



## Preliminary Criteria for Membership

Potential Candidate Schools must provide evidence of the following:

- Articulating a clearly stated mission and guiding principles of both education and inclusivity
- Upholding non-discriminatory policies and practices in admissions, employment, and all other aspects of school operation, as provided by law
- Incorporating as a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization under IRS ruling
- Adhering to governance by an independent Board of Trustees
- Practicing academic integrity, i.e., academic freedom to promote diversity in pedagogy and curriculum without restriction to any single dogma
- Having an academic program spanning at least three successive grades, with an early childhood program counting as one grade
- **Operating for at least three consecutive years by the time of application for Candidacy and five consecutive years by the time of Initial Accreditation**
- Demonstrating a willingness to meet the VAIS Standards for Membership

## Potential Candidate School Checklist

Potential Candidate Schools will complete the following steps in order:

1. **Conversation with Director of Accreditation and/or Executive Director:** This meeting will determine a possible fit between the School and the Association.
2. **Initial Visit to the School:** The Director of Accreditation will visit the school for a tour and a deeper discussion with the Head of School regarding candidate expectations and the value of VAIS Accreditation. Phone or Zoom calls and email exchanges may precede the meeting.
3. **Application Form:** After establishing that the School may be a fit for the Association, the School will be invited to complete an application and to submit the application fee.
4. **VAIS Documentation Requirements for Candidate Schools:** Make a copy of this form and link the required materials in the designated table. Once the required documents have been gathered, please share with the Director of Accreditation for review via email at [leliagrinnan@vais.org](mailto:leliagrinnan@vais.org).
5. **In-person Visit with the Director of Accreditation, Executive Director, and a member of the Accreditation Committee:** Following the positive review of the documentation, an in-person visit to the school will be scheduled. VAIS representatives will be interested in getting a tour of the school and meeting with the Head of School and Board Chair. The purpose of this visit is to become better acquainted with the applying school and, in turn, for the school to become more familiar with the purposes of the Association, the requirements for membership, and the

evaluation process in its entirety. Please see the agenda for this visit, [Initial Visit to Potential Candidate Schools](#).

6. **Head of School and Board Chair Presentation to the Accreditation Committee:** At the designated Accreditation Committee meeting, the Committee members will welcome the Head and Board Chair of the potential Candidate School to hear a brief history of the school, as well as an overview of the school's mission, philosophy of education, and strategic vision. The Committee then will make a recommendation for initial candidacy to the VAIS Board of Directors.
7. **VAIS Board Meeting:** The Accreditation Committee's motion is weighed by the VAIS Board of Directors. The Executive Director will inform the potential candidate of the decision.
8. **Candidate Status:** Once a school is accepted as a Candidate, the school will be granted non-voting membership privileges and be required to pay full dues to the Association.
9. **Initial Evaluation Self-Study Process:** The school will have up to two years to complete the self-study process with the support of the Director of Accreditation and the VAIS staff.