Anatomy of a Visit

Accreditation Visiting Committee Orientation
Part II
School Visit Guidelines
Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions (Committee Chair)
2. Review of Part I—CAIS and the Accreditation Visit
3. Interviews and Observations—Part II
4. Writing—Part II
5. Discussion of Internal Evaluation Report
6. Preparation for the Visit
Section 2:

What is CAIS?
CAIS Vision

To be the standard of excellence in learning and leadership, shaping the future of education.
Our Mission

To pursue continuous whole school improvement through exemplary leadership training, research, and accreditation.
CAIS Values

• Student – Centred
• Leadership
• Excellence
• Collaboration
• Relevance
• National & Global Perspective
Why Accreditation matters

• Reflective, collaborative whole school improvement process based on evidence not assumptions

• Parents who invest in our schools deserve accountability

• Students deserve the focus on improved learning and excellence
What role does the Accreditation Visiting Committee play?

- Understand the National Standards
- Review the Internal Evaluation Report
- Observe schools in action
- Engage with people in schools
- Engage in collaborative work with the Committee
- Leave the school with a meaningful, thorough and clear document that provides a pathway to whole school improvement
What is the Committee Culture?

✓ Collegiality
✓ Confidentiality
✓ Respect
✓ Professionalism
What are we doing here?

- We are here to experience the school’s programs and services
- We are not here to evaluate the job performance of teachers or administrators.
What are we doing here?

- We are here to **listen** to everyone, learn and give our best support

- We are here to **measure** the school in action against the Internal Evaluation Report and the National Standards

- We are here to **encourage** open and candid sharing of challenges and triumphs while respecting confidentiality
What are we doing here?

We are here to celebrate the successes of the school and validate what they are doing well.
The Process

1. The Visit Schedule
2. Writing assignments
3. Interviews, meetings & classroom visits
4. Team meetings
5. Writing the report
6. Follow-up
The Visit Schedule

• Review the schedule provided by the school
• Identify school/group meetings already scheduled—decide which members of the Committee with attend and lead group meetings
• Identify Committee meetings:
  Monday meeting
  Tuesday meeting
  Wednesday meeting
Three Committee Meetings

1. Monday - Indicators of Effective Practice

2. Tuesday – Draft Recommendations and Commendations

3. Wednesday – Confirm Recommendations and Commendations
   - Committee votes on Standards

***For each meeting, committee members report according writing assignments***
Three Team Meetings

- Focus on understanding based on evidence
- Focus on National Standards
- Focus on commendations, recommendations and suggestions
- Focus on the school
Writing Assignments

- Review writing assignments
- Discuss Introduction (purpose) and Standards
- Discuss Standards 2 and 3 specifically—ways to ensure a comprehensive review without overburdening the principal writer
  - Collaboration
  - Standard/Division/Topic leaders
  - Small group meetings to review findings and writing
SECTION 3:
Interviews and Observations Part II
Individual meetings

- Meetings should be prearranged if at all possible. Don’t just drop in during someone’s prep period.
- Set a fixed length of time for the meeting to ensure that all important topics are discussed.
- Prepare key questions ahead of time—meetings should not be “fishing” exercises.
- If someone requests a meeting for personal reasons, take a second team member with you.
Chairing Group Meetings

- Plan the objectives of your group meeting (refer to Standards)
- Plan your method for introductions and your opening questions
- Begin by explaining the purpose of this review and congratulating them on participation
- Prepare key questions ahead of time
- Stick to your start and end times
Interview/Meeting Questions

Begin by asking some open ended questions:

Tell me about your position here.

What are you most proud of?

What keeps you awake at night?

How would you approach that?
Interview/Meeting Questions

Move to more specific and direct questions designed to confirm or establish evidence:

We understood from the Internal Report that…

What factors contributed to these results?

Is this characteristic of…?

How did the school/group learn from…?

Where can evidence be found that…?

What evidence is there that students are able to...
Interview/Meeting Behaviours

- LISTEN; be an active listener—ask more questions than you answer and listen more than you speak
- Explain purposes of questions and double check understanding
- Keep initial questions simple/non-threatening
- Do not make comments that reflect personal opinions/biases
- Avoid comparisons with your own school or other schools
- Do not allow a few people to dominate groups
- Thank people
Classroom Observations

• Always good practice to ask if it is alright to come in

• Stay as long as is appropriate

• Track everyone you meet and whose classes you invade!

See handout for specific examples!
SECTION 4:

Writing Part II
Writing Visiting Committee Reports

For each of your assigned areas:

1. **Overview**:
   Background and general context
   (this may refer directly to the Internal Evaluation and the school’s self assessment)

2. **Observations**:
   What you saw at the school (evidence)
Writing Visiting Committee Reports

3. **Commendations:**
   Areas of perceived real strength

4. **Suggestions:**
   Ideas or resources that the school may wish to consider—answers the “how?”

5. **Recommendations:**
   Changes that need to be made or concerns that need to be addressed—answers the “what?”
Recommendations

WHAT?

What significant area of the school needs to be addressed by this Recommendation?
Recommendations

Three tips on wording:

1. Use the language found in the Internal Evaluation Report—look at their summaries and recommendations
2. Use the language found in the Indicators of Effective Practice
3. Use language that is clear and straightforward
Recommendations

✓ Never program specific
✓ Never who
✓ Never how
✓ Be mindful of cost implications
✓ Must be supported with evidence

See the handout for specific examples!
Commendations

- Never who
- Must be truly above and beyond
- Focus on unique value proposition
- The full VC must reach consensus for each Recommendation and Commendation
Suggestions

• **HOW?**

Suggestions offer solutions to *less significant findings* or offer a specific idea for the implementation of a recommendation
The Writing Process

• Each team member writes a draft report on her/his sections
• Do not add any recommendations or commendations—these are only made through the consensus of the group
• Draft reports are emailed to the office 10 days after the visit—reports@cais.ca
• Report is assembled, rationalized and undergoes an initial edit
The Writing Process

When you receive the draft report:

• Please read the entire report
• Comment on content, emphasis, accuracy, repetition, and tone
• Add any additional thoughts or suggestions
• Do not add any commendations or recommendations after the fact
The Writing Process

• The report undergoes a further rewrite based upon VC comments
• The draft report is then shared with the Head of the School for consideration
• The Head, Chair and CAIS discuss the report
• Significant changes may include the committee
What are we after?

✅ Schools that are engaged in reflective and collaborative dialogue

✅ Schools that are committed to continuous improvement

✅ Schools that do more than the provincial requirements
Feedback on the Process

What was done well?

• The team listened
• The team knew our school and cared
• Everyone was spoken to
• Not intimidating
• They asked good questions
Feedback on the Process

What could be improved?

• Interview each person
• The Visiting Committee spoke too much
• They seemed more interested in what they could take back to their schools
Section 5:
The Internal Evaluation Report
The Internal Report

The Chair of Committee Leads this discussion

- Strengths?
- Surprises?
- Further questions?
- Other comments?
Canadian Accredited Independent Schools

EXPECT THE BEST