



Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL?

Independent schools are pre-collegiate, non-profit institutions governed by boards of trustees and supported by tuition revenue, charitable contributions, and endowment income. Through the accreditation process, schools hold themselves publicly accountable to all who seek assurance that they meet high standards of educational quality, operation and staff competence.

HOW DO SCHOOLS ATTAIN MEMBERSHIP IN CAIS?

To be eligible for provisional membership, schools must be in their fifth year of operation, be incorporated not-for-profit, meet the standards outlined in the publication Standards for Member Schools (including enrollment, grades served, etc.) and those of a visiting committee of the CAIS Board of Standards. To attain full membership, schools must undergo a full accreditation and be granted a term of accreditation by the Board of Standards.

WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

Member schools are accredited by an ongoing, cyclical process of accreditation. The CAIS Board of Standards grants a term of accreditation up to a maximum of six years, based upon the school's self-study and a report from a team of educators who visit the school. This team writes commendations and recommendations for the school to use in strengthening all aspects of its program and operations, and in meeting the 100 standards contained in the CAIS document. In the mid year of the accreditation cycle, the school must submit an interim report describing progress made on the recommendations. All member schools are accredited by CAIS, and CAIS also conducts joint accreditations with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), the Western Catholic Education Association (WCEA) and Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE).

HOW DO I CHOOSE A SCHOOL?

Independent schools offer families a wide choice, including schools large and small, secular and religiously affiliated, boarding and day, coeducational and single sex, with rural, suburban or urban campuses. While all member schools meet accreditation standards, each school is unique, defining its own mission and objectives, curricular emphases, pedagogical approaches and extracurricular programs. To choose the right school, we encourage families to visit schools, review school literature and, finally, rely on their own knowledge of their child and family.

DO YOU RANK SCHOOLS?

No. It is impossible to rank schools as diverse as those in our membership, just as it would be impossible to rank children in a family. Each must be judged by the degree it fulfills its own objectives, the kind of program and culture the school provides and the qualities that will help a student to succeed there. As stated above, the "best" school is the one that meets the needs of the child.

HOW DO I OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CAIS MEMBER SCHOOLS?

The schools will provide you with information on enrollment, tuition and fees, job opportunities, financial aid, academic program, I-20's for international students, etc. You can access the websites of our member schools through the *Finding a School* page on our website, or through listings in our printed directory.

Our website www.caisca.org provides more information, including listings of member schools by type and location, job opportunities, documents, newsletters, etc.



CAIS At A Glance

WHO WE ARE

The California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) is a non-profit organization of more than 190 elementary, middle and secondary schools in California. The Association serves and strengthens its schools by setting standards of academic quality and ethical conduct, by providing for the professional growth of faculty, administrators, and trustees, and by promoting ethnic and socio-economic diversity.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

To reach its goals CAIS:

- Monitors each school's compliance with membership standards through a professionally recognized system of evaluation and accreditation.
- Provides a variety of programs, workshops, and services for teachers, administrators, and trustees to foster professional growth and shared knowledge among schools.
- Represents the viewpoints and commitments of independent education to the broader community, providing information and leadership on educational issues.
- Serves as a source of information and counsel to schools.
- Encourages cooperative relationships between and among schools, both public and private, for the ultimate benefit of California's students.

HISTORY

- 1941 - California Association of Independent Secondary Schools formed with 21 members
- 1949 - Elementary schools admitted and CAIS formed
- 1961 - All secondary and K-12 schools accredited by WASC
- 1965 - CAIS incorporated as a non-profit corporation
- 1982 - Membership limited to non-profit schools
- 1984 - WASC/CAIS secondary accreditation document approved
- 1996 - Elementary and secondary accreditation manuals merged
- 2001 - CAIS forges independent accrediting process in partnership with WASC

- Present - Largest state independent school organization serving more than 190 member schools and 73,000 students

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

CAIS professional development programs serve over 4,000 teachers administrators, heads and trustees each year. Programs include:

- Separate retreats for beginning elementary, middle and secondary school teachers.
- Retreats for experienced teachers and middle managers.
- A regional meeting serving 2,000 teachers and administrators.
- Professional workshops in twelve subject and grade level areas.
- Trustee Conference serving over 800 trustees and heads of school.
- Conference for heads of school.
- Workshops for accreditation team training, testing.

COMMUNICATIONS

CAIS maintains listservs for:

- Heads of school
- Assistant heads
- Business officers
- Development Officers
- Admissions Officers
- Board Chairs

CAIS publishes Association Newsletters and Faculty Newsletters.

On our website you can:

- Access information on time, dates, locations and program for conferences and workshops
- Register for conferences
- Post or find a job
- Find a school and link to the school's site
- Download the accreditation manual
- Read current and archived newsletters
- Access resources of all kinds

INSURANCE SERVICES

- CAIS Workers' Compensation Insurance Program
- CAIS Long Term Disability Insurance Program