



AMERICAN HERITAGE  
SCHOOL & FAMILY EDUCATION CENTER

April 22, 2009

All Parents and Students  
American Heritage School

American Heritage Middle and High School Programs 2009-2010

Dear Parents and Students,

From the time that we launched our inaugural high school class in the Fall of 2007, we have been actively planning for a unified 7-12<sup>th</sup> grade program that will afford our middle school (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>) and high school (9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>) graduates with every benefit of the finest secondary education program possible. We have grown our high school carefully – one grade level each year – and are pleased to offer 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grades in the 2009/2010 school year, with every expectation of offering 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and a full 9-12 high school program, beginning in the Fall of 2010.

We have carefully considered feedback from parents, students, and board members, as well as from other outstanding private and public school administrators and educators – and we are pleased to share with you more highlights of what you can expect at American Heritage School next year and in years to come!

High School Graduation Requirements. In order to graduate from American Heritage High School, 27 credits will be required according to the attached “High School Graduation Requirements” list. The vast majority of students enrolled in our 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grades this year (2008/2009) are receiving 7 to 8 credits per year for their coursework, depending upon whether they elect early morning seminary (which allows another course during the day for up to one additional credit).

Core and Specialized Instruction. All students in grades 7-12 will have the benefits of a combined core and specialized instruction model that includes both an integrated core class taught by a single instructor as well as specialized instruction in math, science, art, foreign languages, and electives. Core instructors will integrate the subjects of Language Arts, Literature, and History/Geography (in high school, the subjects of Language Arts and Literature will be offered as one combined course referred to as “English” for transcript purposes). As in previous years, grades 7-8 will also have devotional as a separate 30-minute daily subject taught by their core instructor. Currently, we anticipate course offerings and teacher assignments as set forth on the attached list of “Course Offerings 2009-2010”.

Mathematics. Math will continue to be an area of particular focus in 2009-2010. We plan to add a fourth math instructor to our middle and high school math department in a continuing effort to meet students at their various individual levels. Saxon Math will continue to be used through Algebra

2 and other advanced math curricula and programs are being actively considered by our curriculum committee. Also, we instituted a volunteer after-school math lab this year and will expand the lab to the extent that we feel it is being regularly used by students and families.

Science. Over the last three years, the School has made tremendous progress in increasing student achievement in science, averaging in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally on last year's standardized science assessments in middle and high school. Still, we are planning various improvements to our science program, including a chemistry instructor for the high school, a lab coordinator to assist our 5-8 science instructor with regularly scheduled hands-on experiments, and a detailed syllabus at the beginning of each term that will communicate more clearly to students and parents the scope and sequence of science instruction for each term. We will continue to use our A-Beka middle school science textbooks acquired in 2008 and our Apologia high school science textbooks (physical science, biology, and chemistry) that have been used since we began our high school science program in 2007. We will also continue to utilize field-learning opportunities to provide students with instruction and experience outside of the classroom.

Curricular Electives. Beginning with the 2009/2010 school year, we anticipate offering the following curricular electives, primarily for high school students (grades 9-11). Most of these electives will satisfy certain high school graduation requirements in fine arts, foreign language, and physical education. Grades 7 and 8 will be included as possible and appropriate. (See attached "Course Offerings 2009-2010" for more details.)

- Spanish
- French
- Orchestra
- Choir
- Acapella
- Musicology (music appreciation and composer history)
- Drama/Debate (includes Constitution Bowl)
- Art
- Ballroom Dance
- Fitness for Life

Please note that high school students desiring to take most or all of the above-listed electives AND complete the seminary program may need to take early-morning seminary one or more years in high school (see more on seminary below).

Seminary. CES is looking forward to providing at least two sections of seminary at American Heritage School beginning in 2009/2010, depending on the number of enrolled students. Currently, CES is planning to hold early morning seminary at American Heritage School from 7:10 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. five days per week, in addition to another seminary class to be offered here during the class day.

Extracurricular Programs. We will continue to offer extracurricular basketball and soccer for both boys and girls, which will satisfy graduation requirements in physical education. We also will

offer extracurricular orchestra (beginning, intermediate and advanced) for any student or non-student conditional upon successful audition. We do not anticipate adding other extracurricular programs in the 2009/2010 year; however, certain curricular electives such as orchestra, drama, constitution bowl, science bowl and other events do require some extracurricular rehearsals and meetings.

*Student Government, Academic Competitions, and Other Special Events.* High school student government will continue to operate with class officers from the 7<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> Grades. The elected Student Council will continue to have access to administration through attendance of a monthly Student Council meeting that includes Mr. Beckwith and other administrators. At the recommendation of the Student Council, we will also increase the number of dances that are held during the year. We will also continue to compete in the regional Constitution Bowl in connection with our debate elective as well as encourage high school students to be involved in major school benefit events such as the Christmas Benefit Concert, which will feature a return performance from Dr. Michael Ballam.

*Uniforms and Dress Code.* Based upon proposals that we received from the Student Council, we anticipate including more uniform options for middle and high school beginning with the 2009/2010 year, including a new AHS sweatshirt option. We have generally been very pleased with the dignity and maturity with which our middle and high school students have approached the uniform standards this year and feel that we can continue to recognize that maturity through increased uniform options. Note that beginning with the 2009/2010 year, the new Friday dress uniform options for middle school that were phased in this year on an optional basis, will be required.

*Calendar and Daily Schedule.* Based upon feedback from a majority of parents and teachers who feel that more time for inservice and family time would be very welcome, we have added four additional full inservice days to the annual school calendar for middle and high school (for a total of seven). Also, we have aligned the middle and high school “early out” days with the elementary school inservice days – such that every K-6 inservice day is also an early-out day for middle and high school. By way of comparison, the total in-class hours for middle and high school continue to exceed the total in-class hours of the Alpine School District middle and high school calendars.

Based upon overwhelming feedback from teachers, the daily schedule will remain basically unchanged with exception of our moving to a straight block as opposed to a modified block schedule for high school students only. Thus, for grades 9 through 11 only, we will operate on block schedule with an 8-period “A/B” schedule (see attached “American Heritage School Block Schedule” for more details). For grades 7 through 11, the school day will still begin at 8:10 a.m. and end at 3:10 p.m., not including designated early-out inservice Fridays, early morning seminary, and extracurricular programs.

For those families that have elementary school students as well, the daily schedule for grades K-6 will also remain unchanged (begin classes at 8:30 a.m. and conclude the day at 3:05 p.m.). As is currently the practice in most classrooms, beginning at 8:15 a.m., teachers in grades K-6 will provide supplemental enrichment activities for students who arrive early and are awaiting the 8:30 a.m. bell.

As always, if families have special circumstances pertaining to arrival or dismissal, we will be as flexible as possible to accommodate those schedules.

*Technology Initiative.* Recognizing the vital role of technology in education, we will continue to provide the option for high school students (9<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> grades) to use personal laptops at School for notetaking, research and writing purposes related to School curriculum. We will also be integrating technology into our foreign language programs by providing licenses to *Rosetta Stone*, one of the leaders in foreign language tutorial software, which will supplement our live teacher instruction. Any non-approved use of a personal laptop computer at School (including but not limited to video games, e-mail, or text messaging) will result in the temporary or permanent loss of laptop privileges for the student at School. If you choose to purchase a laptop, we recommend that you purchase one that will meet the suggested minimum requirements set forth below:

*Minimum Hardware Requirements:*

- 1GB RAM
- DVD player, CD-RW burner
- Wireless network capabilities

*Minimum Software Requirements:*

- M.S. Office
- Windows XP Pro
- Anti-Virus protection

A PC operating system is strongly recommend for compatibility and on-site trouble-shooting purposes; however, to our current knowledge, most programs that we will be using are Macintosh compatible or have special Macintosh versions of their software.

*Academic Probation.* The academic probation policy of the school affects high school transcripts as well as all students participating in extracurricular programs. We hope that all parents and students will take a moment to familiarize themselves with the policy, as follows:

Students will receive an “academic warning” when their overall grade falls below a C- in any single course. These students may participate fully in all curricular and extracurricular activities.

A student will be placed on “academic probation” for any of the following:

- (1) remaining on academic warning for longer than 30 days, or
- (2) receiving two or more grades below a C- on any end-of-term report card, or
- (3) receiving a single F on any end-of-term report card.

Students who are on academic probation may not participate in any *extracurricular* activities sponsored by the school for 30 days. A student will be removed from academic probation at the end of the 30-day probation period if no course grade is currently below a C- average for the current term.

At the conclusion of the course (whether a full year or shorter than a full year), students averaging less than a C- overall will receive no credit for the course and must coordinate with the teacher to repeat the failed term(s) or the failed assignment(s) necessary to receive credit.

Repeating Terms and Making Up Credit. For a variety of reasons, students may from time-to-time encounter the need to make up credit that was not received as a result of one or more incomplete or failed terms. In such cases, the teacher will provide a packet of materials and assignments for the incomplete or failed term that must be completed by the student to receive the make-up credit.

Accreditation. In April of 2007 American Heritage School was formally inducted as a candidate member of the Pacific Northwest Association of Independent Schools (PNAIS) – an accreditation association that is well respected in Utah and around the country. Assuming all goes as planned, fully accredited diplomas will be offered for the first graduating class of 2010/2011 and transfer credit to local high schools should be honored subsequent to 2010/2011. Although we have every expectation of full accreditation (expected as early as December of 2010 and not later than April of 2011), we cannot promise that American Heritage School will ultimately be accredited at that time, or indeed at all, nor can we make any definitive representations about high school transfer-credit, which is largely a function of policies of the Utah State Office of Education and individual high schools. Please note that most college admissions offices are far less concerned about accreditation than they do about the capability of the individual student, as measured by the student's academic performance, the array of classes taken, and, most importantly for most colleges, the standardized test scores of the student. See the attached article from a national private school trade journal, *Independent School Management*, on prevailing views of accreditation from the perspective of most private schools and college admissions offices.

Advanced Placement Courses. Advancement placement (A.P.) courses are generally offered beginning in the 11<sup>th</sup> Grade. We anticipate offering A.P. English, A.P. English Literature, A.P. U.S. History, and A.P. Calculus based upon preference and interest level of the particular students enrolled. A student who elects an A.P. course will be in the "A.P. Track" of an integrated course that includes differentiated homework and instruction for both A.P. and non-A.P. students. We will not offer concurrent enrollment courses. We will continue to communicate with high school families in coming months concerning specific A.P. preferences. Also, please note that A.P. credit may be received by successfully passing an A.P. exam regardless of whether an A.P. course was actually taken. In connection with our college advisement services, we will inform students of A.P. test dates, locations and preparation opportunities.

Standardized Testing. This year we administered ACT preparation exams and practice ACT exams to our students in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grades. We are very pleased to report the School's averages far exceeded the national averages for performance on these exams. We will continue to administer standardized tests as necessary and appropriate to provide parents, teachers, and college admissions offices with the benefit of comparable and credible performance data for each of our students. Based upon our research and consistent with the trend of various other private schools in Utah, we plan to administer the PSAT NMSQT to 11<sup>th</sup> Grade students and continue administering the ACT PLAN exam to 10<sup>th</sup> Grade students, the ACT EXPLORE exam to 9<sup>th</sup> Grade students (both in place of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills). Both the ACT EXPLORE and ACT PLAN have value not only as norm-referenced national standardized exams, but also as preparatory exams for the ACT, which is now accepted by all universities in the nation. We will also continue to offer practice ACT exams each term to all high school students.

Qualification for High School and College Athletics. For families that are serious about high school and college athletics, please be aware that particular academic requirements may apply to you depending upon the high school or college that you want to attend. At least two organizations that you should be aware of include: (1) the Utah High School Activities Association (UHSAA) <http://www.uhsaa.org/info/> and, (2) National Collegiate Athletic Association- (NCAA), <http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal>.

College Admissions. We have confidence that our high school program will produce outstanding students that will be sought after by some of the finest colleges in the country. Obviously, we cannot guarantee that a student graduating from American Heritage High School will be accepted to any school of his/her choice; however, we are confident that our students will be well qualified for great colleges and universities – and that if they will diligently apply themselves not only to their coursework here, but also to the spirit and mission of American Heritage School, they will prove to be some of the most successful college students, community members, husbands and wives, and fathers and mothers in their national graduating class.

This year we have been truly astounded by the performance and the spirit of our middle and high school students. This truly is a school with a mission that only the Lord fully comprehends – and that we continue to strive to fulfill. We appreciate the support and enthusiasm of so many in our school community who have provided (and continue to provide) input, ideas, people, and resources to help make this endeavor an overwhelming success and to further bless the lives of the rising generation!

Sincerely,



Grant Beckwith  
Principal

Cc: Board of Trustees

High School Graduation Requirements

Graduation Requirements	Credits	Information
English	4.0	One class each semester
Mathematics	3.0	Minimum of 6 semesters of math in high school (Algebra 1 and higher)
Science	3.0	1.0 Earth Science (9 <sup>th</sup> Grade) 1.0 Biological Science (10 <sup>th</sup> Grade) 1.0 Chemistry or Physics (11 <sup>th</sup> or 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade)
History/Geography	4.0	2.0 World History (9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> Grade) 1.0 American History (11 <sup>th</sup> Grade) 1.0 American Government and Economics (12 <sup>th</sup> Grade)
Fine Arts	2.0	Select from the following choices: Choir, Orchestra, Drama/Debate, Art and Dance
Foreign Language	2.0	Choose from Spanish or French
Educational/Computer Technology	.50	(9 <sup>th</sup> Grade)
Principles of Leadership	1.0	(10 <sup>th</sup> Grade)
Physical Education	2.0	.50 Fitness for Life .50 Health (10 <sup>th</sup> Grade) 1.0 Select from Ballroom Dance or After School Athletics
Financial Literacy	.50	(11 <sup>th</sup> or 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade)
Electives	5.0	Ten (10) semester classes of student's choice (not including Seminary)
Total Credits Required	27.0	1.0 credit=one year .50 credits= one semester

(Updated April 2008)



# AMERICAN HERITAGE

SCHOOL & FAMILY EDUCATION CENTER

## Course Offerings 2009-2010 Grades 7-11

Grade	Type	Subject	Teacher	Credit
7	Required	Art	Mrs. Culver	
7	Required	Core (Language Arts, Literature, History, Geography and Devotional)	Mrs. Scanland/Mrs. Updike	
7	Required	Math (8/7) or Math (Algebra 1) or Math (Algebra 1/2)	Staff Staff Staff	
7	Required	Science	Mr. Miller	
7	Required	Speech/ Keyboarding	Mrs. Perry/Staff	
7	Elective	Choir (Boys)/Physical Education (Boys)	Mrs. Hancock/Mrs. Jespersen	
7	Elective	Choir (Girls)/Physical Education (Girls)	Mrs. Hancock/Mrs. Jespersen	
7	Elective	Music Appreciation	Staff	
7	Elective	Orchestra (Beginning, Audition Only)	Mr. Brown	
7	Elective	Boys Basketball (Extracurricular)	Mr. Taylor	
7	Elective	Boys Soccer (Extracurricular)	Mr. Jensen	
7	Elective	Girls Basketball (Extracurricular)	Mrs. Gibson	
7	Elective	Girls Soccer (Extracurricular)	Mr. Nazer	
7	Elective	Orchestra (Extracurricular)	Mr. Brown/Mrs. Willey	
8	Required	Art/Computer Graphics	Mrs. Culver/Mrs. Jewell	
8	Required	Core (Language Arts, Literature, History, Geography, and Devotional)	Mrs. Yamada/Staff	
8	Required	Drama/Keyboarding	Mrs. M. Brinkerhoff/Staff	
8	Required	Math 8/7 Math (Algebra 1) or Math (Algebra 1/2) or Math (Geometry)	Staff Staff Staff Staff	
8	Required	Science	Mr. Miller	
8	Elective	Ballroom Dance I (Beginning)	Staff	
8	Elective	Choir (Boys)/Physical Education (Boys)	Mrs. Hancock/Mrs. Jespersen	
8	Elective	Choir (Girls)/Physical Education (Girls)	Mrs. Hancock/Mrs. Jespersen	
8	Elective	Music Appreciation	Staff	

Course Offerings 2009-2010

Grades 7-11

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8	Elective	Orchestra (Beginning, Audition Only)	Mr. Brown	
8	Elective	Orchestra (Intermediate, Audition Only)	Mr. Brown	
8	Elective	Study Hall	Mrs. Yamada/Staff	
8	Elective	Boys Basketball (Extracurricular)	Mr. Taylor	
8	Elective	Boys Soccer (Extracurricular)	Mr. Jensen	
8	Elective	Girls Basketball (Extracurricular)	Mrs. Gibson	
8	Elective	Girls Soccer (Extracurricular)	Mr. Nazer	
8	Elective	Orchestra (Extracurricular)	Mr. Brown/Mrs. Willey	
9	<b>Required</b>	Core (English I, History I)	Ms. Scholl/Mr. Carman	2.0
9	<b>Required</b>	Educational/Computer Technology	Staff	0.5
9	<b>Required</b>	Earth Science	Mrs. Logan	1.0
9	<b>Required</b>	Math (Algebra 1/2) or Math (Algebra 1) or Math (Algebra 2) or Math (Geometry)	Staff Staff Staff Staff	1.0 1.0 1.0
9	Elective	Acapella (Boys/Girls)	Mrs. Hancock	0.5/1.0
9	Elective	Art I	Mrs. Culver	0.5/1.0
9	Elective	Ballroom Dance II (Intermediate)	Mrs. Mullen	0.5
9	Elective	Debate, Constitution Bowl	Ms. Scholl/Mr. Beckwith	0.5
9	Elective	Drama I	Mrs. Perry	.05
9	Elective	Fitness for Life I	Mrs. Jesperson	0.5/1.0
9	Elective	French I	Mr. Gentile	0.5/1.0
9	Elective	Musicology	Staff	0.5/1.0
9	Elective	Orchestra (Intermediate, Audition Only)	Mr. Brown	0.5/1.0
9	Elective	Seminary	CES Staff	
9	Elective	Seminary (Early Morning)	CES Staff	
9	Elective	Spanish I	Mr. Carman	0.5/1.0
9	Elective	Spanish II	Mr. Haymond	0.5/1.0
9	Elective	Boys Basketball (Extracurricular)	Mr. Taylor	0.5
9	Elective	Boys Soccer (Extracurricular)	Mr. Jensen	0.5
9	Elective	Girls Basketball (Extracurricular)	Mrs. Gibson	0.5
9	Elective	Girls Soccer (Extracurricular)	Mr. Nazer	0.5
9	Elective	Orchestra (Extracurricular)	Mr. Brown/Mrs. Willey	0.5

Course Offerings 2009-2010

Grades 7-11

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10	<b>Required</b>	Biology	Mrs. Logan	1.0
10	<b>Required</b>	Core (English II, History II)	Mr. Gentile	2.0
10	<b>Required</b>	Health	Mrs. Jesperson	0.5
10	<b>Required</b>	Math (Pre-Calculus) or Math (Algebra 1) or Math (Algebra 2) or Math (Geometry)	Staff Staff Staff Staff	1.0 1.0 1.0 1.0
10	<b>Required</b>	Principles of Leadership	Mr. Beckwith	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	Acapella (Boys/Girls)	Mrs. Hancock	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	Art 1	Mrs. Culver	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	Art II	Mrs. Culver	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	Ballroom Dance III (Advanced)	Staff	0.5
10	Elective	Beginning Orchestra (Audition Only)	Mr. Brown	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	Drama II	Mrs. Perry, Mrs. Brinkerhoff,	0.5
10	Elective	Fitness for Life I	Mrs. Jesperson	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	Fitness of Life II	Mrs. Jesperson	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	French I	Mr. Gentile	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	French II	Staff	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	Musicology	Staff	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	Orchestra (Intermediate, Audition Only)	Mr. Brown	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	Seminary	CES Staff	
10	Elective	Seminary (Early Morning)	CES Staff	
10	Elective	Spanish I	Mr. Carman	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	Spanish II	Mr. Haymond	0.5/1.0
10	Elective	Boys Basketball (Extracurricular)	Mr. Taylor	0.5
10	Elective	Boys Soccer (Extracurricular)	Mr. Jensen	0.5
10	Elective	Girls Basketball (Extracurricular)	Mrs. Gibson	0.5
10	Elective	Girls Soccer (Extracurricular)	Mr. Nazer	0.5
10	Elective	Orchestra (Extracurricular)	Mr. Brown/Mrs. Willey	0.5
11	<b>Required</b>	Chemistry	Mrs. Logan	1.0
11	<b>Required</b>	Core (English III, History III)	Mr. Haymond	2.0
11	<b>Required</b>	Financial Literacy	Staff	0.5/1.0

Course Offerings 2009-2010

Grades 7-11

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11	<b>Required</b>	Math (Algebra 2) or Math (Pre-Calculus) or Math (Geometry) or Math (Calculus)	Staff Staff Staff Staff	1.0 1.0 1.0 1.0
11	Elective	Acapella (Boys/Girls)	Mrs. Hancock	0.5/1.0
11	Elective	Art	Mrs. Culver	0.5/1.0
11	Elective	Ballroom Dance III (Advanced)	Staff	0.5
11	Elective	Beginning Orchestra (Audition Only)	Mr. Brown	0.5/1.0
11	Elective	Fitness For Life I	Mrs. Jesperson	0.5/1.0
11	Elective	Fitness for Life II	Mrs. Jesperson	0.5/1.0
11	Elective	Drama II	Mrs. Perry, Mrs. Brinkerhoff	0.5
11	Elective	French I	Mr. Gentile	0.5/1.0
11	Elective	French II	Staff	0.5/1.0
11	Elective	Musicology	Staff	0.5/1.0
11	Elective	Orchestra (Intermediate, Audition Only)	Mr. Brown	0.5/1.0
11	Elective	Seminary	CES Staff	
11	Elective	Seminary (Early Morning)	CES Staff	
11	Elective	Spanish 1 (beginning)	Mr. Carman	0.5/1.0
11	Elective	Spanish 2 (intermediate)	Mr. Haymond	0.5/1.0
11	Elective	Boys Basketball (Extracurricular)	Mr. Taylor	0.5
11	Elective	Boys Soccer (Extracurricular)	Mr. Jensen	0.5
11	Elective	Girls Basketball (Extracurricular)	Mrs. Gibson	0.5
11	Elective	Girls Soccer (Extracurricular)	Mr. Nazer	0.5
11	Elective	Orchestra (Extracurricular)	Mr. Brown/Mrs. Willey	0.5

(Updated April 2009)

Block Schedule 2009/2010  
Grades 9-11

A Day Periods	B Day Periods
1	2
3	4
5	6
Lunch	Lunch
7	8

Block Schedule Period Times

1&2 8:10-9:40  
3&4 9:45-11:15  
5&6 11:20-12:50  
Lunch 12:50 -1:35  
7&8 1:40-3:10

(90 minute classes)

(Updated January 2009)

# To The Point

Practical ism® strategies for day-to-day school operations



**Are you ready for accreditation? Understand the costs and benefits, and ensure that your investment pays off.**

## In This Issue

**Accreditation: How Can It Benefit Your School?**

**Make the Most of the Accreditation Process**

**Merry e-Card to You!**

**Get Expert Legal Advice on HR Issues**

Vol. 13, No. 7, November 2007

## ► Insights on Private School Operations

### **Accreditation: How Can It Benefit Your School?**

In some areas in the United States, private-independent school Trustees, educators, and constituents routinely expect their institutions to undergo accreditation, whether the process is conducted by a regional association (geographically based) or one that is affiliative (religiously or philosophically based). In other areas, accreditation of any sort is the exception, rather than the rule.

Regardless of your school's location or orientation, consider the following issues in (a) deciding whether or not to invest institutional energy and funds in the accreditation process and (b) determining how to proceed, if the decision is to seek accreditation.

Consider these points.

- ▼ Many parents, prospective and current, feel it's important for the school to boast some kind of accreditation.  
They may have public school backgrounds and know little about how to assess schools, so the accreditation stamp of approval – never mind whose stamp – provides an easily conceptualized means of comparing one school to another. A school either has it or it does not. For some, this factor can simplify enrollment decisions.
- ▼ Next-level institutions, on the other hand, usually have little interest in whether or not their feeder schools are accredited.  
Universities, colleges, and private-independent upper and middle schools tend instead to examine track

records previously established by a feeder school's graduates. They will also be interested in the array of courses a given applicant has completed. When standardized test results are available, universities and colleges in particular will want to scrutinize an applicant's performance on them. It's not likely that the accreditation status of that individual's school will be brought into an admission debate.

- ▼ The accreditation process can be expensive, in both direct and indirect costs.

The self-study that precedes an accreditation visit will require faculty and administrators to put in hundreds, even thousands, of hours. When the visiting team comes on-site, the school pays the cost of travel and other out-of-pocket expenses, which generally total several thousand dollars.

- ▼ Once accreditation is attained, your school will pay annual dues or fees to maintain the association's activities.

Some associations provide outstanding

Continued next page ►

### Accreditation Benefits

support services to member institutions; others, very few. Before you commit to the process, consider the cost-effectiveness of what you receive in return for the amount you pay.

Note that schools may join some associations without being accredited by them. In that case, fees may vary according to the school's status.

▼ **School leaders, in retrospect, view the self-study process as having been worthwhile.**

This is despite the enormous investment of energy and time that goes into it – often a full year or more. The forced self-examination of programs, systems, services, standards, and structure, coupled with the re-examination of the school's mission and its ability to meet that mission, tends to strengthen institutional fundamentals. Few schools fail to grow stronger by the end of a self-study.

Of course, a school could carry out its own self-study periodically, without involving an accreditation agency or going through an accreditation process. However, most find it difficult to make this a realistic exercise without the implied "threat" of the visiting team's examination of the school's materials and documents.

▼ **The documents generated in the self-study can have value in the long run.**

This depends partly on luck – the visiting team's composition and leadership. It's also partly the result of your school's ability and willingness to execute, where appropriate, the visiting committee's recommendations – i.e., reformulate your planning documents, strategic and/or long range, to accomplish the goals implied by the self-study and by those recommendations. (See the accompanying article on page 41,

"Make the Most of the Accreditation Process.")

▼ **In making the decision, it is critical to bear in mind that the visiting committee itself is a committee of your peers.**

This is a "peer review," as distinct from an "expert review." A particular visiting "peer" may be broadly informed and highly trained in her or his area, but the person's expertise is often limited to that particular area.

As a result, a visiting team's recommendations may or may not be feasible or desirable. Whether or not the school and the recommendations are a "good fit" with each other will depend on the skills of the author(s) of the final report.

It is especially common for the visiting team's recommendations to have implications for the school's long-term solvency. The Board and administration must be especially careful in "costing" the resulting modifications in the planning document(s) so that the financial impact over time is clear.

Strengthening programs and services often means elevating tuition levels (or, in the absence of elevating tuition levels, inviting insolvency). This program-to-dollars relationship may or may not be made clear in the improvements suggested by your visiting team.<sup>1</sup>

▼ **No service agency or governmental entity accredits the accreditors.**

If you have a choice of two or more accrediting agencies (regional and/or affiliative), you must do your own research. Weigh three factors: services provided for your school, dues/fees and other monetary costs to your school, and the reputation and image of the accrediting agency. For those Trustees whose experience with or knowledge about accreditation comes from the public school arena, this may seem ridiculously

confusing, and it often is. Public schools in the U.S. deal with regional associations, which have no overlap among them. There are no choices to be made.

▼ **New private-independent schools and those that are adding one or more divisions tend to feel that accreditation should be undertaken as soon as possible.**

They are often right. An accreditation agency's imprimatur helps give credence to a fledgling enterprise. Trustees simply need to keep in mind the fact that accreditation is fundamentally an "image and reputation" issue, as distinct from an "educational excellence" one. Accreditation is not a statement about excellence; it is a statement about meeting external organizational procedures and standards.

Accreditation may be a marketing necessity in your area of the country, or you may be considering it as one component in a rebranding effort designed to clearly identify your school's competitive advantages. Review the "cost" (in time, energy, and dollars) versus the benefits, and make your decision based upon how effectively a given agency's accreditation will enhance your school's ability to attract and retain the students you want.

If you decide to move forward, take steps early in the process to ensure that your school will derive the greatest benefit from the accreditation and will be able to implement the recommendations effectively.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See "Your School's Financial Equilibrium: The Three Levers," *To The Point*, 12-3-13.

<sup>2</sup> See "Make the Most of the Accreditation Process," *TTP*, 13-7-41.