

## FAQ CAIS Accreditation

St. George's School of Montreal was awarded accreditation as a CAIS member school in 2013.

### Who is CAIS?

CAIS is the voice for accredited independent schools in Canada. As a community of independent schools, CAIS explores and pursues exemplary leadership, training, research and international standards of educational excellence. As of September 2013, over 90 independent schools in Canada, Bermuda, the Dominican Republic, and Switzerland were members of CAIS.

### What is the value of being an accredited member school of CAIS?

CAIS accreditation is a peer-reviewed, comprehensive and exhaustive process that examines a school's operations from every angle. CAIS Accreditation provides:

- School leaders with validation of current programs and services and suggested planning for future growth and development;
- Educators with valuable professional development and information about effective practices in other schools through participation on peer review teams;
- Boards of Directors with an independent, non-governmental validation that the school they oversee is effectively delivering a quality educational experience to its students;
- Schools with a deserved recognition for going above and beyond the minimum to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to quality; and
- Parents and the public with the assurance that the school is focused on providing a safe and enriching learning environment while maintaining efficient and effective operations.

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## **What was the accreditation process for St. George's?**

**Step 1:** The CAIS accreditation process started with an internal evaluation to examine all aspects of our programs and operations, strengths and weaknesses, strategic plans, in order to determine how well our program fulfills our mission. We submitted our Internal Evaluation Report to CAIS in March 2013 following close to one year of preparation and analysis.

**Step 2:** A visiting committee, comprised of peers from other independent schools, came to the school for four days in April 2013. Working from our Internal Evaluation Report, they observed and met with many members of the school community, including students, staff, alumni, parents and Board members.

**Step 3:** The visiting committee then prepared their report which included commendations and recommendations. The final report was sent to our Head of School in September 2013 and shortly thereafter, the school received an official letter from the CAIS Board confirming our accreditation status.

**Step 4:** Accreditation notwithstanding, the recommendations made by the visiting committee will be addressed by the school via a written response back to CAIS. We plan to submit our reply by June 1, 2014 which is well within the 18-month time limit set by CAIS. Please note: According to the conditions of CAIS membership, the school will undergo re-accreditation again in approximately five years.

## **What came out of the accreditation process?**

As a result of their observation and evaluation, the visiting committee documented and commended our school on the following:

- Adhering to our mission and founding principles and living our values each and every day
- Providing a supportive learning environment encouraging students to think critically and freely, and to value differing perspectives on topics
- Being an inclusive community and accepting, respecting and supporting others who are different
- The exemplary work being done in the area of service and citizenship both in the local and global community
- Our active approach to promoting awareness of environmental issues and implementing practical strategies to meet clearly defined sustainability goals within the school community and beyond



- Our strong commitment to the Arts and Performing Arts and the passion and commitment of Art/Performing Art teachers
- Promoting the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle through a wide variety of programming to accommodate for personal interests and talents
- Our breadth of co-curricular offerings and the SLAM program
- The depth of meaningful support/enrichment available to students through the Centre for Learning Enrichment (CLE)
- The exemplary performance in several curriculum areas at both the Elementary and High School
- The accelerated mathematics track in Grade Eight to engage students in mathematics
- The efforts of the science department to integrate universal concepts with other subject areas
- The History Department for its exemplary Contemporary World Integrative Project and its impact on the broader school community
- The visual arts department curriculum goals to develop visible thinking and art appreciation through studio work
- The innovative Community Learning Program and variety of ways the school fosters an awareness of global issues, a sense of social consciousness and a commitment to social responsibility
- The degree of follow-through in the curriculum design and mapping to ensure consistency
- The strategy and practices of professional development and the deepening of the curriculum at St. George's which is highly valued by the faculty
- Our professional development in the areas of brain research to guide our curriculum planning
- The harmony and overall atmosphere of the leadership team
- High staff morale as evidenced by conversations with committed and passionate employees across the school
- The extent to which we are open, respectful and welcoming of all prospective students, and their families
- The Governance Committee's recent work to consolidate policies and best practices around its governance model.
- The Finance & Administration team on their strong operational management
- The policies and procedures in place for both Health and Safety and Emergency Response



## **What recommendations did the visiting committee make?**

The visiting committee's recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- The need to finalize the dynamic strategic thinking plan and its timely communication to the community
- The development of a longer term and sustainable financial strategy linked to our overall strategic vision
- The adoption of a longer term financial planning focus, including capital projects, with more “what-if” scenario planning and consideration of revenue supplementation
- The development of advancement plans that build endowment and establish a major gift strategy, as well as formalize the on-going connection with alumni
- Continued development of retention, recruitment and succession strategies
- Completion of our Atlas Rubicon curriculum mapping in concert with our multi-year professional development plan
- Continued integration of technology within our curriculum
- Improvements to the Science, Art and Music spaces (resources permitting)
- The need for a school-wide assessment policy for practices common to all departments
- The implementation of a more formal performance evaluation process
- Continued communication of a bold and direct link to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning
- Continued development of health-focused programs