



Dear Parents,

This letter is a follow up to the email that you received earlier in the week about a survey for the re-accreditation process that Seattle Academy is engaged in. (By the way, about 175 people have completed the survey already, which is terrific!! Thank you very much. [Here's the link again.](#)) I'd like to take a minute to say a few more words about the PNAIS accreditation.

Seattle Academy is a member of the Pacific Northwest Association of Independent Schools (PNAIS), which is an accrediting organization. The mission of PNAIS is to help its member schools provide high quality education for their students. Because each school has a unique mission and philosophy, the PNAIS accreditation process looks for alignment between a particular school's mission and its day-to-day program, and the major standards that get assessed in an evaluation are based on characteristics that have been deemed necessary in an excellent school.

While accreditation has the external purpose of promoting standards of excellence in schools and providing an external review of specific schools to the public, the real value of the process for a school is internal self-reflection. For us at Seattle Academy, we are taking stock of where we have been, where we are, and where we want to go. And we will set major goals and action plans for ourselves as we move into the future. The guiding question in all this work is: "Are we preparing students for college and life?"

There are three main stages to the accreditation process.

- In the year before the evaluation takes place, the entire school engages in an intensive self-study. Every department of the school meets to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses and to review its activities against professional standards. Every teacher, staff member, and administrator takes part in this self-study, and groups thoughtfully evaluate all areas of the school: academics, athletics, the arts, the physical plant, administrative practices, the business office, the board, the admissions process, clubs, the outdoor program, support services, and so forth. Meetings take place over the entire year, and in the end, the school produces a Self Study report. In 2003, our document was 172 pages.
- The actual evaluation occurs when a team of comes to Seattle Academy and observes the school in action for three and a half days. We will have about a dozen visitors on our evaluation team, which will come October 9-12, 2011. That team will have read our Self Study, and at the end of their visit, they will write a report and make a recommendation regarding our re-accreditation. Seattle Academy was first accredited in 1988 and we have been re-accredited three times since then.

- Following the team visit, report, and vote by the PNAIS Board of Governors, Seattle Academy will receive a response report, which will become part of our follow up action plan.

That's the process. While it is a great deal of additional work for teachers and staff who still have their daily work while all this is going on, the fact is this is a very energizing exercise. And that's mainly because it is yet another chance for all of us to examine in detail our alignment with the school's mission. Is our goal—in all areas of the program, in every corner of what we do—to Prepare Students for College and Life? Do all our actions and policies and procedures keep us consistent with or take us closer towards that goal? The self-study process may be intensive and time consuming, but all of us at Seattle Academy appreciate the opportunity to question, reframe, and refocus our work in terms of the mission of the school.

Evaluation requires feedback, and a key part of getting feedback is hearing from all the constituencies in the school through surveys. You've seen the survey for parents. Faculty, staff, and administrators are also being surveyed, and students will take an online survey during school in about three weeks. We wrote our own custom survey for alumni, and they are being contacted via the alumni office (using Facebook and Twitter, naturally!). Many students will also assist in the process through feedback they may have offered about a particular program they are a part of.

We appreciate your understanding as we do this work—taking extra break days in January and April—and we appreciate your participation through the survey. If you have any questions about the accreditation process, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,
Fred Strong
Dean of Faculty