



**SERVING & ACCREDITING  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**

VISITING TEAM REPORT

## Swift School

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# A History of SAIS Accreditation

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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 accreditations 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 that 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.

# The Review

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A team representing SAIS 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;
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:

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

The study addresses four critical questions relative to each of the school's stated goals for improvement and mission fulfillment:

- **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.
- **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.
- **PLAN:** What is the plan to get there? The PLAN should be based on an analysis of pertinent data, research of the best practices, and alignment with generally-accepted expectations for student learning at schools with similar missions.
- **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.

# SAIS Accreditation Policies

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- **Accreditation Committee**  
The SAIS Board of Trustees has established the SAIS Accreditation Committee to oversee the accreditation services offered by SAIS. The Accreditation Committee establishes and maintains review boards whose members review and act upon visiting team recommendations. The Board of Trustees reviews and officially approves the schools recommended for accreditation by the Accreditation Committee.
- **Accreditation Appeal Process**  
If the visiting team recommendation to offer accreditation or re-accreditation is rejected, specific reasons will be given and the school may be given a timeframe and assistance to address deficiencies. The decision of a review board may be appealed in writing by the head of school, referencing specific area(s) in which the school was found deficient. A subsequent review board will review the original findings and the appeal materials. If the decision is upheld by the subsequent review board, the decision may be appealed in writing by the head of school to the SAIS Board of Trustees. The school's accreditation status will remain unchanged during an appeals process. The judgment of the SAIS Board of Trustees is final.
- **Interim Report Requirements**  
Accredited schools must submit a two-year interim report to SAIS after the team visit. This report ensures continued compliance with standards/indicators and documents efforts made in addressing the visiting team's recommendations and the school's self-study goals.
- **Member in good standing:** Schools must remain a member in good standing, with all annual membership dues paid in full and abiding by policies and procedures.
- **Notification of substantive change / head of school change:** Accredited schools must notify SAIS in a timely manner of a substantive change using the form at [www.sais.org/change](http://www.sais.org/change). Changes may include: head of school change, other leadership changes, adding or contracting grade levels, merger, name change, mission change, major construction, crisis situation, litigation, school closure, other changes. In the event of a substantive change, SAIS may request additional information or conduct a visit to the school.
- **Terms of accreditation and re-accreditation:** Terms of accreditation are generally for five years commencing on July 1 and concluding on June 30. Schools must host a visiting team prior to the expiration of their term of accreditation and during the same semester of their previous accreditation if a re-accreditation visit and within three years of becoming a candidate for accreditation if an initial accreditation. Any variance to an accreditation timeline must be approved by SAIS. A new self-study is required for each five-year period reflecting evidence of continuous improvement.
- **Non-compliance:** Stakeholders may file a non-compliance complaint against a school. Upon receipt and verification of a non-compliance report, the school will be given an opportunity to respond to the inquiry. The inquiry, response, and any subsequent written correspondence on the matter may be made available to the accreditation visiting team chair on the next accreditation visit. However, an immediate investigative visit to the school may be undertaken if the response by the school is unsatisfactory or an accumulation of complaints indicates that a school's response is inconsistent with a preponderance of evidence. As is frequently the case, if a school's practices are bordering on non-compliance, a discussion that is triggered by a non-compliance complaint is often a catalyst to remedy such practices. In the event that a school is not compliant, a series of actions will be undertaken with the school such as but not limited to: a request to remedy the non-compliance issue, placing the school on warned status or probation, and an ultimate action of dropping accreditation.

# Roster of Team Members

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## Chair(s)

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# School Snapshot

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## Mission

Swift School prepares students with dyslexia and related language-based learning differences to be successful in life.

Swift's mission drives every decision made by the board, administration, faculty, and staff. The mission informs the admissions process, the student experience, hiring decisions, curriculum design, and professional development as evidenced by the Portrait of Success, the Standards of Professional Excellence, and the Five-Point Promise.

## Brief History

Gail Swift, a passionate educator of dyslexic students, founded Swift School in 1998. Swift School began modestly with a class of five students. While Gail taught, Josie Redwine, a lawyer and mother of a daughter with dyslexia, worked to expand enrollment and formed the corporate structure by which Swift operates today. Gail Swift retired in 2007 and was succeeded by Executive Director Betsy Stroud until June 2010. Rich Wendlek became Swift's head of school in July 2010, serving until his retirement in June 2020. Chris Pomar was appointed head of school at that time and continues to lead the school.

In 2006, Swift School purchased the former John Deere headquarters in Roswell. The 25,000-sf building on five acres was reconfigured to meet school building codes. The move provided space to accommodate a growing student body, at that time numbering 84, and to expand programming. Campus improvements in 2010-2013 included the sports court, exterior deck, and playground. Terrace level renovations introduced a science lab and other classrooms for the new middle division, which opened in fall 2011. An additional building (7,200 sf) constructed in 2012-13, created art and music rooms, dining and activity halls, athletic storage, and offices. Swift leased spaces for PE classes, faculty parking, and larger events, and also utilized public facilities for interscholastic sports.

In October 2014, a new constituent-driven strategic plan, North Star, was launched. Based on estimates of the dyslexic population in the local area, the plan called for growth to 350+ students. More space was deemed necessary but attempts to purchase adjacent property were unsuccessful. Swift acquired an 18.3 acre site on Old Alabama Road with plans to develop it initially for 5th-8th grades with athletic facilities, and eventually to house the whole school.

With an almost immediate unanticipated decline in enrollment, the board determined that development costs of the Old Alabama Road property could not be supported. In the interim, Swift acquired adjacent property, which was key to developing the current campus. Decisions were made to sell the Old Alabama Road property and focus on development of the 300/310 Grimes Bridge site for up to 200 students. The Old Alabama Road property was sold in September of 2020. A new master plan for the Grimes Bridge Road campus was approved by Roswell City Council in December 2021.

As of January of the 2021-22 school year, Swift's enrollment is 172 students in first through eighth grades. The lower division, directed by Roni Battoglia, serves 93 students in grades 1-4, with plans to expand to K-4 in 2022-23. Melissa Jozefov directs the middle division with 79 5th-8th grade students. The inclusion of the 5th grade in the middle division, starting in 2021-22, serves to pair developmentally-like groups and to balance the responsibilities of the two division directors. There are 36 faculty members team with 17 administrators and staff who serve the school. The board of trustees has grown to 14 members from single digit membership just a few years ago.

Swift School was awarded accreditation by the Georgia Accrediting Commission in 2004. In 2011, Swift was initially accredited by the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS) and AdvancED with a full renewal of accreditation in 2016. In October 2019 and April 2021 respectively, Swift School was recognized by

the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners & Educators (OGA) as an Accredited Training Program at the Associate and Certified levels.

## Leadership

The current leadership model follows a traditional independent school structure. A board of trustees composed of volunteers led by a board chair hires the head of school as the chief executive. The head of school is charged with all oversight of the operations of the school and hiring of all personnel. See organizational chart (Employee Handbook, Appendix A) for leadership levels of responsibility. The head serves as the legal authority for the school. The board is guided by regularly updated and approved bylaws. The board utilizes committees for decision making and strategic planning.

## Self Study

Swift School engages in formal and regular strategic thinking and planning aligned with its vision, mission, and beliefs. Swift operates on strategic planning cycles. In 2019, the strategic plan launched in 2014 (North Star) was retired, and between September of 2019 and May of 2021, the development of a new plan occurred. The board engaged business advisor Lisa Lai to facilitate the planning process, which involved surveys, SWOT analysis, community visioning, and the development of goals. Members of the board, administration, faculty and staff, parent body, along with former parents, actively collaborated on strategic planning committees.

During this time, the board led a search for a new head of school, who was hired in May of 2020. The 2020-21 school year included orienting the new head of school and adapting the strategic direction begun by the board of trustees. Strategic planning retreats were held by the board in the fall of 2020 and the fall of 2021. Currently, strategy and goals in three broad categories (Strategic Pillars) - finance, marketing, and service - provide the school's direction. This plan was ratified by the board in May of 2021. The plan is summarized in the document "Swift School Strategic Priorities 2021-2024" and included in the evidence files.

During the 2021-22 school year, committees were established to address SAIS Accreditation Standards and Indicators. Members of the leadership team served as chairs or co-chairs for each standard. Faculty members indicated their preferences and were assigned to a committee. Committees met on several occasions to discuss indicators, research answers, and construct responses to each standard. All responses were reviewed by the leadership team.

Goals were selected from the strategic priorities to be addressed during the next five-year cycle. Administration, faculty, and staff shared responsibility for developing the plan to achieve the goals. For example, faculty members followed a "What? So What? Now What?" protocol adapted from NSRF to develop the plan for Goal 3 addressing curriculum development. Detailed plans for meeting each of the goals will be presented in the school report.

## Improvement

The following have been identified as major areas of school improvement:

- 1) Continue growth of a robust governing board.
- 2) Create a master facilities plan to improve the existing learning environment(s) and address the functional needs of the school both short-term and long-term.
- 3) Create a comprehensive curriculum (1-8) that is data driven and sequential in nature and supported by a robust professional development plan.

4) Create a vibrant and engaging sense of community, and foster greater inclusion of alumni, current parents, and other stakeholder relationships to promote The Swift Effect®.



# Introduction

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## Introduction and Overview of the Visit

Swift School was founded in 1998 by Gail Swift with a class of five students. In the early days of Swift, Josie Redwine helped Swift to expand and develop the current structure of the school. Swift purchased its current campus in 2006 and expanded into its current footprint, including a middle division, in 2012-13. Currently, Swift enrolls 175 students in first through eighth grades. The lower division (grades 1-4) serves 88 students, and the middle division (grades 5-8) serves 87 students. Swift was first accredited by SAIS and AdvancED in 2011 and was re-accredited in 2016. Today, Swift is a thriving community of learners that helps students develop a full complement of reading and language skills using the Orton-Gillingham approach. With an OG fellow on site, Swift also provides OG professional development for faculty and staff.

During the course of our three-day visit, the visiting team felt warmly welcomed by the entire Swift community. From a celebratory dinner with administrators and trustees on Sunday night to an outstanding choral performance at the end of day two, we felt like members of the Swift family. Throughout our visit, we observed classes and met with trustees, lower and middle division students, administrators, faculty, parents, and alumni. In each and every conversation, community members share their love of Swift, their feelings of deep belonging in the community, and their sense that Swift changes lives.

# Area 1

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## Title

Goal 1: Continue growth of a robust governing board.

## Description

The Swift School is committed to growing a robust governing board and has made significant progress toward this goal since 2016. The board has grown from 10 to 17 trustees and has developed a focused structure of standing committees: executive, buildings and grounds, finance, culture and outreach, and advancement. They have also engaged in succession planning with a 2021 bylaw revision. In addition, they have established a structure for new member orientation, a fall retreat, and regular board meetings.

The school has partnered with consultants to further educate and inform the board on their role in governance, strategic planning, and fundraising. In 2020, they worked with ISM on a strategic enrollment and marketing plan and held a session on strategic financial planning in 2021.

In addition, the board led the school to re-evaluate and align its mission to focus on children through grade 8 and weather a significant enrollment drop, which necessitated the divestment of the Old Alabama Road property and a renewed focus on a master site plan for the current campus.

Their goal is to develop a 20-member board of active and diverse trustees, adding specific expertise to each committee to help guide the school according to the school improvement plan. The head of school and board executive committee plan to annually assess progress against the strategic goals set forth in this school improvement plan.

The visiting team lauds the board for the focused progress they have made since 2016. To continue to move forward with robust governance, they will both continue the good work made thus far and focus on alignment, ensuring that the school improvement goals, board goals, and strategic goals match. This will allow for priority setting and focus across the entire community.

## Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Attending to board size and diversity by purposely adding members with direct parent connections to Swift and revising board bylaws regarding term limits to allow for more frequent turnover in non-executive committee members;
- Developing a more robust structure for standing board committees (finance, culture and outreach, advancement and buildings and grounds) to allow for more focused and purposeful board work in these key areas;
- Creating five-year plans and models to improve the functioning of the finance committee of the board, increasing regularity of core functions like annual budgeting and moving away from reactive financial planning;
- Partnering with key consultants and constituents to develop a more comprehensive trustee orientation process, board self-evaluations, and a more robust understanding of key governance responsibilities;
- Developing a trustee selection process that takes specific talents and competencies into account;
- Re-evaluating appropriate school size and scope of mission to right-size the campus and address a significant enrollment drop, resulting in the sale of the Old Alabama Road property and a clearer sense of Swift's mission.

## Recommendations

The visiting team recommends that the school consider the following:

- Developing additional ways to increase diversity on the board by regular re-evaluation of areas that could include board bylaws, rotation of executive committee members, board size, trustee recruiting, and needed trustee competencies and skills;
- Developing and maintaining clear priorities for each 3-5 year plan, focusing on a step-wise and methodical pursuit of current and future goals and carefully evaluating how ideas for growth or outreach align with and support those goals;
- Promoting shared leadership amongst trustees by facilitating and enabling newer trustees to explore leadership roles or take on areas of responsibility;
- Continuing to shift the culture to that of a philanthropic board where trustees take pride in leading and advancing the shared board and school goals through giving and fundraising, especially as the board explores the next capital campaign;
- Continuing to develop a robust board evaluation structure that both recognizes current strengths and remediates weaknesses, maintaining and strengthening deep understanding of trustee expectations.

# Area 2

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## Title

Goal 2: Create a master facilities plan to improve the existing learning environment(s) and address the functional needs of the school both short-term and long-term.

## Description

While the school has experienced an unusual period since the previous re-accreditation in varying enrollment, a pandemic, and revision of facility needs, the school's mission remains at the center of every decision. Since 2016, the school revised their previous vision for expanding locations and grade levels and recommitted to their current campus location with a maximum enrollment of 200 students. To support this new vision, they sold the 18-acre Old Alabama Road property and shifted the focus to optimizing their current footprint and facilities. Through this property sale, the school was able to retire debt and look ahead to phase one of their master site plan.

Since the pre visit in April 2022, Swift has broken ground on the first phase of their current master site plan, to be completed by the first day of school, 2023, which will create a larger play field in the center of campus, add much needed parking, and improve the school entrance and carpool process. Much of this project is funded through reserves.

The school has recently developed plans for the next phases of work on their current campus. First, they have partnered with an occupational therapist to establish plans for an outdoor learning space with a multisensory focus. In addition, their two building spaces are approaching maximum capacity, and they continue to revise space allocation to meet current priorities and needs. They will need to look at how to expand space within their existing campus footprint; needs exist for gym or PE space and for a restructuring and reconfiguration of the two campus buildings to create better space for curricular and administrative functions.

Currently, Swift should be commended on maximizing and optimizing space for the current needs of their students despite facility limitations; however, for the long-term health of the school, they will need to look carefully at facilities expansion and/or improvements. Alongside any site planning, Swift will need to build capital to support future plans. The school is committed to engaging in financial and site planning as parallel processes.

## Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Successfully navigating the revision of previous campus expansion plans and the divestment of the Old Alabama Road property, enabling the school to recommit to its core mission and develop facilities plans accordingly;
- Breaking ground on phase one of a campus master plan by beginning construction on the central play field, parking lot, and new entrance, leading to larger student PE and recess facilities and improved traffic flow and setting the stage for future site planning;
- Building and utilizing disciplined financial planning and budgetary reserves to meet the needs of past capital improvements that supported growing enrollment;
- Creatively optimizing current building facilities to support current and future program and curricular initiatives;
- Creating a strong sense of belonging for all families at Swift through community gatherings on campus, despite facilities limitations that do not allow the full community to gather for rally points and events.

# Recommendations

The visiting team recommends that the school consider:

- Aligning future master facilities planning with strategic financial planning and/or next capital campaign to provide resources to align key priorities for facilities with community, curricular, and programmatic goals;
- Creating a culture of philanthropy through the growth and development of board fundraising efforts and parent/caregiver education about independent school philanthropy;
- Enhancing school resources for advancement efforts;
- Exploring how to incorporate community gathering spaces into facilities plans, both for student divisions and the entire Swift School community - parents, students, alumni, and other stakeholders.

# Area 3

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## Title

Goal 3: To create a comprehensive curriculum (1-8) that is data driven and sequential in nature and supported by a robust professional development plan.

## Description

The Swift School develops and aligns the curriculum and instructional design with the school's mission and expectations for student performance. The Orton-Gillingham program undergirds the core approach to reading and literacy education, and the school sees all Swift teachers as reading and writing teachers no matter their specific content areas. It is evident that Swift synchronizes instruction both within and across grade levels.

Swift works to align the current curriculum with the Georgia Standards of Excellence and incorporates a variety of researched-based programs such as Wit and Wisdom, The Writing Revolution, and Woodin Math. The teachers continually modify these programs to meet the needs of their students, something that many community members noted as part of Swift's "special sauce." Students report deep engagement with all aspects of the learning experience at Swift, noting that they feel like they are growing as readers, "love" math and science, and feel challenged at just the right levels. One student shared that "every day is a new challenge and every day the teachers help you with something you might not understand."

The next stage in Swift's curriculum journey is to vertically integrate the curriculum. Swift has already taken significant steps in this direction by creating a specific and time-bound approach to "areas of [curricular] focus" each year, which will allow for a comprehensive evaluation of all areas by 2025.

The school has clearly prioritized collaboration through the allocation of time and resources, and this collaboration produces a cohesive student learning experience. Faculty report that time is built in for the adoption of new curricular approaches like Wit and Wisdom, and that where possible, class schedules are aligned to provide common planning time for grade levels. The school also provides resources for professional development of teacher-leaders, who in turn provide in-house professional development for all Swift faculty.

## Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Developing and maintaining a strong Orton Gillingham program to provide outstanding reading instruction that prepares students for future success;
- Creating clear horizontal alignment and collaboration on curricular initiatives, including with specialists in programs like STEAM, art, music, drama and PE;
- Allocating regular time for collaboration among faculty to create and maintain momentum on key curricular initiatives;
- Developing teacher-leaders to leverage key skills and create pathways for career growth and development;
- Exploring and selecting researched-based curricular programs and adapting them as needed to ensure the best fit for Swift students;
- Providing consistent and deep executive functioning support and social and emotional learning in all classrooms to undergird student development.

## Recommendations

The visiting team recommends the school consider the following:

- Continuing to develop teacher-leaders to provide professional development on methodology and to build and maintain clear vertical alignment of curriculum in grades one through eight;
- Continuing efforts to create curriculum guides for all content areas, building on what is working from current programs and creating a more seamless course of study;
- Enhancing retention efforts and engaging in succession planning for key curricular roles, given that Swift invests significantly in the talent and development of curricular leadership;
- Continuing to enhance time for professional development and collaboration among faculty to keep pace with the robust schedule for curriculum development and evaluation in each area;
- Ensuring vertical integration across the lower and middle divisions for curricula like Wit and Wisdom, mathematics, and social and emotional learning.

# Area 4

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## Title

Goal 4: Create a vibrant and engaging sense of community and foster greater inclusion of alumni, current parents, and other stakeholder relationships to promote The Swift Effect.

## Description

Like all communities, Swift School pulled back from offering community events during the COVID pandemic. Now that gatherings are again a possibility, the school wants to bring back previous efforts and develop new ways to connect the entire Swift School family. They hope to return to hosting events on campus to welcome alumni, parents, and prospective families. The May Family Festival is a great example of this goal at work. Swift offered a day of activities and food trucks on campus, bringing families, faculty and staff, and others together to celebrate and connect. Faculty, students, and parents/caregivers all noted this as a key event that made them feel a part of the larger Swift community.

Swift has done excellent work to ensure that new-to-Swift families feel connected and supported as they join the community. By providing community education programming through the Swift Institute, they help families both learn and communicate the experiences of students with dyslexia and other language-based learning differences. Several parents described a course within the Swift Institute as “profound.” One parent noted, “I made everyone in my family come.”

In addition, Swift hopes to explore new possibilities for keeping alumni engaged with the school, recognizing that alumni experiences and success stories are a key piece of the school's marketing and communications strategy. The visiting team experienced the power of alumni when we met virtually with nine former students via Zoom. Alumni universally praised their Swift School experiences, noting, “I wouldn't be where I am today without Swift.” They remain a powerful and not fully utilized opportunity for the school. Several noted that they hope to be contacted to help with fundraising and other events. To highlight the impact of Swift School on his development, one alumnus noted that to him, the school represented “home.”

Another area of focus within this goal is the outplacement experience, because students transition from Swift to another school when they are ready, whether this occurs at the end of 8th grade or before. The outplacement process is another opportunity to build community. Swift has worked hard to partner with parents and caregivers during the outplacement process by developing a comprehensive web resource and by providing counseling for each family. The next area of opportunity is to think about how to support students moving through this transition.

## Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Developing and maintaining relationships with Swift alumni, which builds and maintains a feeling of connectedness and community;
- Successfully and holistically onboarding new families by making them feel welcomed into the community through parent-to-parent contact, providing educational programming to help families and community members understand the experience of having dyslexia, and immersing families in a culture of understanding and acceptance;
- Building trust with families by providing deep expertise about dyslexia and language-based learning differences and serving as a primary resource to connect them with appropriately trained professionals;
- Providing a holistic school approach by developing and maintaining co-curricular programming and offering community events and education beyond the school day;



- Developing outplacement education and resources for parents and caregivers to help them transition from Swift to their next school community.

## Recommendations

The visiting team recommends that the school consider the following:

- Deepening the relationship between the school, the wider school community, and alumni through events and programming designed to connect constituents with one another and cultivate a lifelong Swift Effect;
- Leveraging the energy, knowledge, and enthusiasm of Swift parents and caregivers by providing structured opportunities for volunteer connections and parent/caregiver social events to support the school's efforts in community building and philanthropy;
- Exploring opportunities to support students in the outplacement process, especially to help them manage the academic, social, and emotional challenges of a school transition;
- Expanding programming to offer new and exciting opportunities for students to build community and skills through off-campus experiences, clubs, afterschool programs, and enrichment activities.

# Additional Commendations and Recommendations

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## Additional Commendations

The team commends the school for the following:

- Building and maintaining a pervasive sense of community in all areas of the school, ensuring that each student, faculty and staff member, and family feels a deep sense of belonging within the Swift community;
- Creating an environment many describe as “magical,” where students and alumni feel they are known, loved, supported, and appropriately challenged to become readers, learners, and thinkers;
- Aiding students on their journey to understanding themselves as learners, developing self-advocacy and building on their strengths to prepare them for successful futures;
- Developing, sharing, and executing extensive community education about dyslexia and other language learning differences that helps families and community members better understand their students' learning journeys.

## Additional Recommendations

The team recommends the school consider the following:

- Creating tighter alignment among existing and future goals for school improvement, annual board goals, facilities goals as outlined in a master site plan, and strategic planning goals to ensure that all community members are focused on the same key strategic areas for growth;
- Developing a community-wide understanding and culture of philanthropy to help the school maximize its facilities and potential as a best-in-class learning community for students with dyslexia and other language-based learning differences;
- Exploring how to collect data on students' and families' sense of belonging and making explicit the school's plans to center conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion, as Swift continues to engage in planning and goal setting;
- Leveraging the upcoming 25th anniversary as an opportunity to build community, enhance school pride, communicate the value proposition, celebrate traditions, and generate excitement about current school priorities.

# Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation

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## Summary

After only three days at Swift School, the visiting team easily concluded that it is indeed a magical place where children thrive. Swift is still a relatively young school and yet the mission is palpable in each and every aspect of the school and community. The Swift team collaborates to put students first and to inspire confidence and self-advocacy in each learner, creating a culture of belonging for students and families alike. One student noted that “Swift feels like the first place where I belong,” and a parent shared that the school “immerses you in love.” The team certainly saw the culture of belonging in action.

## Conclusion

The visiting team would like to recognize the leadership of Donna Cherry for her deep investment of time and thorough approach to the entire re-accreditation process. From start to finish, Donna and her team have been organized, methodical, and aspirational. Her tenure at Swift and personal commitment to students and colleagues made her an ideal ambassador for the school.

We would also like to commend Chris Pomar for his exemplary leadership. The school community both sees and appreciates his warm relational approach coupled with his drive toward a growth mindset and a culture that strives for excellence. From greeting each student by name at morning carpool to his support of faculty, he represents the best of servant leadership.

Finally, we would like to commend the entire faculty and staff of Swift School for their steadfast commitment to helping children reach their full potential as lifelong readers and learners.

## Standards Compliance

The school is in compliance with all standards of the SAIS accreditation process as verified by documentation, observations, and interviews.

## Self-Study Quality

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.

## Recommendation

The school is unanimously recommended for accreditation.