. H. Jones
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903
Telephone: 803-403-3031
Email address: chj2t@virginia.edu

Faculty Advisor's Name:
Dr. Mark Hampton
Bavaro Hall 137A
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903
Telephone: 434-982-2092
Email address: mhampton@virginia.edu

If you have questions about your rights in the study, contact:
Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.,
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: 434-924-5999
Email address: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb

By checking this box, I acknowledge to have read the consent form above, and voluntarily

agree to participate in this research study.

◯ Yes, I agree to participate

YOUR ROLE AT YOUR INSTITUTION

Please describe your relationship with your institution:

◯ Teacher

◯ Administrator

◯ Trustee

YOUR INSTITUTION

Please tell us the institution with which you are currently associated:

QUESTION 1

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to engage my whole school community in a discussion about school improvement.**

- ◯ I do not agree.
- ◯ I agree

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to engage your whole school community in a discussion about school improvement. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to engaging your whole school community in a discussion about school improvement?**

QUESTION 2

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve teacher learning and teaching at my school.**

- ◯ I do not agree.
- ◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve teacher learning and teaching at your school. Please

provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to improving teacher learning and teaching?**

QUESTION 3

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen teamwork at my school.**

- ◯ I do not agree.
- ◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen teamwork at your school. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to strengthing teamwork at your school?**

QUESTION 4

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve student achievement at my school.**

- ◯ I do not agree.
- ◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve student achievement at your school. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to improving student achievement?**

QUESTION 5

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen and refine my school's culture.**

- ◯ I do not agree.
- ◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen and refine your school's culture. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to strengthening and refining its school culture?**

QUESTION 6

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve the way that my school allocates resources.**

- ◯ I do not agree.
- ◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve the way that your school allocates resources. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to improving the way that your school allocates resources?**

QUESTION 7

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve communication at my school.**

- ◯ I do not agree.
- ◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve communication at your school. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to improving communication at your school?**

QUESTION 8

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to compel my school to engage in strategic planning.**

- ◯ I do not agree.
- ◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to compel your school to engage in strategic planning. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to compelling your school to engage in strategic planning?**

QUESTION 9

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to demonstrate to the public at large that my school is a "quality" institution.**

◯ I do not agree.

◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to demonstrate to the public at large that your school is a "quality" institution. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.

◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.

◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to demonstrating to the public at large that your school is a "quality" institution?**

QUESTION 10

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to reinforce that my school complies with high educational standards.**

◯ I do not agree.

◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to reinforce that your school complies with high educational standards. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to reinforcing that your school complies with high educational standards?**

QUESTION 11

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is for my school to reflect a commitment to institutional improvement.**

- ◯ I do not agree.
- ◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is for your school to reflect a commitment to institutional improvement. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to reflecting a commitment to institutional improvement?**

QUESTION 12

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to make sure my school's mission is inherent in all aspects of its work.**

- ◯ I do not agree.
- ◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to make sure your school's mission is inherent in all aspects of its work. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to making sure its mission is inherent in all aspects of its work?**

QUESTION 13

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to reassure parents that their investment in my school has been a prudent one.**

◯ I do not agree.

◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to reassure parents that their investment in your school has been a prudent one. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.

◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.

◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to reassuring parents that their investment in the school has been a prudent one?**

QUESTION 14

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to provide my school with accurate commendations and recommendations, as executed by our visiting team.**

◯ I do not agree.

◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is to provide your school with accurate commendations and recommendations, as executed by your visiting team. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to providing your school with accurate commendations and recommendations, as executed by its visiting team?**

QUESTION 15

Please respond to the statement below as to whether or not you agree with the theoretical statement.

***In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is for my school to produce a detailed self-study and, in turn, secure an objective evaluation.**

- ◯ I do not agree.
- ◯ I agree.

You agree that a critical outcome of accreditation is for your school to produce a detailed self-study and, in turn, secure an objective evaluation. Please provide us with some follow-up information below.

***During my school's recent accreditation:**

- ◯ This critical outcome was very much achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was only partially achieved.
- ◯ This critical outcome was not at all achieved.

***What do you feel are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been an outcome and what actually occurred as a result of your school's recent accreditation with regard to producing a detailed self-study and, in turn, securing an objective evaluation?**

CLOSING PAGE

If you would like to contact the researcher to provide more thoughts on the accreditation process in which you participated, please write him at chj2t@virginia.edu

You are now finished with this survey. If you would like to withdraw, you may select "Withdraw" below. Otherwise, our most sincere thanks for your participation in this important research. Please click "Done" below to compete the survey.

◯ Withdraw

Appendix M: Comments by Stated Goal

Comments are arranged by stated goal and within question by respondent's relationship to their school (teacher, administrator, trustee). No editing has occurred other than to remove answers that were either blank or had some variant of "." or "n/a" in the response box. All efforts have been made to redact school names for purposes of confidentiality.

Stated Goal 1: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to engage my whole school community in a discussion about school improvement.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teacher Responses:

- On the committee to which I belonged, we were presented with a plan and then urged to debate its merits--but with the outcome predetermined. Otherwise, the results of the process generally were not thoroughly shared with the community.
- There was so much "busy work" that there was not as much time as I would have liked for meaningful discussion.
- functioning of committee and time available
- Lack of follow-through, especially with scheduling TIME for collaboration, planning, etc. so that teachers can design new curriculum, discuss nuts and bolts changes that would result in changes. We have discussions of problems and theoretical solutions, but there is no follow-up to help teachers implement changes in teaching (or changes in other areas).
- I do not feel that I got feedback or saw the bigger picture of the process. I was only privy to one small piece.
- We are such a large school--it is difficult to engage the whole teaching community. it would have to be a major push by the administration and there are so many other issues for a school this size.
- School is a busy place. It's hard to find real time to discuss improvements, and even harder to find ways to implement improvements. We are always in a slow gradual process of evolving and improving. The accreditation brought us to discuss more, but the gradual evolution did not leap forward during that time. I don't think it really could have gone much faster, in reality.
- I'm not sure any school completely reaches every goal it sets.

- Change in administration
- Some initiatives were dropped for economic reasons.
- Time!
- There is such a time gap between the beginning of the gathering of information until the actual site visit, that sometimes the goals or information may have changed or even become obsolete. Or, if it was referring to the last accreditation's goals--it might not even exist any more. That is what I have seen in the past few that I have been involved with.
- All stakeholders had the opportunity to complete questionnaires and summit data which was then presented as a unit. There was no real discussion.
- I do not feel the entire faculty is involved in the process as they should be.
- I think that conversations occurred that proposed action, but that little was actually accomplished. We need to take hard action more often and discuss less. Change isn't easy but it is needed to stay relevant, fresh and competitive.
- Lack of communication and not sharing or even wanting to share information. Too many chiefs, administrators, not enough teachers or administrators doing their jobs
- I was involved in the discussion as a department chair. I feel pretty sure that it was not an all-school discussion and that some people probably would have liked to participate in discussions but weren't asked to do so.
- I think there, are some very real differences between what the accreditation team saw, what we think we do, and what we really do.
- I am new this year, so I can't really answer this question!
- Representative committees did most of the work rather than a grass roots approach.
- Conversation occurred only between administration and department heads. There was little dialog about this at the teacher level.
- I think it is no surprise that people put their best face forward in an evaluation situation, particularly teachers who have an inclination to please. Therefore there may not be total transparency and realism in the perception available during accreditation. That said, I am sure allowance is made for that circumstance, as it is probably common to all schools.
- The accreditation process seems overly cumbersome and beaurocratic to most teachers, so little "buy-in" is achieved.
- The people chosen to be involved in the process were hand picked. They did not represent all of the various stakeholders.
- "focus still on the specific school...not really all or whole school
- Opportunities for discussion were really ""respond to this idea/ plan/ proposal"" rather than think of an idea/plan/proposal
- There wasn't really any time spent in discussion of ""what are the problems you see""....the problems to be addressed were identified already
- The outcomes are fine...just think there may be a way to tweak the initial discussions."

Administrators:

- It's impossible to fully address in a realistic timeline all of the school improvements that are discussed during the process.
- As a result of the report from the accrediting group our school took steps in my opinion to change the long-held community and culture of trust in faculty professionalism. The committee's report engendered fear of litigation by our constituents to strongly recommend ending the practice of online social networking / online communication between students and faculty.
- At times, the process and getting the accreditation become more important than true soul searching and improvement.
- lack of consistent participation within the school community
- Time restraints. Everyone had a part in the process. However, only a few were involved in the actual discussions of outcomes and opportunities for school improvement. Many felt that they already had enough on their plates and would prefer that someone else handle this area of concern.
- Intial feedback regarding strengths and recommendations was good, but followup communication, discussioin and planning sometimes stalls at an administrative level.
- Not many changes.
- There was not an engagement of the entire school community in the sort of action-planning that might proceed from a thorough review of the standards for accreditation. I think this may have had something to do with the design of the process rather than any aversion on the part of the school.
- With over 600 employees and thousands of stakeholders it would be impossible to engage everyone in the conversation, so many felt disconnected.
- Because of our size, I feel that the community as a whole was largely removed from the process.
- Lack of alumni feedback in process.

Trustees:

- More people need to be involved and understand importance of accreditation
- Difficulty in obtaining a majority of parent engagement and interest, as it pertains to our "whole school community". I do feel that the accreditation process wholly engaged our administration, staff and trustees.
- Participation by more parents would be good. I think every effort was made to make that happen, but we should identify ways to involve more...
- My participation was limited; therefore, do not put too much weigh in my response. The recommendations did not seem especially pertinent nor critical to the school's future.
- based on board discussion's at the last meeting.
- I did not feel that the entire school community was engaged in these discussions, only trustees, teachers, and administrators. (Quite frankly, it appears that this is further evidenced by the fact that parents weren't asked to complete this questionnaire....)
- "Whole school" implies a 100% participation of every stakeholder which is difficult. In that respect the goal was only partially acheived.

- I think like a lot of things that are in depth and multiple pages, items get skipped over or glossed over. I think a top ten list of things done well or improvement needs would help generate better conversation. Not just a summary report.

Stated Goal 2: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve teacher learning and teaching at my school.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- Abstract principles and resolutions were not reduced to pragmatic steps which could be implemented.
- Teacher learning can be impeded by the amount of time and resource accrediation required.
- Very general recommendations.
- We don't currently have a good system for evaluating good teaching, so teaching practice is very inconsistent.
- Same response as previous question: lack of time for hands-on, practical training. Exception: the school has offered help with iPads this year.
- There was not much emphasis placed on what we do specifically in our classrooms.
- I don't know.
- I am not sure I think it is such a part of the process, but think that it is supposed to be. I think there are other better ways to improve teaching if that is the objective.
- Scrambling to produce documentation precluded action in many cases.
- See my answer before--the school is too big to really engage the whole faculty so at times the accreditation goes over the heads of the teachers right to the administration who deals with it.
- We are so busy with managing our varied teaching, dorm, and/or coaching responsibilities. Then, we have need to enjoy a personal life outside of school. This leaves very little remaining time to devote to improving learning and teaching. Also, making my lessons ready for the iPad takes many hours each week because I have new electronic texts and because the iPad requires PDF-accessible documents.
- Teachers tend to be creatures of habit and are slow in integrating new methods into their teaching.
- Not enough specific work on subject areas and how they relate to the big picture goals.
- Change in teachers, apathy of the administration and formatting at the school
- We do not have the time to have a lot of vertical grade level meetings or conversations.

- I feel that the accreditation process focuses on so many different facets of our school that teacher learning and teaching takes a bit of a back seat to some of the other institutional issues.
- I think our accreditation focused a lot more on our school community than the teachers. It was more about our relationship with our parents and community than improving our teachers.
- I have always felt that for the accreditation process, we all put our best foot forward--super-cleaning the facilities, show casing our best achievements, and putting on a show. When it is all over, it's back to business as usual.
- There is more of a push for professional development but it seems to be more form than substance. It seems that we are "checking off boxes" rather than working together for overall teacher improvement
- Once again, because not everyone was involved. Some faculty are involved heavily, and they gain the most benefit.
- Again, same reasons as before. There is also an acute lack of professional development funding.
- I don't know
- Same as before
- I think the way we view,teachers here and the way the accreditation team are not accurate.
- I felt like a lot of the accreditation had nothing to do with what was being taught in the classroom
- Again, I am new...I am not sure!
- Too soon to see results.
- Teacher improvement is a never ending process. The accreditation process continually identifies strength and areas for improvement, therefore it is never "completely" accomplished.
- Two of the principal initiatives don't directly deal with teacher learning and teaching.
- Most teachers agree with this and will look to improve. There are some who are less likely to think they need to change.
- I feel that we are in the progress of creating a more collaborative work enviroment where we are all an integral part of the learning team/process. This is in the works. It just takes time to develop.
- I think that a lot of good conversation happened... but it will take time to see if there is follow through to actually improve student learning and teacher effectiveness.
- An institutional fear of real thoughtful analysis and meaningful change.
- I am uncertain.
- It is pretty much left to the individual to make use-- or not-- of the results.
- I think there was insufficient time to prepare materials necessary to submit, and insufficient time to reflect on our teaching strategies and student outcomes in order to revise them an improve them.

Administrators:

- Mostly the diction in the question: improving teacher learning and teaching is an outcome of the accreditation process, but it is not a critical outcome. So, we had good, robust discussions about the teaching and learning process but both were improved but not significantly.
- Some teachers take the process more seriously than others.
- Many of the issues discussed pertain to subjects not directly related to instruction. In other words, my perception of the process is that the instruction piece is an important part of the process, but not the only part.
- It is too early to tell is we have achieved these goals.
- I feel that the accreditation committee needed more insight into our faculty, their abilities, current methods, etc.
- Independent Schools and educators in general do not like true evaluation or classroom observation, therefore, there is very few written records which can be used in a constructive improvement process.
- I'm not sure the team focused much on teaching, and there were no recommendations related to teaching.
- the need for teacher buy-in from all teachers
- Teachers are encouraged but not required to change.
- Teacher buy in
- I think it is an ongoing process of improvement. We recently had a professional development day and our Upper School Assistant Director coordinated an "un-conference" at which faculty developed ideas for sessions on the spot and facilitated group discussions. Though I am not a teacher at the school, I attended three sessions at which teachers were actively sharing new ideas for technology in the classroom. That topic was a hot part of our accreditation discussions, and I was pleased to see that great strides had been made. The discrepancy lies in the willingness of some teachers to jump on the train and learn new ways of connecting with kids in the classroom through technology and media.
- New information can be presented and shared, but there is little followup to see if teachers are putting into practice what they learned.
- The time needed to accomplish the goals set for the teachers.
- Teachers are often reticent to hear any critique of their teaching and even more reticent to embrace change.
- The teachers are not held accountable and they are not observed.
- Most faculty need help seeing the link between accreditation--which they perceive as an administrative necessity--and teaching/learning, which they see as their daily business. Faculty get better at seeing the connection the more they are involved in the process. I once had former a head of school tell me, "All I want from SACS is a C." He said that openly. Such an attitude doesn't help.
- Some teachers do not feel comfortable making changes to what they have done for many years. It is a slow process but change is occurring. Teachers are getting more comfortable using technology.
- Our school is in he process of much organizational growth and change. Some faculty members do well with improving teacher learning and teaching and others are on the path. Keeping up with expectations is challenging for some.

- I think the accreditation process was a validation of the excellent teaching that we believe occurs, and the recommendations are helpful, but I think a more explicit action plan as part of the self-study would be necessary to ensure that improvement occurs as an outcome.
- Structures and priorities for teacher learning not in place, little consensus on type of teacher learning that is needed
- There were many new hires. More than normal.
- I think that improving teaching is a always a work in progress and it is never fully achieved.
- I think that a good discussion began. I think some good things-revised curriculum guide and scope and sequence-came out of this process. Now it is up to us to continue the discussion and continually revise the scope and sequence (which is already "out of date". This is an ongoing process.
- How much can really happen in a two and a half day visit?
- This is impossible to answer on a global scale
- There are staff members who will always believe there way is the only way.
- We have not had the time to develop all the ingredients of the accreditation feedback
- The learning happens afterward not during.
- A lot of the accreditation process involves other measurables not associated with teaching and learning.

Trustees:

- Clear plan to fully address areas of need was not implimented.
- Partially due to budget issues.. More money is being allocated to professional development now. Good example of our benefit from the accreditation process.
- Improving teacher learning and teaching is always a work-in-progress.

Stated Goal 3: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen teamwork at my school.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- More communication is still needed.
- Those on some committees hardly communicated at all.
- It's basically the same as it was before with some superficial changes.
- I did not work with members of my department.
- See previous answers.

- There is very limited time during the school day to meet with colleagues. Outside of school hours, teachers have family lives and are members of various other communities.
- I am new to the school, and if teamwork is a desired outcome, I have not experienced an atmosphere of teamwork within my department. I am aware that great things are going on in each classroom, but we are not discussing those things/learning from each other/working across disciplines, etc., at present.
- Time constraints sometimes play a role in how much teams can collaborate.
- I feel there needs to be more communication across grade levels as well as Lower, Middle, and Upper School.
- Varying attitudes among staff members about the value of accreditation exercises and willingness to fully participate.
- Not enough gatherings for us to work together as a school
- lack of time to come together as a group
- There are changes being made to make sure the MAC and traditional classes are being meshed together more, so we are still working out the kinks to make sure everyone is on the same page.
- Not sure
- We worked to together to develop goals and plans for the school's accreditation procress. Unfortunately, during the course of the year the schedule and work load limits teamwork. No time is set aside for meaningful teamwork and collaboration between educators throughout the school year.
- There still seems to be a divide amongst divisions. Additionally, communication is not as open within the school as a whole. Teamwork is a goal, but it has yet to be realized.
- We very rarely have times as a faculty to discuss curriculum, give support, and bounce ideas off of each other if we are not in the same department. I think it was something that was low on the list of items to achieve through accreditation.
- We work fairly well as a team, and I don't see any strengthening of that as a result of the accreditation process.
- A great deal of information has been presented to the faculty from the study so I can understand why we are progressing in a certain direction. However, the overall feeling is that teachers receive directives based on the accreditation process rather than encourage team developed plans.
- All teachers must buy in completely for this to work. I'm not sure this was the case.
- Is anything totally achieved?
- The need we observed after our last accreditation was the goal of "one school" which would include lower, middle, and upper. We saw it as good but needing improvement.
- More committees less with "team" being said but not taking the committees or their suggestions seriously
- Once again the school presents itself differently then is real Pb a daily basis.
- Because we have no real time carved out in our schedules to collaborate and learn from the professionals that we actually work with.

- The departments are still fragmented--we are only now coming to some key decisions about scope and sequence that should have been sorted out a while ago. The English departments only recently became its own department, so struggling with scope and sequence throughout the grades is a real struggle, and there is not clear consensus.
- I'm new!
- I don't think there is an accurate choice for this question. I believe we already have excellent teamwork at *[institution]*, and there is not a choice for no improvement needed or not applicable.
- See previous comment. I also feel we do not have enough team or schoolwide planning time set aside for this to be truly effective. I do feel very supported by my administrator in creating more time for more effective team collaborative planning. We are in the process of improving this in the LS.
- There was good collaborative work across divisions and departments during the time of the study, but again, there is limited carry-over and continued collaboration.
- We are working on outcome. We need time worked into our schedule to make this happen.
- Teamwork at the local level-- but may be better if it went beyond that.

Administrators:

- It's not possible to fully implement all the issues that were discussed.
- Participation in the process is limited to select groups who will put the best face on the institution. This group is selected because they are least likely to be critical or because they do not have a good understanding of the areas that need improvement.
- again, the need for enthusiastic participation by all
- Again, we are working towards this process, but sometimes it seems to stall at an adminastrative level.
- Administration and faculty buy in
- Teachers felt that doing accreditation work was a burden; it was difficult for them to buy into the process, as they felt it simply created more work for them and did not see the "big picture".
- The same people do all the"teamwork" at school. It did not change that.
- See previous answers
- Allocation of time for vertical, horizontal, and heterogeneous teams to undertake real initiatives
- I think we continually have to be intentional about this and create time for this to happen. We have begun to be creative in our approach to scheduling time for teachers to meet. This is an ongoing commitment, process, and at some divisions in our school a culture shift.
- My way is the only way again.

Trustees:

- TBD

Stated Goal 4: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve student achievement at my school.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- Basically I have no way of answering the previous question because I lack the information: how should I know how student achievement was affected by the accreditation process?
- Failure of several of the previous goals to be achieved.
- My answer is a guess. We have not been given specific information regarding student scores on CTP-4 tests for the last 4-5 years. The middle school teachers have had very little discussion regarding student achievement.
- It remains to be seen how the accreditation will affect our student achievement.
- See previous answers.
- Frankly, I don't really know. I actually don't know much about what took place in the accreditation process. My only information is the briefing we got in the faculty meeting. I don't remember this topic being discussed, so that's why I marked "partially achieved."
- Grade inflation and unrealistic parent expectations as well as parental coddling make grades below A's and B's almost taboo at *[institution]*.
- Student achievement is not controlled by teaching alone. Other factors contribute to student achievement.
- I don't think we know the answer to this yet.
- *[institution]* must continue to push ahead with academic rigor despite apathetic students and parents who desire to see their child get strong grades apart from strong work. This will be an ongoing challenge, but one in which *[institution]* is making strides.
- This is difficult to answer as we are only in our 2nd year of our five year goals. The school is making great efforts but only so much can happen in one year. There is a tipping point for initiatives.
- I feel some teachers get the best out of their students and I feel some teachers are accepting mediocrity as well as teaching that way.
- Student achievement has a whole lot more to do with students' willingness to work and native abilities than with anything the accreditation process can accomplish
- I said partially because we do identify weaknesses in our system and part of the time we put in place changes that actually improve student achievement, but sometimes areas are not effectively changed or worse, ignored.

- The process requires us to go through a wonderful self evaluation but it seems to stop there. We shelve the information until the next time.
- This is impossible to test.
- In my opinion, no training can guarantee that students will WANT to learn more. This desire comes from within mostly.
- Student achievement is directly tied to teaching quality and overall educational improvement.
- Results are presented in a way to appear better than they are.
- Is anything totally achieved?
- We needed to focus on a continuous curriculum which challenged students in all divisions and taught skills that would be useful at the next level.
- I think that the student improvement in achievement has yet to be seen; it will be a result of what we learned/determined through accreditation and will be realized in the coming years.
- Switching schedules to have less time in class and more projects that do not increase learning but look good to administrtors because they are using the letest catch word or band wagon
- This is not something that can take place over night.
- It is an ongoing process, not immediately met.
- Not sure...I'm new!
- Not enough data to support--- students have not taken standardized tests yet for this year. Also, it may take more than one year to see this evidence.
- Too soon for results.
- I believe the improvement will be seen in 5 to 10 years if we stay the course and don't jump ship and go with some other ideas for improving student achievement before we've seen this first one through to the end.
- As with the teacher improvement question, while we as an institution want our students to do their best, not all students will work towards that goal.
- There is no way to immediately tell if there is improved student achievement as a result of the work we did.
- I do not feel that we have had enough time to address this issue to the extent stated in the committee's recommendations.
- Grade inflation and rich and influential parents are running *[institution]*. Many students are accelerated beyond their capabilities and the curriculum and its integrity has suffered.
- Needed more reflection time to apply changes decided upon at department level into day-to-day teaching. Yes, improvement took place. Not 100 percent achieved, however.
- I think this was only partially achieved because the formative and summative assessments we use grade each year on an individual basis, and are not necessarily used to show trends over time in order to track improvements in student achievement.

Administrators:

- The accreditation process provided a wonderful avenue for reflection which led to improved practice. While that does contribute to increased student achievement, I still need to do more to make that a reality--beyond what the accreditation does.
- It is too soon to tell if student achievement has improved.
- Not possible to fully implement because of the sheer number of issues that are discussed.
- I don't think we achieved it in the accreditation process. I think it will be achieved as we extend into the future.
- Plans are in motion, but not completely implemented yet.
- Again, it is too early to tell.
- Again, without a vehicle to improve the classroom teaching there will be little improvement in learning (or achievement which should be secondary).
- I don't know that student achievement was examined during the visit, nor were there any recommendations related to the matter.
- better direction from administration in this area, but we need full buy in
- not sure
- This is a work in progress. Teachers are being challanged to be innovative in their classrooms and being mentored and supervised in a more routine fashion. We are really addressing grade inflation and alternate assessment stratagies for students.
- I think it is simply a matter of time. We cannot see or attribute great strides in student achievement until we have time to measure it after improvements have taken place school wide. I think that the improvement in teamwork among faculty and new ideas being fostered in the classroom will ultimately result in increased student achievement.
- We are not there, but improvements are being made all the time. It's a process, not a moment in time.
- Still focusing on homework as a way to increase student achievement. That is not the way to do it.
- Well, because student achievement is always our business and never finished. Plus there are many different ideas about what "achievement" are--schools and parents don't always agree.
- I do not feel that the changes that are occurring due to the accreditation have had time to develop enough to affect student achievement. I think it will ultimately improve student achievement.
- I think that we still have some things to look at such as critical thinking and reading to take achievement even higher.
- To improve student achievement, we must return our focus to mission.
- The focus of the visiting committee did not seem to be on student achievement - at least not directly.
- It is just too soon to tell. Achievement can only be measured over time.

Trustees:

- I simply do not know if student achievement has resulted from our recent accreditation. I presume it will improve, but that can only be determined over time.
- Since student achievement is our overall focus, everything we do should be in order to improve that.. I personally do not have concrete evidence here, but there would have been indirect benefit.
- I am not sure how to measure this outcome as a result of accreditation. My answer is more a statement of uncertainty than a statement that the outcome was not achieved.
- No comment
- We were just accredited. I think our secular education is being well run and we are implementing recommendations but I'm not sure 6 months is enough time to see much student improvement.

Stated Goal 5: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to strengthen and refine my school's culture.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- Again, I have no way of knowing whether or not the accreditation process helped refine the school's culture: I just do not have the information.
- See previous answer.
- I feel that we used to promote reading more than we currently do. I also feel that the iPad has taken the place of conversation, discussion, and reflection in our daily activities.
- We are still working on this.
- This, too, will be an ongoing opportunity to have our students live according to the truth they know.
- Once the accreditation process is finished, people tend to put the report on the shelf and seldom look back.
- Changes with our ILTC program
- They did not involve enough regular teachers. Seemed like the only people working on the self study were administrators.
- THere isn't much diversity at our school, so it's harder to be strengthen school culture when there isn't much to work with.
- We need to double down on our commitment to being an institution that doesn't let parents pay for grades. If we're a college prep school, we need to be getting students ready to succeed in college. Which means more student accountability.
- Is anything totally achieved?
- We needed to increase the exposure of our International community at the upper school in the middle and lower schools.

- Not really addressed, admin thinks that our international students are the only culture we need
- Our culture needs the most work.
- No idea...I'm new!
- Too little time spent by the accreditation team actually observing classrooms. Limited to no engagement between the accreditation team and the faculty. Too much of the accreditation team report is based upon paperwork provided by the school that is never subject to analysis.
- Refining the school culture is difficult when many current faculty, staff, students and families don't want to see a change. Again, time will tell.
- Not enough time to make chages that are suggested. We usually do implement most suggestions for improvement.
- I believe we are struggling with defining exactly what our school culture is. I think this is important because I feel we do need to define ourselves. This process just emphasized our lack of cohesiveness even more.
- The school is still working on strengthening the culture. Changing mind sets takes time, but it is an ongoing discussion.
- See last response.
- School culture has become one of unwritten rules and policies so everyone can be treated differently and not equitably.
- We are still, as always, refining our school culture.

Administrators:

- Impossible to fully implement.
- Similarly, the focus on accreditation versus true improvement and the selection of people involved in critical roles.
- new mission and tagline achieved, more collaboration
- Again, this is an on going process. We are constantly looking at the feedback and recommendations we received, especially regarding admissions, retention and student life.
- Again, this takes time.
- We are working very diligently toward achieving the goal of strengthening our school culture but it is a work in progress. I have high hopes that it will result in a new culture where students are kinder, less likely to cheat, and willing to take a stand for what they believe to be right.
- We're working on this!
- I do not believe we have a firm grasp of school culture--more like herding cats.
- Again, too early to tell as this is measured over time.

Trustees:

- Not enough engagement of whole community

- Hard to measure. Accredition is really focused at the top.

Stated Goal 6: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve the way that my school allocates resources.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- Again, the gap between the process and its implementation. I am a teacher. how should I know how the allocation of resources has--or has not--changed?
- I am not certain on this question, but I did not feel that I could give full approval on this topic.
- Cannot accurately respond to this because the allocation of resources is not generally publicized.
- I really don't know how well this was or wasn't achieved.
- There is the perception (and most likely the reality) that school spending favors athletics over academics. Also, we began the 1:1 iPad program without hiring sufficient tech personnel. The faculty attitude toward incorporating technology has been damaged because we have not had enough knowledgeable support staff. The tech staff do not have teaching experience or time to help teachers figure out ways to use iPad. They are strictly trained in the hardware and electronics, not in teaching.
- I do not believe allocation of resources was directly looked at during our accreditation process, however, I anticipate this will occur as we implement our strategic goals in the coming months/years.
- See previous answer.
- The financial statements are not open and easily accessible to members of the community. For example, I would like to see the expenses for football. I know that teachers are expected to drastically reduce copying expenses, but then I see an expensive glossy marketing advertisement for the *[institution]* music program. I don't see a concerted effort to manage the budget and rein in expenses in a logical way. The hiring of the Admissions Head comes to mind. After contracting to a national search team and flying various candidates to *[city]*, the school hired the local spouse of a staff member.
- The school is continued to look for new financial resources to make initiatives happen. I believe short-term goals have been met and we are working toward long-term goals now.
- We discussed what SHOULD be done and then went back to doing things the SAME WAY WE ALWAYS HAVE!
- Resources are always limited in a private school setting. It is difficult to allocate parts of the pie that will please all constituents.
- I do not know how all resources are allocated.

- Is anything totally achieved?
- There needs to be more equality in the allocation of funds from area to area.
- Too much money to administrators especially the top and not enough budget cuts from unnecessary items.
- The team seemed simply to ask administrators what they would like to see recommended so that they could take those recommendations to the board to achieve goals the administrators already had in mind.
- My answer reflects the fact that I have no idea how resources are allocated...so, I went for the middle!
- The Board has to be a stronger part of that process.
- Each year, our enrollment increases as well as tuition, however, faculty pay does not seem to increase proportionally.
- No idea...I am new, I don't know what it was like in the past!
- No results yet.
- I continue to feel as if the school allocates resources poorly. We are a school, not a company. I believe the money/resources should be spent for educational improvements, not for more and more administrative wishes and ease. Students first. Everything else should follow.
- With several major initiatives, the allocation of both human and financial resources is spread somewhat thin. It would be more effective to choose 1-2 initiatives and dedicate more resources to each.
- No opinion
- I was not informed about how the school allocated resources as a result of the process.
- The allocation of resources is not always shared with us so it is difficult to know how the accredidation process impacted it.
- We need time to process the outcome and allocate resources.
- "The squeaky wheel will get the wheel.
- Someone will be hired in DEVELOPMENT rather than to support teaching and learning, etc."

Administrators:

- I am not privy to the full extent this would or would not have occurred.
- Impossible to fully implement.
- We are in the middle of a year, so resources can't be reallocated until a new budget year rolls around.
- not enough money!
- The school is spending money on Professional Development to enhance our Diversity initiative and to get teachers up to speed on using iPads in their classrooms. We have also spent money in the Lower and Middle schools to introduce programs to lead to a more positive school culture. The Upper Division is working on this initiative also but is not getting as much financial support.

- We have had to allocate a lot of funds for the building of a new Humanities building, so other projects have had to pushed back.
- I disagree because in my opinion more funds should have gone to improve best practices in teaching
- I was trained that resources should be determined by mission. In other words, money allocated to support mission. Probably lie every other school, we support what will bring students, not necessarily what is mission critical.
- Again, the visiting team did not seem to focus on this goal.
- Again, too early to tell.
- We are on a learning curve and the intent is to focus on the proper allocation of resources.
- This aspect is rarely addressed in the accreditation process.

Trustees:

- Outcome was good. Much time is being spent almost daily and therefore it was mostly a review or a review of what *[institution]* is doing.
- Our school's allocation of resources is evolving.
- Again it has focused our boards energy on important things, but I'm not sure the 6 month mark I can quantify whether this goal has been reached.

Stated Goal 7: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to improve communication at my school.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- More communication is still needed.
- I do not know why, but I suspect deans are trying to micro manage and also they seem to be catering more to parent demands without checking with teachers first. The school's administration is huge, and I feel the head for Academic Affairs is not familiar AT ALL with curriculum, class activities, etc. throughout the school, esp. in middle school and in support areas like study skills, testing, etc.
- See previous answer.
- Overall, communication is very strong, especially with the BIG ideas/changes. It's in the daily running of the school (week at a glance received on Tuesdays, advisory notes received right before the meeting, etc) that we can continue to improve upon.
- During the accreditation process, there is more interaction then usual among administrators and faculty and between faculty members, but after the process is completed, things tend to go back to the status quo.

- I was only able to see the finished product.
- As always we don't have as much time for this as we would like or need.
- Communication and teamwork suffers daily because the schedule and work loads limits meaningful collaborations. We converse through emails and by phone, but finding the time to pursue the goals of the communication is a challenge due to scheule and work loads.
- We know we have failure to communicate between divisions, and even though we have instituted changes to help improve communication, there are still some people so stuck in a rut of doing things their own way, that communication still has a long way to go.
- Based on the accreditation, we have added modes of communication which are great, in theory. In practice, these are more technological but not necessarily more effective
- Teachers know only what the administration wants them to know.
- Is anything totally achieved?
- Sharing information from department to department as well as from division to division could be improved.
- Less and less is being shared and more compartmentalized keeps everyone from seeing the entire picture just pieces.
- One area are school needs much improvement on is communication. We are inundated with information but so many people do not know what is going on. We need to find a better way to communicate amongst each other.
- Use email more and meet in person less
- In a school with several divisions, this will always be difficult. Some divisions are better than others at communicating.
- Only by email, or IF time and schedules allow it...
- I'm new.
- This is difficult to answer. Perhaps with all the new initiatives, there was so much more info to be shared that some was lost in the process.
- Many committees.....how much buy-in?
- changes are not made in the middle of the year most often, people meet, discuss suggestions, and how to best adapt them to our school can't happen as soon as someone turns in a report
- I feel it is an ongoing process with communication between the different departments critical, and everyone getting the same information.
- While we had the opportunity to share during the process of accreditation, I don't know that our voices were always heard.
- See earlier comments. We are in the process of improvomg on this area. The workshop on Feb. 19 was a clear indication of that.
- Again... communication was great throughout the process, but there had been little carry over.
- There remain areas for improved communication between different divisions of the school.
- Communication is recognized as a problem. It continues to be a problem.
- I think the process of accreditation was actually quite confusing for many of the faculty members, as this process pointed out some of the communication flaws from

the administration regarding their expectations of the documentation that was needed. In the end everything was completed perfectly, but it could have been a much easier process than actually occurred.

Administrators:

- The Head of School (me) has some work to do in this area!
- Impossible to fully implement.
- This was
- lack of common focus among divisions and departments
- We need to continue to improve our top down communication, especially in response to feedback elicited and received from faculty.
- internal communication is fractioned between the divisions here
- Like student achievement, communication is a daily business--in some ways it's moment to moment. The message of what our school goals should be has been well established since the last accreditation, but implementing good communication never ends.
- Communication within and between the divisions is always an issue. I do not see it getting better at this time although I think there is a need for better communication, especially between the transition years of 4th to 5th, and 8th to 9th.
- Communication is better, but almost always the most challenging thing in any organization.
- School Culture
- Time for collaboration
- There is a noticeable lack in communication between the other campuses and the Primary School. Often times the Primary School is the last to know about things.
- This is a work in process.
- Too early.

Trustees:

- Good communication is an ongoing process at our school. The new leadership structure is working to improve it.
- Did not feel discussion for improvements were realistic
- School most recent board meeting
- I think this is an ongoing process, and a major weakness of the school. While vast improvements have been made it requires constant attention.

Stated Goal 8: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to compel my school to engage in strategic planning.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- The accreditation-related decisions of which I have knowledge were made at the administrative level and then presented to the school community.
- I think the school is still divided about its goals for middle and upper school.
- See previous answer.
- I just don't have a clear idea of the strategic focus of the school. We see this once a year in a staff meeting via a power point slide show, and I don't recall the big picture or little details.
- I am not involved in very much of the strategic planning, so am unable to accurately answer.
- I feel the voice of the teachers are not always heard.
- Not enough administrative support nor follow up
- The strategic planning that was done through accreditation had more to do with the school campus rather than curriculum. It was more focused on where we wanted to be with regards to appearance than education.
- I am sure there was strategic planning, I just haven't heard much about it.
- Unable to explain.
- Planning is occurring with no intention of follow through
- It feels like our school makes decisions with limited information and planning.
- Only when time is set aside for this type of planning...
- I'm new.
- Effective strategic has occurred at my school. I am not sure it was really related to the accreditation process.
- Our strategic planning is already a work in process, but there is always room for improvement.
- See last response.
- I think that we are engaging in strategic planning as a result of the accreditation. With time, I am sure that it will be communicated.

Administrators:

- Impossible to fully implement.
- not sure
- we are going through multiple changes here at *[institution]*. the results will not be felt for years
- I am not aware of specific planning strategies.
- We were already fully enagaged in strategic planning.

Trustees:

- No comment

Stated Goal 9: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to demonstrate to the public at large that my school is a "quality" institution.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- See previous answer.
- This is another that I can't fully evaluate the results of. I don't know what the public at large thinks of my school. Nor do I know what the public at large thinks of accreditation from an association that they don't know the details of. I am not aware of the perception of SAIS among the public. For all they know, it could be similar to the BBB which means almost nothing in the reality of business. (While this might sound abrupt and rude, it's not meant to be- just a series of statements).
- The school is working to broaden keeping the public at large informed about our program as well as our efforts to engage with the local community.
- I think it is a difficult and lengthy process to inform the public of the quality of our institution.
- Not sure that the word always gets out properly to the community.
- This is still an active work in progress. We need to demonstrate that the education we offer is superior to *[institution]* and other competing institutions. This means we need to recruit dynamic and unique faculty members.
- Improvement in test scores and displaying our International community will help us achieve this.
- Not sure...I am new to this school and the area.
- The accreditation visit is too brief and without depth.
- There's always room for improvement and other venues to explore
- It is possible that I am simply not aware of how this information was shared with "the public at large". I am aware that our solid results are used with admissions, and the praise of our results was shared with the faculty. I am not aware whether or not this information was released city-wide or even within the region.

Administrators:

- not advertised.
- We are still perceived as a "special needs" school.
- Our constituency needs to better understand the accreditation process and its' value.

- We have developed strategies for getting the word out and will be able to determine whether we have in the near future

Trustees:

- Time will tell how this impacts the public at large...
- I am not sure that parents/consumers focus that much on the TYPE of accreditation that a school gets.
- Public awarness of private school education is less than optimal and something we continue to try and improve.

Stated Goal 10: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to reinforce that my school complies with high educational standards.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- I tend to disagree with some definitions of high standards.
- High educational standards are defined differently by each person in a school community. We do our best to be consistent, but it's difficult.
- Many classes are too easy; students lack initiative and respect; students cannot read well enough to tackle demanding work. We have not addressed the reading problem effectively. We need a single, unified approach from teachers and admin throughout the school.
- During a recent accreditation, we teachers wrote curriculum maps. Some teachers did not follow through with curriculum maps, and others fulfilled the request.
- I never heard what standards we were aiming for and which we achieved.
- At some levels, a higher expectation needs to be required by teachers.
- I'm new.
- The report of the accreditation committee really did not address this.
- Honestly, it was not required that we demonstrably show application of agreed goals, scope and sequence. Not to imply that excellence in that area is not occurring.
- The school's educational standards are in the process of being raised to meet the level determined by engaging in the accreditation process.

Administrators:

- With the MAC as part of our scores, we don't really measure up.

Trustees:

- Again I think we need improvement in a few areas, mainly math. It has focused the boards attention and led to the highering of a math consultant. We just recieved recommendations and are movingb forward to improve them.

Stated Goal 11: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is for my school to reflect a commitment to institutional improvement.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- The accreditation process has the feel of just going through the motions. Some good arises out of it, to be sure, but I don't feel that it is as much about institutional improvement as it is about showing the world that we are good at what we do.
- We want to improve, but we don't develop serious initiatives to tackle priority issues. See previous responses.
- Trustee building needs to be demolished. Our aging heating and cooling systems in the older buildings need to be brought up to 21st century standards.
- Is anything totally achieved?
- Mostly lip service to jump through the hoops
- I'm new.
- I think a lot of what occurs with accreditation is "lip-service."
- Again, the disconnect between the objective and the reality of school life is at work here.
- different definitions or understandings of institutional improvement ...depends on who is speaking

Administrators:

- The accreditation is seen by many as a short-term hurdle to overcome and then the process is put on a shelf for a few years.
- consistent buy in
- ?
- The details are in how improvement is defined. Again, should be driven by mission.

Stated Goal 12: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to make sure my school's mission is inherent in all aspects of its work.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- We are committed to what we do, but I don't believe that the accreditation process is what makes *[institution]* try to ensure that its mission is universal in what it does.
- It semed that we were complying with this because we knew it was an essential element of accreditation rather than because it was an essential factor in our decision making.
- The mission to make a positive difference in the world is so ambiguous as to be virtually meaningless.
- Morale among teachers and staff is not what it should be at a wonderful school and beautiful campus like *[institution]* School. Professional respect and cordial relations should be our operating byword and are not what comes to my mind when I think about the varied human relationships at our school.
- It is very difficult to get all on board as it relates to our mission, but that is what we strive for.
- I feel our school needs to work on a consistency in spirituality across all levels of the school as well as connecting to students more through Chapel with MS and US.
- I'm not sure we tout our 'mission' enough for all to know and understand what it is!
- Our mission statement has not been upheld this year. Class size has increased exponentially, but not much if anything has been done to lower the students teacher ratio as a whole; therefore, individual attention is suffering.
- Is anything totally achieved?
- Just lip service done here.
- I'm new.
- Academics are more and more put on the back burner due to ramped up sports and service activities which I believe are ramped up for advertisement.
- when *[institution]* goes thru the accreditation process, we are looking for specific areas in which to improve our school looks at it as a chance for self reflection some areas in need of change are discovered by us in gathering information for the report, others are pointed out. some areas outsiders may identify a "problem" that we do not see as a specific problem *[institution]* has always encouraged suggestions for growth, improvement, and improving overall quality we are a private school relying on tuition if we did NOT do those things, we go out of business the fact that our applications are far above those in the past would indicate, that despite a poor economy, we are offering what you are asking about because of the internal structuring of *[institution]* we will continue to evolve
- The school always has to look at new ways and new options to make sure we are reaching our goal
- We are still in process of defining some of the terms in the mission.

Administrators:

- There has been some discussion about the validity of our present mission statement. This makes it difficult to say that we have this outcome.
- The mission will take to much work and require too many changes to achieve.
- ?
- Mission statement is currently under review. "Old" one is too cumbersome and vague
- Too many competing programs, too little adherence to mission-driven decisions.

Trustees:

- We attempt to accomplish that daily, but there will always be challenges .I could have answered ether way.
- Work is still going vis-a-vis achieving this outcome
- The mission was slightly unclear and is being better defined/clarified at the current time.

Stated Goal 13: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to reassure parents that their investment in my school has been a prudent one.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- Our tuition continually rises, and we load all kinds of expenses on parents. Will our school be filled by the richest children or children whose parents choose to sacrifice their financial stability to send their children to *[institution]*?
- Some e-mails have been sent out but this is an ongoing process and it is too soon after to tell how effective we are at this.
- Similar to the question about the public, I'm not sure I'm in proper position to answer this. I don't know what the parents think about accreditation. I believe most parents at my school would still send their children here without accreditation because of the value they see in it. For some parents, the accreditation might be crucial. I don't know for sure.
- As long as some choose not to return, then you are not reaching everyone.
- The cost of tuition is a little high.
- Is anything totally achieved?
- Currently, tough decisions are required in many homes. One being, "Is this education that I am paying for actually worth the price?" Most times, it is worth the price, but parents often have to make decisions based on other factors when deciding to send their children to an independent school.

Administrators:

- Always an ongoing conversation.
- I do not feel it is the job of the accreditation team to put worth on ones education
- Difficult to measure this.
- Convincing parents that their investment is prudent is tricky. Their confidence is vulnerable to how their children feel and how the economy is behaving. Not all of that is under the school's control, and since 2008 we have been immersed in the question of whether or not we are worth it. I think that parents and school personnel perceive accreditation very differently.
- I am not convinced that we market the results of our accreditation as much as we should. We had a good outcome but it seems to be mentioned only in passing, the strategic plan and its goals seem far more important. And perhaps they are.
- Understanding the value of accreditation is challenging for some parents.
- I think parents are never satisfied with private schools. However, some parents would like our school to cater to only gifted children.
- this is in progress. We are identifying all the outcomes and will be able to articulate this to our parents over and over again in the near future

Trustees:

- A lot of parents still struggle to pay tuition, even if they believe in the quality of the school. In this economy, it's just not afforadble for all.

Stated Goal 14: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is to provide my school with accurate commendations and recommendations, as executed by our visiting team.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- I don't know what the commendations and recommendations were.
- The administration really deals with these recommendations. It is then filtered slowly to the teachers.
- I have not been made aware of recommendations from the visiting team.
- Mostly the notes the accreditation team gave were positive. There was not very much, if any, constructive criticism to use in terms of areas to improve upon.
- I think that sometimes the information is not perceived in the way that we meant it to be perceived. Maybe this is due to presentation on our part, or misconception of the visiting team, I'm not sure.
- Is anything totally achieved?

- Don't know for sure. Only part of the report has been shared with everyone
- As I said before, I think the team took direction form the administrators about what recommendations they'd like to see in the report. I imagine that the commendations were more genuine, but they probably also grew mostly form reported successes.
- The report back from the Visiting Committee was pretty general, largely commending what we're doing with limited recommendations, at least those that were shared were limited.
- The recommendations of the team were rather underwhelming. They did not hit on the areas that are the most critical for our school at this time such as meeting the needs of students with disabilities.
- I think the team needs to stay longer and be more thorough in order to be more significant.

Administrators:

- some aspects were not shared with the faculty at large.
- We showed them our best. Had we desired honest recommendations, we might have shown them our problems. Their visit was too short to immerse in our school culture.
- I really don't want to answer this question.
- The viositing team seemed to have some agendas that did not coincide with the vision and culture of our school. They were easily distracted almost searching for something to report.
- A few of the recommendations were based on incorrect facts.

Stated Goal 15: In theory, a critical outcome of accreditation is for my school to produce a detailed self-study and, in turn, secure an objective evaluation.

Responses below reflect those who answered either "This critical outcome was only partially achieved" or "This critical outcome was not at all achieved."

Teachers:

- As noted above, the accreditation committee to which I belonged did not approach its task objectively: the decisions were made for us.
- Admin no interested in hearing the truth just in keeping their over paid jobs.
- "Securing" might be too strong a word.
- No comment
- Coming up with a truly objective evaluation is most likely not possible.
- The self-study didn't seem as thorough as under previous accreditation models. It involved fewer people, less overall time. The accreditation process seemed like a rubber-stamp rather than a serious look at what we do and how we do it.

- Only a small group of individuals was involved with this process.
- Are they just theories or are things put in practice successfully. How do the people involved in the institution know that ideas presented are then achieved once put in place
- Again, what do we decide is important to "self-study" is limited

Administrators:

- Impossible to fully implement.
- I feel that it is very hard for a small group of people to get a true pulse of the institution in a few short days of visiting. I do understand that it is hard to dedicate more resources to the process, and I am not sure that a few more days on campus would improve the awareness significantly. Also, I feel that the process is flawed since the groups for interaction are pre-selected and the statements and papers put forth for review are carefully prepared with he objective of achieving accreditation as the main goal - true critical review and a true improvement plans are hard to develop from this process. Although, I think the process can be improved by having the visiting team randomly choose those to interview and to randomly visit classrooms, I am not sure if a much better process can be put together under the time and resource constraints.
- The teachers do not do a performance review each year.
- We are always self evaluating. Some staff are not as accepting to constructive criticism or new ideas.
- Too many agendas and too little time visiting the school.

Trustees:

- I think the process has multiple problems. Schools need the accreditation and put their best foots forward. I'm not sure with all the other items on the reviewers plate how much digging is done. I think the accreditation is so important these days that