



**VISIT REPORT**  
for

**Christ School**  
500 Christ School Rd.  
Arden, NC 28704

**Paul Krieger, Headmaster**  
pkrieger@christschool.org  
828-684-6232

**Mr. Bryan Martin, Accreditation Coordinator**  
**Math Department Chair**  
[bmartin@christschool.org](mailto:bmartin@christschool.org)  
828-684-6232

**Mr. Nat M. Hyde '74, Board President**  
Nat.Hyde@UStTrust.com

**March 25 - 28, 2012**

**Curt Masters, Visiting Team Chair**  
**Headmaster / Brentwood Academy (TN)**

# A History of SAIS Accreditation

---

SAIS member schools are part of a remarkable history of quality assurance in education.

SAIS began its organizational life in 1903 as the “Mid-South Association of Independent Schools,” providing training for teachers in private schools and some early public schools in the southeastern states. In 1953, another organization began as the Southern Association of Independent Schools, providing a forum for independent school administrators to work with public schools through SACS and to contribute to the larger interest in accreditation in the southeast. MAIS and SAIS merged in 1986 to form the present SAIS, with an emphasis on accreditation through SACS for independent schools and professional development for administrators, trustees, and teachers. Today, SAIS works to help both established and emerging schools approach these issues with creativity and innovation. Working at the state, regional, and national levels, SAIS serves and strengthens member schools through the promotion of the highest quality educational standards and ethical conduct.

The mission of SAIS is to provide leadership, accreditation services, and professional development resources that will strengthen member schools as they fulfill their missions. The focus of SAIS’s interest when it began in 1953 was to develop and maintain relationships with the expanding organization of SACS in order to ensure significant input from independent schools into the exploding world of public school accreditation. The post-WWII years of baby booming, facility planning, teacher training, and legislative entitlement funding eclipsed the scope and role of private education in America close to the current level of service. Part of this history of negotiating standards in a predominantly public school oriented world of education caused SAIS to embark on its own method of accreditation in the late '90s. The efforts resulted in the SAIS method of accreditation available to member schools.

SAIS has designed and implemented a significant program of accreditation to assist member schools as they develop and promote high quality education in this region. This method is based on a school’s stated mission and its own unique approach to thorough and vigorous self-examination.

In today’s world of accountability in schooling, accreditation serves as a critical component of a school’s demonstrated effectiveness and ability to provide successful schooling for children. A school that is able to achieve accreditation demonstrates a commitment to a process that requires the school to meet a set of rigorous standards; to engage in a program of continuous school improvement; and to demonstrate quality assurance to its stakeholders through self-evaluation and peer-review. SAIS accreditation provides schools access to an integrated network of services and technical assistance that supports every school’s ability to identify and meet its goals for improving student performance and the teaching and learning process.

SAIS accredited member schools are part of an international network of accredited schools which have demonstrated success in educating children. As such, SAIS accreditation is recognized throughout the world as a symbol of quality in education for students and teachers.

To earn accreditation, schools must meet quality standards, be evaluated by an outside group of peer professionals, and implement a school plan focused on strategic improvement and student performance. Accreditation is voluntary and must be renewed each year.

## ***Roster of Team Members***

---

### **Chair**

Mr. Curt Masters  
Head of School  
Brentwood Academy  
219 Granny White Pike  
Brentwood TN 37027-5753  
615-373-0611 x115  
[curt\\_masters@brentwoodacademy.com](mailto:curt_masters@brentwoodacademy.com)

### **Team Members**

Ms. Jennifer Ellis  
Assistant Principal  
Marist School  
3790 Ashford Dunwoody Rd NE  
Atlanta GA 30319  
770-936-2261  
[ellisj@marist.com](mailto:ellisj@marist.com)

Mr. Dan O'Brien  
Upper School Dean of Students  
Greensboro Day School  
5401 Lawndale Dr  
Greensboro NC 27455  
336-288-8590  
[danobrien@greensboroday.org](mailto:danobrien@greensboroday.org)

Mr. David Powell  
Academic Dean  
Darlington School  
1014 Cave Spring Rd SW  
Rome GA 30161-4700  
706-236-0444  
[dpowell@darlingtonschool.org](mailto:dpowell@darlingtonschool.org)

Mr. Matt Radtke  
Director of Admission and Financial Aid  
Hammond School  
854 Galway Ln  
Columbia SC 29209-2099  
803-776-0295  
[mradtke@hammondschool.org](mailto:mradtke@hammondschool.org)

## The Review

---

A team representing SAIS and AdvancED conducted an on-site visit to review this school's self-study and standards compliance. The team was comprised of team members whose diverse independent school backgrounds provided an array of expertise. The visiting team sought the answers to these four critical questions within the framework of the school's self-study. The following pages contain the findings.

### **In conducting the on-site reviews, the visiting team was responsible for:**

1. Assessing the adequacy of the self-study process;
2. Identifying strengths of the school deserving commendation;
3. Developing recommendations that may help to strengthen the programs of the school;
4. Assessing compliance with the standards of SAIS-AdvancED;
5. Developing a written report of the findings.

### **To fulfill the team's responsibilities, team members:**

1. Reviewed documentation provided by the school;
2. Conducted interviews with board members, parents, school personnel, students, and community members;
3. Applied the standards for accreditation;
4. Developed a draft of commendations and recommendations;
5. Contributed to the content and focus of the written report;
6. Provided input as to the determination of accreditation.

### **The primary focus of the self-study process is to demonstrate the capacity of a school to meet the requirements for accreditation. A typical self-study consists of:**

- Analysis and response to accreditation standards;
- Identification and demonstration of a continuous process of improvement;
- Implementation of methods that provide for quality assurance.

The study addresses four critical questions:

1. **PROFILE: *Where is the school today?*** The PROFILE should include clear, comprehensive information reflecting current student performance data, stakeholder perspectives, community characteristics, and analysis of strengths and limitations in the areas of student learning and school performance.
2. **VISION: *Where does the school want to go?*** The VISION is a clear, compelling purpose communicated through the school's vision and mission statements, beliefs, and core values.
3. **PLAN: *What is the plan to get there?*** The PLAN should be based on an analysis of pertinent data, research of best practices, and alignment with generally-accepted expectations for student learning at schools with similar missions.
4. **RESULTS: *How will the school know when it has accomplished its plan?*** The RESULTS are documented evidence demonstrating successful implementation of

strategies that resulted in accomplishment of the school's mission and student achievement gains related to the school's mission.

## School Snapshot

---

Christ School is a college preparatory school affiliated with the Episcopal Church. Its mission is to produce educated men of good character, prepared for both scholastic achievement in college and productive citizenship in adult society. We achieve this mission through a four-fold process. First and most important, we challenge and encourage each student, in the nurturing environment of a close-knit campus, to develop academically to his maximum potential. Second, through competitive sports, student self-government and a variety of extracurricular activities, we help each student to develop his physical fitness and leadership skills, and his respect for others regardless of their origins, cultures or beliefs. Third, by involvement in the care of our campus home, civic duty is learned, along with a sense of the dignity of honest labor. Finally, through religious instruction and regular participation in Chapel activities, each of our students learns the sustaining value of faith and spiritual growth throughout his life.

Christ School was founded in 1900 by Father Thomas Wetmore and his wife Susan Allen Wetmore as a mission of the Episcopal Church. Mrs. Wetmore's family gave them four acres of hilltop land just south of Asheville, North Carolina for the purpose of educating the rural mountain children of the area at a time when there were no public schools. In addition to academics, the mission school also taught students a trade, such as industrial arts, crafts like weaving, basketmaking, and cabinetmaking, and nursing for the girls. These trades helped support both the school and the families of the students. The Wetmores had a tremendous outreach into the poor rural community, providing nursing care and clothing. When Father Wetmore died in 1906, Mrs. Wetmore became Principal and continued her fundraising efforts on behalf of Christ School for another 40 years. Christ School was co-ed until 1927 when public schooling became available and provided transportation for the children of the area. At this point, Christ School became a true college preparatory Episcopal boarding and day school for boys.

The school has grown to over 500 acres of academic and residential buildings, athletic fields, wooded trails, and green space. Christ School currently has 249 boys in grades 8-12, and students come from all over the United States and across the globe, adding cultural depth to the rigorous academic education. The school provides a full college preparatory curriculum, and hallmarks of the Christ School experience include small classes (10-12 boys per class), Advanced Placement and honors courses in all subjects, extensive extracurricular opportunities, and an outstanding faculty. The school is still affiliated with the Episcopal Church as an unfunded mission and accepts boys of all faiths. St. Joseph's Chapel at Christ School is the longest continuously operating Episcopal church in western North Carolina, and the tradition of a Chaplain conducting regular Chapel services has continued unbroken for over a century.

The 500-acre campus and the surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains are home to Christ School's nationally recognized [Outdoor Program](#). The athletic program features 19 teams in 11 sports with an emphasis at the Junior Varsity level on mastering fundamentals and with the emphasis for Varsity on providing a level of play competitive within our athletic conference. Graduates attend [leading national universities](#).

The school is led by a Headmaster, serving with the support of a self-perpetuating 21-member Board of Trustees (with another four Ex-Officio members representing the Alumni and Parent councils and the WNC Diocese of the Episcopal Church). Headmaster Paul Krieger works closely with a nine-member team of direct reports, and is actively involved with students and faculty in the day-to-day life of the school.

The self-study was formulated around an ongoing Strategic Plan initially developed in 2007 and reviewed and updated in September of 2011. A Steering Committee coordinated a thorough review of the school's status, brought the Strategic Plan up to date, and developed the responses to the Standards during professional development days as well as during faculty in-service, faculty meetings, and department meetings.

The Strategic Plan specifically addresses eight areas: Finance and Endowment, Campus and Facilities, Curriculum and Programs, Faculty Excellence, Community Life, Responsibility and Leadership, Extra-curricular Programs, and Admission and Marketing.

## PROFILE

---

### **PROFILE: *Where is the school today?***

Christ School, founded in 1900 as a co-educational mission school of the Episcopal Church for the purpose of educating the rural mountain children of the area, is now a school of 249 boys in grades 8 through 12.

The school transitioned to an all boys' school in 1927 when public schooling became available and transportation for children in the area was provided. Christ School's current student population is made up of boys from across the United States and the world.

Three-fourths of Christ School students are boarding students and one-fourth of students are day students. Christ School intentionally maintains the ratio of 75% boarding students and 25% day students.

The school is still affiliated with the Episcopal Church as an unfunded mission and welcomes students of all faiths. The students attend Chapel twice weekly and attend a Eucharist service each Thursday.

The campus has grown from its original four acres to over 500 acres of academic and residential buildings, athletic fields, wooded trails and green space. Over the past several years many improvements have been made to the physical plant including the addition of the Mebane Science Center as well as the renovation of the library, dining hall and some of the classrooms. Additionally, improvements have been made to athletic facilities and parking has been added.

Christ School continues to live out its mission of producing educated men of good character, prepared for both scholastic achievement in college and productive citizenship in adult society by focusing on the whole student and providing support and opportunities for boys to provide service to the school, service to the community and participate in many different activities both on and off campus. In keeping with this mission the admissions office focuses on attracting and selecting boys who are compassionate, ambitious yet put others first, want to be part of a team, have a good work ethic and want to be surrounded with boys "different from himself." The faculty and staff are committed to the boys' development both inside and outside of the classroom.

### **Commendations:**

The visiting team commends the school for:

- Having a mission that appears to guide planning and decision-making.
- Recruiting a Board that understands the delicate balance between providing appropriate rigorous oversight and interfering with operational matters at the school.
- Remaining debt free despite recent dramatic improvements in infrastructure.
- Garnering a remarkable level of parent, faculty and student support and appreciation for the work of the school and, in particular, the leadership of the Headmaster.

- Developing a Wellness Team that comprehensively and holistically explores issues relating to student and faculty emotional and physical performance.
- Promoting a genuine work program that instills in students the ideas of care for home and dignity of labor.
- Cultivating a vibrant sense of community among the faculty
- Encouraging positive student leadership with their prefect and Proctor programs
- Upgrading dorms structurally as well as with the addition of furniture and flat screen TVs
- Beginning a new strategic planning process that will be carried on into the spring of this year.
- Extraordinary dedication and commitment of the faculty and staff to the boys.
- Fostering an environment where boys are supportive of one another, which is evident both in how they speak and interact with one another, and in how older students interact with younger students.
- A clear mission statement focusing on the four-fold purpose and vision of the school.
- The pride of all faculty and staff members of Christ School of being an employee at the school, as evidenced by their willingness to go above and beyond assigned responsibilities.
- Strong support of the extensive campus and facilities by a very small team of maintenance, facilities and grounds workers.
- Creating a physically appealing campus and setting.

**Recommendations:**

The visiting team recommends that the school consider:

- Studying the feasibility of the current structure of the maintenance, facilities and grounds crew.
- Investigating a larger sustainability program.
- Evaluating and studying peer school dormitory facilities for a continued point of reference.
- Evaluating the desired strength of the academic profile, especially in the areas of teaching and learning.

# VISION

---

## **VISION: *Where does the school want to go?***

There is a clear sense of pride and excitement at Christ School among the students, faculty, Board of Trustees, and parents. The first page of their great publication *oh Boy!* expresses their enthusiasm and passion for who they are and what they do. There is a continued sense of a commitment to support, challenge and motivate young men as they grow. There was a consistent theme centered on how much the school has changed due to the deliberate and planned decision to increase the quality of students, which was echoed throughout the visiting team's visit.

There is also a sense of clarity among the faculty and parents with regard to the type of student who will excel at the school. Christ School will support, challenge and motivate a young man to become not only a dedicated student, but one who is comfortable being involved in all areas of the school. There is also a strong presence of a "second curriculum", which focuses on character education and becoming a true gentleman.

All constituents support the mission, which is to produce young men of sound character, academic preparation for college and beyond, and civility with leadership. Christ School has a traditional curriculum, a breadth of activities and co-curricular opportunities, and a true sense of a welcoming and supporting environment. Schools are not just brick and mortar, they are also people places - Christ School clearly demonstrates both.

## **Commendations:**

The visiting team commends the school for:

- Publishing new marketing materials that promote the tenets of the Christ School mission.
- Adding administrative staff to support the Headmaster in carrying out his administrative responsibilities.
- Consistent commitment to improving facilities while taking on no debt.
- The addition of the service learning program, created in 2009.
- Expanding the role of the fine arts, including developing programs to engage a wider cross-section of the student body.
- The creative science opportunities in the new Mebane science center which will provide exceptional instructional classroom and lab opportunities.
- Empowering and supporting innovation (for example, in service learning, student support, and student life).
- Providing many safety nets to make sure that no boy falls through the cracks.
- Developing strong stakeholder belief in the mission and value of Christ School.
- Implementing an international travel program for recruitment and advancement.
- Developing a personalized admission approach.

## **Recommendations:**

The visiting team recommends that the school consider:

*SAIS Accreditation Visit Report*

- Adopting a process of self-evaluation for the Board of Trustees to serve as benchmarks for ensuring continued strong performance.
- Developing Board orientation and training opportunities.
- Making the Academic Goals for Christ School Students a foundational part of the school culture and the basis for all class development and lesson planning in academic classes.
- Empowering members of the Administrative Team (and academic Department Chairs) to own and share a vision for the development of Christ School Academic program.
- Adding opportunities for early adopters to engage faculty in practical applications of technology.

## PLAN

---

### **PLAN: *What is the plan to get there?***

Christ School continues to build upon its remarkable recent success with a commitment to sustain the practices that led to its recent renaissance. Tellingly, the school has chosen to see through to completion the strategic goals set forth in its 2008 Strategic Plan before embarking on a new strategic initiative. Trustees, administrators, faculty, and parents appear to agree on the factors that have propelled Christ School's recent growth: an renewed understanding of admissions-appropriate students, new facilities, and the visionary leadership of Headmaster Paul Krieger. They understand that nurturing these decisions and individuals are of paramount importance as Christ School moves beyond this accreditation cycle.

Several plans are in place to make this happen. First and foremost, Christ School understands that the growing the quality of its student body helped the school improve in many areas over the last decade--this task will continue to be a focus area for all constituencies at the school. New publications, increased travel, and the maintenance of a 75% boarding population should increasingly help prospective families see Christ School as a “first choice” school rather than a “second chance” institution for many students.

The school also plans to make continued necessary improvements in its physical plant. Many cite past improvements as vital to attracting a mission-appropriate student body, and the expected addition of an new gymnasium and an expansion/renovation of the student dining hall will make the campus only more attractive to prospective students and families.

The school, especially its Board of Trustees, also recognizes the importance of fundraising to the school's future. Its Development office, despite setbacks caused by the 2008 financial crisis and office turnover, remains committed to a determined effort to supplement tuition revenue with a \$1,000,000 yearly Annual Fund campaign. Additionally, plans exist for a campaign to more than double the school's endowment; with the school at capacity, a larger endowment will provide a new revenue stream for the school.

Christ School continues as well to develop an academic program that prepares its students to be collaborators, critical thinkers, and innovators—the core of its Academic Goals for Christ School Students. The school has sent its Academic Dean and Mathematics Department Chair to a conference on authentic assessment, for example. An essential part of the strategic plan is for Christ School to translate these toeholds into a school-wide shift in the way faculty members develop goals for student achievement, structure their classes, and assess students against these well-articulated goals.

### **Commendations:**

The visiting team commends the school for:

- Adding leadership at strategic positions, including recent additions to the team as well as some seasoned veterans.
- Clear and consistent communication with parents and students, resulting in the sense of accessibility and personal attention.
- The addition of numerous campus improvements.

- Continuing to develop opportunities for off-campus activities as well as international travel.
- Revising the dining hall menu, including creative experiences like steak night and sushi night each month.
- Showing flexibility in improving the curriculum while demonstrating a willingness to make continued changes when expected goals are not met, ie. shortening American Literature and British Literature classes to one semester (and changing back to full-year courses after evaluation).
- Adding Arabic to the foreign language curriculum.
- Giving the boys opportunities to obtain life skills through the work program, the Life Skills curriculum, the cultural and community service requirement, senior leadership opportunities, senior speeches, and assembly – among others.
- Creating outreach opportunities for families to experience Christ School - for example, the Father/Son weekend.
- Providing the Learning Resource program, which wonderfully supports students who struggle academically.
- Creating opportunities for leadership as evident through Eagle Scout projects.
- Developing a robust guest speaker series.
- Developing a clear understanding of mission appropriate students.
- Adding comfortable, inviting space for day and boarding student interaction in the student center and bookstore.
- Sharing the success stories of the athletic teams.

### **Recommendations:**

The visiting team recommends that the school consider:

- Adding ways to ensure that an impressive scaffolding for improvement of academic instruction found in policies and use of faculty meeting time translates to the classroom and improves student outcomes.
- Publishing criteria for admissions decisions.
- Publicizing how students are involved in Community Service and Service Learning programs.
- Continuing to integrate Service Learning activities into the curriculum.
- Engaging faculty in a more active role in Community Service and Service Learning opportunities by having them help with and serve as chaperones for events.
- Formalizing, communicating and practicing the emergency plan with all members of the community.
- Continuing evaluation of campus security.
- Exploring the addition of an orientation program at the start of the school year.
- Developing a financial aid committee.
- Evaluate the long-term sustainability of a financial aid program in which over 50% of the student body is receiving aid.
- Continuing to highlight the importance of the Honor Code by making it more noticeable on campus and in the classrooms.

## RESULTS

---

### **RESULTS: *How will the school know when it has accomplished its plan?***

In the Self-Study report, Christ School documented how each of the recommendations from the previous SACS report was addressed. Evidence suggests that the recommendations were carefully considered and implemented where feasible, amended where appropriate, and deferred where necessary.

Building on the previous recommendations, the school has laid the groundwork to build on their historic mission by growing the leadership of its administrative team, raising academic standards, growing endowment, and publicizing its new profile. Continued growth will be demonstrated by delegating more authority to the headmaster's administrative team for day to day operations and strategic decision making, and empowering academic leadership to hold department chairs accountable for continued collaboration. Continued growth in endowment will be demonstrated by exploring specific strategies which match endowment funds to Christ School's unique mission (endowing faculty chairs in honor of individuals, for instance). The school has involved its highly supportive stakeholders in planning and decision-making as it takes its character-building mission to new levels of twenty-first century professionalism. Continued growth will be demonstrated by codifying the recruitment, training and evaluation of board members and development of a clear leadership succession plan.

The faculty and administration have employed the alumni of Christ School in such events as the yearly interview to measure the effects of its four-fold purpose and mission. They have also made use of parents in the career speaker program to help students shape future goals. The school gathers and studies standardized testing information and shares data and trends to shape instruction and better prepare students for college admission. Recognizing that test scores provide one set of data, Christ School encourages the building of student resumes through strong extra-curricular involvement and service learning. As Christ School continues to join its compassionate mission with a commitment to perpetual growth, a more consistent gathering and analysis of various data will help.

### **Commendations**

The visiting team commends the school for:

- Whole-hearted investment by the entire community in the four-fold purpose and mission of Christ School.
- Conducting a full audit of the Advancement Office.
- Implementing impressive additions to and renovations of its facilities.
- Expanding its administrative team (Assistant Headmaster, Controller) to assist Mr. Krieger in the operation of the school.
- Expanding the college guidance team to better assist 9th and 10th graders in preparing for college applications.
- Encouraging the professional development of faculty by fully funding graduate degree work.

## **Recommendations**

The visiting team recommends that the school consider:

- Developing and implementing a continuing professional development plan for all administrators and faculty, including visits to other schools and the development of a network of school professionals.
- Continuing to collect test data on student achievement, and further developing analysis of data in addition to SAT and PLAN scores to plan instruction and shape the college preparatory course of study.
- Developing a portfolio of outcomes-based data beyond standardized testing to measure teaching effectiveness and inform curriculum decisions.
- Working to ensure data collected on alumni and other former students has a material impact on classroom learning and instruction.
- Developing a strong and intentional evaluation system for faculty that measures their output in relation to Christ School's Academic Goals for Christ School Students and ensuring that professional development activities (in-service days and funded off-campus opportunities) are related to faculty faculty with these goals.
- Developing leadership opportunities in areas of curriculum development, teaching strategies, and faculty development either within or outside of the current department chair structure.
- Developing and implementing a fair and rigorous evaluation system for programs, board members, administration, faculty, and staff to set individual and institutional goals and measure progress.
- Having each department do an end-of-year report. This would help each department reflect on what they have done and where they have come in a year, and additionally be historically beneficial for the institution.
- Studying the community service hour requirement.

## **Additional Commendations and Recommendations**

---

### **Commendations:**

The visiting team commends the school for:

- A responsive team of faculty and administrators whose passion for the school and the boys under their care has won strong parental appreciation.
- Leadership development within the student body that has resulted in a sense of confidence and ownership among the students, as well as a sense of safety and belonging.

### **Recommendations:**

The visiting team recommends that the school consider:

- Formalizing the advisor program with training and a manual. Additionally this piece could be taken “on the road” to be shared with other schools, which would help make more people aware of the wonderful things that are happening at Christ School.
- Exploring opportunities to convey that often-expressed appreciation for dedicated faculty and staff.
- Developing additional sources of revenue such as summer programs and the rental of facilities.
- Continuing to investigate ways of becoming more involved within the greater Asheville community.
- Evaluating additional uses of technology in the admission efforts (on-line applications, for example, as well as uses of social media).

## **SUMMARY**

---

Christ School provides an environment that is welcoming, challenging, motivating and inspiring. We appreciate the efforts made to prepare for the accreditation visit, and enjoyed the opportunity to hear students, parents and faculty speak with appreciation and affection about their experiences in this nurturing community. We particularly note the strong impact in transforming the reputation and climate of the school that the team of faculty, staff and Board have had under the leadership of Paul Krieger, as we heard many times over. Balanced and experienced Board members, a dedicated faculty, an enthusiastic student body and a group of strongly supportive parents all contribute to the vibrant atmosphere and the sense of anticipation for the future.

Clearly the school has been moving forward strongly in many aspects already; yet opportunities for continued growth abound, as mentioned above. It was a pleasure to see the School in action.

## **CONCLUSION**

---

**The visiting team finds:**

1. That the school is in compliance with all standards of the SAIS and AdvancED accreditation process.
2. That the self-study conducted by the school meets the standard of quality and thoroughness required by the SAIS accreditation process and answers the four critical questions as outlined in the Guidebook.
3. That the school is unanimously recommended for SAIS and AdvancED accreditation.