



## Standards for Member Schools

The California Association of Independent Schools is composed of a group of independent, academic elementary and secondary schools that adhere to and maintain a set of educational, professional and ethical standards of high order. Membership in the Association is predicated on each school's readiness to subscribe to a set of general commitments that serve as operational guidelines for all Association schools.

### Association Commitments

- Ethical - The Association exists to promote high ethical practices among the independent schools of California. These practices are delineated in a statement of Principles of Good Practice to which each member school is expected to adhere at all times.
- Financial - The Association expects each member to offer evidence of fiscal stability in its total school operation.
- Administrative - The Association supports the position that a school's stability is considerably enhanced by a school head who is clearly designated the leader of the school and enjoys a degree of permanence.
- Teaching - The Association advocates a high order of professionalism by faculty employed by the schools. Methods may vary school to school, but teachers dedicated to helping young people to learn are essential in all of our schools.
- Philosophical - The Association requires that each school clearly state its goals and purposes and have the ability to demonstrate in practice the fulfillment of its philosophy.

### Standards of Membership

To be considered for membership in the California Association of Independent Schools, a school must have been established and in operation for a period of at no less than five years. Applications received prior to October 1 will be considered for membership in the current year. Two members of the Board of Directors will visit the school prior to the winter meeting of the Board, at which time new schools are approved for membership. New provisional schools may participate in all Association activities in a non-voting capacity. Evaluation for full membership must take place in the second or third full year of provisional membership.

- Each school must undergo accreditation every six years or as required by the term of accreditation. (See separate sections on Standards that detail elementary and or secondary evaluations.)
- All schools applying for membership must be incorporated not for profit.
- Each school must have a clear statement of its objectives and purposes. All individuals and groups - governing body, professional staff, students and parents - associated with a school should have an understanding of these goals.
- Member schools must demonstrate a respect for diversity and tolerance for the views of others.
- Each school must have established student admission procedures and policies that are consistent with the school's stated goals. Admission must be non-discriminatory and in conformance with federal and state statutes.
- Each school must make available to the families of newly enrolled students information concerning their financial responsibility to the school.

## Standards of Membership, continued

- **PROFESSIONAL STAFF**

The teaching faculty and administrative staff must be sufficient in number to carry out the stated program of the school.

Employment practices must be non-discriminatory and in conformance with federal and state statutes.

Members of the professional staff should possess either a bachelor's degree or give satisfactory evidence of its equivalence in experience or training.

Members of the professional staff must be qualified by training or experience in the areas in which they are assigned.

The school must have a program for evaluating staff performance that is understood by staff members.

Evidence must exist that the professional staff is provided reasonable working conditions and salaries.

- The yearly calendar of each school must include 175 school days.
- The formal academic curriculum must be designed to meet the stated goals of the school. (See Standards for Secondary Schools.)
- Each school must have physical facilities, equipment and teaching materials to support the program of the school at each grade level. These should include a library/learning center which is organized, supplied and staffed to serve the needs of the students and professional staff.
- Each school must adhere to city, county and state health and safety regulations as they apply to a school's physical facilities.
- Each school must have a governing body with established procedures for developing school policy and delineating its other responsibilities.

- **ADMINISTRATION**

Each school must have an effective administrative organization designed to carry out the policies established by the governing board and the stated goals of the school.

Each school head must give evidence of being a person qualified and capable of providing leadership in the school.

Any school that has a change of head is subject to re-evaluation.

- Parents should be well informed of the objectives and purposes of the school. Reasonable practices and procedures should be established by which parents may communicate their concerns and interests to appropriate school personnel.
- Alumni of each school should be effectively involved in the activities of the school in ways appropriate to their interests and those of the school.
- The Association is concerned that each school maintain a sound credit rating and give evidence of its financial stability. Each school must establish procedures for the management of its financial resources which should include a budget-making process incorporating fund accounting or other approved accounting procedures, annual audit or audit review of unaudited financial statements, and long range financial planning.

## **Standards of Membership, continued**

- Each school must maintain complete and accurate records for staff members, students and graduates.

For each entering student there should be on file an official transcript of that student's previous academic record. The school should keep a record of all scholastic work completed by each student, including an attendance record. Upon leaving a school, a student should have a complete and accurate transcript prepared and promptly sent to schools or colleges of the student's choice.

## **Transfer of Membership**

- Article 11, section 3 of the by-laws prohibits the transfer of membership in CAIS. A sale of all the assets of a school to, or merger into, another school that is not a member of CAIS will be deemed to include a transfer of CAIS membership and thereby constitute grounds for termination of the membership.

## **Standards for Secondary Schools**

Secondary schools should include grades 10, 11, and 12 and confer a high school diploma. Grade nine may be included. There must be at least six full time students enrolled at each grade level.

- All member schools must be jointly accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and CAIS. New applicant schools and continuing member schools must submit a copy of their self-study to the CAIS Secondary Board of Standards. This evaluation procedure will take place every six years or as required by the term of accreditation granted by CAIS and WASC.

- In addition to CAIS/WASC accreditation, all member schools will:

be college preparatory in their stated goals, purposes, and practices;

offer and recommend for their high school graduates academic courses that will meet the minimum course requirements for freshman admissions to the University of California system ("A-G requirement").

## **Standards for Elementary Schools**

- Schools coming within the purview of the Elementary Board of Standards should be capable of being classified in one of the following categories:

Elementary schools with no grade higher than ninth offering at least five consecutive grades, exclusive of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten;

Secondary schools with elementary divisions which have at least three consecutive grades prior to the seventh grade;

Middle schools with at least three consecutive grades none higher than the ninth or lower than the fifth.

- Each school must be evaluated by CAIS every six years or as required by the term of accreditation.
- Each school must participate in the Association testing program. The achievement tests used, the method of reporting results, and frequency of testing are determined by the Elementary Board of Standards.
- Each school must issue student progress reports to parents at least twice during the school year.

## **Principles of Good Practice**

The CAIS Principles of Good Practice deal with interschool relationships and practices. Upon attaining membership in the Association, each school should affirm its acceptance of the Principles of Good Practice by submitting to the Board of Directors a copy of the Principles signed by the head of the school. The Board of Directors shall have the authority to remove a school from membership for violations of the Principles. Complaints against any member school of Principle violations should be submitted to the Board of Directors in writing, together with substantiating evidence, for consideration.

## **The Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors of CAIS has the responsibility of monitoring each member school's fulfillment of its commitment and responsibility to the Association as defined in these Membership Standards and Principles of Good Practice.

Deviation from the standards or practices by a school or an employee may cause serious damage to the reputation of the school, the Association, and independent education in general. This behavior could lead to the loss of Association membership. Should such action be taken by the Board of Directors, a school is entitled to a fair and just hearing before the Executive Board, provided a request for such a hearing is made within 10 days of notification of membership withdrawal.

Since the Board of Directors is made up of heads of school from member schools, this group exists to be supportive and of service to all member schools. A school experiencing difficulties which are brought to the attention of the Board of Directors will receive from the Board every fair consideration and assistance in resolving those problems.

Adopted May 1979

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