CAIS Canadian Accredited Independent Schools

STRONGER Together

Shaping the Future of Independent School Education

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2026–2031







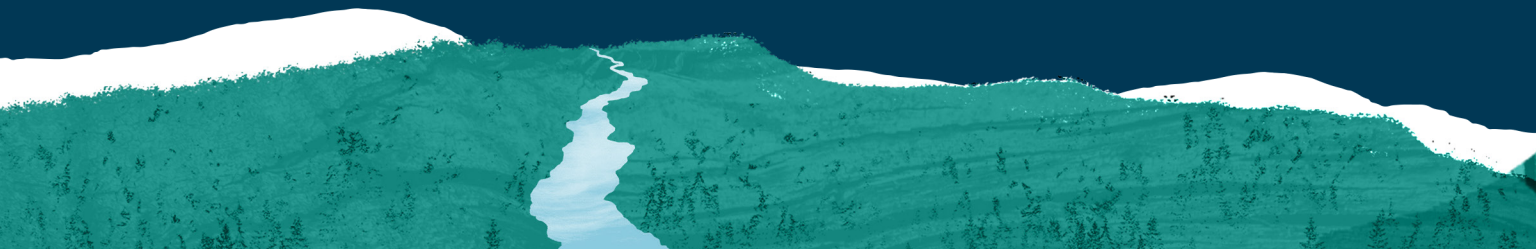
From Insight to Action

CAIS brings together leading independent schools across Canada and Bermuda in a collaborative network committed to continual improvement and educational excellence.

> *“The board thoughtfully considered past and future strategy over two years of meetings to develop a framework that is bold yet supple, and based on the input from our deeply engaged school leaders. As an organization firmly committed to its member schools, these priorities chart a courageous, actionable course for CAIS and the schools we serve, today and into the future.*
>
> —Jim Nelles, CAIS Board Chair (2019–2026)

From January to May 2025, nearly 700 people from CAIS member schools participated in surveys and focus groups to help shape this strategic plan. Their perspectives affirmed what our community values most about CAIS and identified opportunities to strengthen our work.

Building on the 2021–2026 framework, the CAIS Board developed four strategic priorities to guide the organization over the next five years. Together, they provide a focused and responsive framework to strengthen schools, develop exceptional leaders, deliver meaningful member value, and advance independent education in Canada and beyond.



1 Advance a Future-Ready Accreditation Model

Establish an adaptive, internationally respected accreditation system that keeps school improvement at its core.

Members asked for a more responsive and transparent accreditation experience.

How we will get there

- Redesign the accreditation framework with tiered pathways and actionable feedback
- Integrate AI and automation with strong human oversight
- Clearly communicate the value of CAIS accreditation
- Collaborate with regional and international accreditation partners

What this means for CAIS schools

- Accreditation pathways that balance school improvement with compliance
- Meaningful and personalized feedback and sustainable review cycles
- Greater recognition of, and trust in, CAIS accreditation
- A stronger CAIS voice in international conversations about accreditation standards

2 Build Canada's Leadership Engine for Independent Schools

Develop and sustain the strongest leadership ecosystem in Canadian independent education.

Strong schools require strong leaders. Our community has called for more consistent and connected pathways to develop future-ready leaders at every career stage.

How we will get there

- Develop adaptive leadership programs for leaders at different career stages
- Expand in-person, online, and hybrid learning opportunities
- Embed inclusion and belonging in all leadership training and initiatives
- Create more opportunities for connection, recognition, and collaboration

What this means for CAIS schools

- Clearer leadership pathways at all career stages
- More opportunities for professional learning, coaching, and mentorship
- Leadership that reflects diverse, pluralistic, and Indigenous perspectives
- A stronger national network of school leaders

3 Deliver Meaningful Member Value and Impact

Improve CAIS's services to meet members' needs through targeted, timely access to resources.

Members want CAIS services to be easy to access, relevant to their needs, and valuable today and for years to come.

How we will get there

- Build integrated digital platforms and clear user journeys
- Invest in practical toolkits and frameworks for accreditation, governance, and innovation
- Grow and diversify learning networks and communities of practice
- Build a sustainable model that supports continued investment in member services

What this means for CAIS schools

- Personalized, more seamless access to CAIS programs and services
- Tools and resources that make work more effective and efficient
- New opportunities to collaborate with and learn from peers
- Greater confidence in CAIS's long-term stability and value

4 Champion Independent Education in Canada and Beyond

Position CAIS as the leading national voice and research hub for independent education.

Members want CAIS to be a strong, unified, and trusted voice to advocate with universities, governments, and thought leaders.

How we will get there

- Lead national conversations and publish research on emerging issues
- Convene experts and share actionable insights
- Represent the sector in policy forums and advocate with key partners
- Partner with world-class institutions that amplify the value and visibility of independent schools

What this means for CAIS schools

- National advocacy and research that strengthen the independent school sector
- Timely insights on issues like AI, student wellness, future readiness, and sustainability
- A stronger, unified voice for independent education with policymakers and public institutions
- Access to thought leadership, research, and expert convening

What's Next

This plan advances from insight to action in deliberate phases, building early momentum and scaling proven successes across the strategic priority areas while remaining responsive to the changing needs of schools and society.

YEAR 1 BUILD

Launch foundational work, pilot the redesigned accreditation model, strengthen leadership pathways, and begin priority digital and research initiatives.

YEARS 2–3 SCALE

Evaluate early work through member input, expand successful programs and platforms, strengthen collaboration among networks, and deepen CAIS's research and policy presence.

YEARS 4–5 LEAD

Embed proven approaches, assess their impact through feedback, refine the next generation of CAIS services, and position the organization for the strategy that follows.

EVERY YEAR SHARE

Report progress on key measures to the CAIS community and adjust priorities as members' needs and the education landscape evolve.

Our Public Purpose

As a Canadian charity, CAIS serves the public good by working with member schools to continually improve school quality, develop exceptional leaders, and share knowledge broadly.

We are grateful for the dedication and expertise of our members in helping us meet our mandate. Every accreditation review, every leader we help to develop, and every school we support is the result of our shared commitment.

Together, we strengthen the independent education sector and its contribution to a vibrant, pluralistic society by supporting schools that prepare students for thoughtful and engaged citizenship.

For questions or to share feedback on these strategic priorities, please contact:

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LEARN MORE
AT CAIS.CA

Vision, Mission & Values

OUR VISION

Leaders in education, shaping the future of a courageous, compassionate world

OUR MISSION

Continual school improvement through the advancement of standards, support, and a strong Canadian network

“ Our community was clear about both what it values in CAIS and where it wants us to go next. This plan turns that input into a focused agenda for vibrant school communities, next-generation leadership, and a stronger independent school sector committed to Canadian ideals of democracy and pluralism.

—Anand Mahadevan, CAIS Executive Director

OUR VALUES

Community: We believe we are stronger when we come together to learn from and help one another.

Leading: We believe we have a responsibility to be bold—living our Vision of a courageous, compassionate world.

Learning: We believe learning is at the heart of all we do. Continual whole school improvement leads to better outcomes for students.

Global Perspectives: We believe looking beyond ourselves allows us to appreciate our differences and become stronger as a collective. We seek new ideas, promote diversity, and lead in a changing world.





