

NJAIS

New Jersey Association of Independent Schools

Five-Year Report
of the
Visiting Accreditation Team

Rutgers Preparatory School

1345 Easton Avenue, Somerset, NJ 08873

rutgersprep.org

Steven Loy, Head of School

November 15, 2017

Submitted by: Dr. Rodney V. De Jarnett, Head of School, Dwight-Englewood School
Mr. John Green, Head of School (retired), Peddie School;
Executive Director, The TEAK Fellowship

Section I – Introduction:

On November 15, 2017, Dr. Rodney V. De Jarnett, Head of School, Dwight-Englewood School, and Mr. John Green, Head of School (retired), Peddie School, and currently Executive Director of The TEAK Fellowship, were on campus at Rutgers Preparatory School as part of the five-year accreditation interim visit. Dr. De Jarnett and Mr. Green served as Chair and Co-chair, respectively, of the Accreditation Visiting Team in 2012. Prior to the visit, Rutgers Prep School (RPS) provided the Visiting Team all necessary materials, including the well-articulated and organized Five-Year Report; “Inspiring Outcomes.” Rodney and John were graciously received, and during the one-day visit, met with administration, Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and parents of the school. All were open, candid, and insightful throughout the one-day visit.

The opening statement from the Visiting Team Report in 2012:

“The community of Rutgers Prep is just that: a community...evidence of this devotion to community abounds.”

... was felt from the moment the Team arrived on campus for the five-year visit. Fond memories from the Decennial Visit re-emerged fresh in our memories as a feeling of home was apparent from the moment we stepped out of our cars. As it was for the Decennial Visit, the Five-year Report and all supporting documents were thoroughly organized and comprehensive providing the Team with far more detailed information, covering all aspects of the school, than is normally seen in a Five-year Report. The campus reflected this same attention to detail. Ample and spotless, every corner of the campus and facilities demonstrate the same love of Rutgers Prep we saw in each member of the community five years ago and on this visit. RPS has achieved that delicate balance of a well-kept, neat, organized, and clean campus and facility that also reflects a lived-in and enjoyed school; ‘the very best of what most families would like to see in their homes.’

Not surprising, the Team learned in our careful review of the Report and supplemental materials and in our conversations throughout the visit that RPS followed through with great care, deep thinking, and active implementation of all its resources to address the recommendations from the Decennial Report provided the school five years ago. The team commends RPS for taking positive action on these recommendations while also maintaining the highest quality of those aspects for which we the Decennial Team gave RPS commendations.

Section II – The Documents

Rutgers Prep submitted a comprehensive, well-articulated, candid, and well-organized Five-Year Report to the Visiting Team and NJAIS, which included the following sections:

- Introduction
- Current Status of School-Wide Initiatives; an update on the progress of Rutgers Prep’s Action Plan
- Update on Recommendations from Decennial Report
- Description of Process Used to Prepare for the Five-Year Report
- Responses to the NJAIS Standards.

The school also provided the Team prior to the visit the following documents:

- Strategic Plan: 2016 – 2017, 2017 – 2018, 2018 – 2019, 2019 – 2020
 - The strategic plan is brief and pointed, directing the school to work on important issues imperative to the realization of the school's mission. The Plan is organized around four aspects, each followed by a set of clear and concise goals. The Plan outlines goals for 2016 – 2020.
- 2017 – 2018 Academic Year Curriculum Guide
 - A well-written and organized Curriculum Guide provides the reader a clear understanding of the school's course offerings in all disciplines.
- Curriculum materials along with Scope and Sequence materials, Skill Arrays for all courses in all divisions
 - Curriculum materials are available for all courses in all divisions from Pre-Kindergarten through a student's senior year. Each is well articulated and appropriate for the age of the course's students. Curriculum is supported through the use of vertical Scope and Sequence charts as well as listings for the vast skills learned in each program.
- Enrollment Statistics 2014 – 2016
 - Rutgers Prep maintains accurate records of enrollment, attrition, and numbers of new students for each grade level at the school. Additionally, statistics on school-wide retention and financial aid dollars invested for each year (2014 – 2016) were provided.
 - It should be noted that retention over this three-year period ranged from 90% in 2014 to 91% in 2016 and financial aid dollars increased from \$4.2 M to \$4.8 M over this same period as the numbers of students receiving financial aid rose from 260 to 279.
- Anti-Bullying Policy
 - Rutgers Prep provides the community a robust and clearly stated Anti-Bullying Policy in the Student/Parent Handbook. The school's procedures for reporting harassment have been well-established, listing various members of the community one can reach out to including teachers, advisors, counselors, and administration.
- Administration, Faculty, and Staff Data
 - The number employed in positions of administration, faculty, and staff are well maintained and include identity markers to track changes in the diversity of each category. The student to faculty ratio is 8:1.
- Updated Faculty Evaluation Program
 - The school's faculty evaluation program has been updated and was clearly outlined for the Team. This updated program shows continued change and efforts to improve evaluation stating, for example, the teacher portfolios will be transferred to BlackBaud beginning in the 2018 – 2019 academic year.
- CPR and First Aid Certifications for 68 members of the Rutgers staff
 - An impressive 68 members of the Rutgers administrators, faculty, and staff have earned CPR and First Aid Certification.
- Current 2017 – 2018 Budget
 - A brief budget summary for the 2017 – 2018 academic year was provided for the Team showing a \$15,060 surplus from operations and a \$4,742 surplus on reserves.
- Financial Statements from 2014 – 2015 and 2015 – 2016.
 - Completed financial statements prepared by KPMG for the 2014 – 2015 and 2015 – 2016 academic years were provided for the Team. Over these two years, total net assets rose from \$48,155,150 to \$49,717,886.

- Facilities Summary
 - A detailed listing of the number of classrooms, science laboratories, technology labs, mobile technology carts, SMART Boards, art and music studios, athletic facilities, multi-purpose spaces, auditoriums, outdoor play spaces, and libraries was provided for the Team and represent well that the school offers faculty and students a vast array of facilities to support the program.
- The following inspection reports and certifications (all current and up-to-date) were provided for the Team.
 - Fire Alarm and Life Safety System Inspection Reports
 - Life Hazard Certification of Registration
 - Certificate of Liability Insurance
 - Certificates for Fire Extinguishers and Safety Equipment
 - Security Drill Statement of Assurance
 - Certificates of Wet Sprinkler Inspection

Section III – The Visit

The visit schedule included:

- Meeting with the Head of School:

The Visiting Team was warmly greeted first thing in the morning by Dr. Steven Loy, the Headmaster at RPS. Arriving on campus after a full review of the vast array of materials RPS provided, we were very interested in learning more about the five years of progress made since our last visit and in particular, the decline in enrollment over those same years and, yet the financial health of the school.

Dr. Loy described how he and his senior staff leveraged the talented staff to make immediate progress on the recommendations. Dr. Loy informed us that: “We have a lot of great people here, but not enough positions for everyone to lead. So we used the recommendations and the Five-Year Report process for others to volunteer to lead. And the results proved to be outstanding.” The Team commends Dr. Loy for the structures he put in place that allow various members of his community to experience leadership and take ownership for all that happens on campus. It is obvious that the ‘caring community’ written about in the Decennial Report starts at the top with Dr. Loy and permeates from him to every member of the community.

- Meeting with Members from the Board of Trustees:

Apparent to the Team throughout our meeting with the Board of Trustees is its devotion and love of RPS. Whether an alumnus, past or current parent, these members of the Board were dedicated to important strategic thinking – knowing the management of the school was the work of the Headmaster.

The Board was clear about its focus on enrollment, cost of tuition, raising money, and ensuring the school remains strong “for their grandchildren.” Knowing that alumni of RPS have historically been disconnected from the school, the Board has supported the financial commitment to increasing advancement staffing. With fundraising central to the Board’s conversations, it was not lost on the Team that the Board is enormously proud that 100% of last year’s senior class gave to the school, a new tradition that lays the foundation for future giving.

The Board spoke candidly about the changing demographics and the implications for future enrollment. Board members possess a keen understanding that the customer is also changing and that the school's value proposition needs to be better understood. A strong financial commitment made for improved marketing is but one example of the Board's commitment. The Board is also aware of the increase in alternative educational options (i.e. new charter schools in the area).

Keenly aware of the issues, Board members demonstrated their concern about the implications their decisions have on the future of the school. They are proud of recently paying off the school's debt, strong endowment returns, and not micro-managing the school.

- An Opportunity to Attend the Middle and Upper School Morning Meetings:

The Visiting Team split-up late morning to attend both the Middle and Upper School Morning Meetings.

Students led the Upper School Morning Meeting in the Commons. Gathered in the 'living room' of the school, students stand attentively and applaud after each announcement. This was a comfortable and engaging meeting where everyone was focused, reflecting the real sense of community and family felt as soon as stepping foot on campus. Students were even supportive of a change required for playing Spike Ball outside of classrooms during class hours because the noise was interrupting classroom activities.

A member of the Middle School faculty led the Middle School Morning meeting; Middle School students participated and demonstrated a comfort with the microphone that reflects a community dedicated to helping students find their own voice. It was not lost on the Team that the Middle School student body community was forgiving of those who made mistakes in the front of the room nor was it lost that the focus of the meeting was on raising money for a good cause. Both reflect the values articulated in the school's mission.

- Meeting with Selected Faculty from Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools:

All faculty were invited to meet with the Visiting Team. Faculty members from all three divisions attended and spoke honestly and candidly about the school's strengths: colleagues and students, the benefits of the K-12 curriculum and community, a more integrated 6-12 program, faculty autonomy and independence to pursue a new idea, as well as recent changes, the current state of the school, and what they would like to see over the next five years.

Faculty members, for example, were candid yet positive about the transition into the new schedule and longer class periods. Even though there was discussion about the challenges of content accumulation in some courses, the overall opinion for the schedule change was positive. Other positive comments dominated the discussion in regard to more cohesive Middle and Upper School programs, as a result of the new schedule, and newly available 'cross-over' teachers. There was some concern expressed about less time during the week to establish the necessary teacher/student relationships, but this was something they knew that they were working through and learning new strategies. It should also be noted that the new Parent/Teacher conference format (one-on-one) was considered by all to be a vastly positive change.

Faculty members are grateful that each division has a representative who sits at Board meetings. Faculty representatives attending these meetings were grateful for how well the school, and in particular Dr. Loy, communicated and handled the loss of sections due to declining enrollments. They understand that as a result, they might see from time to time larger class sizes and expressed a concern that class sizes should not become too large so as to impact the close teacher/student relationships formed in the classroom. Also, Middle School teachers hoped to return to four classes from the five classes they are currently teaching, stating that there is much more they now do in addition to their teaching responsibilities. One teacher represented the sentiment in the room when she said: “I do not have to worry about my job, but I do not know how the school allocates funds.”

These teachers noted the successful shift in professional development opportunities to better align the opportunity to the overall curricular goals of the school, especially those in-house opportunities needed to implement the new schedule. Each told stories of how the extra resources have been critical to this success. Middle School teachers were excited about Project-Based Learning (PBL) and enjoyed describing why PBL works and is important. Changes in the world language program, new technology classes, and the new STEAM program were also discussed.

Most common were the themes praising the ‘community feel’ of RPS, with all agreeing they hope that the school does not lose this as they adjust to the new enrollment realities. Older students helping classes with younger students and the student-driven extracurricular program were some of the examples given to represent this community feel of the program.

The teachers were quick and determined to point out how the two-word phrase from the new Mission; “pursue passions” related to both students and teachers. Teachers felt strongly that this was especially true for each of them – RPS afforded them an opportunity to pursue their passions.

- Meeting with Selected Students from Grades Six, Seven, and Eight:

The highlight for the Team’s day was our time spent with students. Students were excited and animated to talk about their experiences at RPS. Love of the School’s community feel, strong relationships with teachers, and the ability to have choice and take risks were the hallmarks of their conversations, although students did express their desire to have a “football team” and a “new theater.”

Students agreed that the new schedule did put some pressure on them in specific courses for which content accumulation appeared to be most important. The comment most representative was that from a student who said; “I would rather have more work at home in the AP courses than cram all the classes during the week.” Students also praised the capability resulting from this schedule change to complete the work between classes because they no longer go home every night with five, six, or seven assignments to complete for the next day. One student said as part of this conversation; “Now I can get some sleep at night.” Each felt like the new schedule has reduced levels of nightly stress.

The large contingent of seniors in the group talked about the college process, as each was in the middle of that process. The support from college counselors is “HUGE,” as one student said. “They do so much for us,” said another. One student talked about the essay-writing program saying; “The

essay-writing program over the summer was very helpful. I do not think I could have completed my essays without that summer program.”

Straying from the Visiting Team’s general three questions asked each of the other groups, we asked the students to talk about one of their favorite teachers. Responses came quickly and happily and the Team is only able to quote a few: “She turned my life around.” “You can tell how much he loves what he does.” “He is very qualified – but it is also about his passion. I do not have a favorite, so many are passionate about helping me love it as well.” “They are so caring of me.” “They want to see you succeed.” “They are as much about making sure I succeed as they are about the course.” “They encourage me to try new things.” “My hardest classes were often my favorite even though I didn’t always do well.” “Instead of them telling me, they ask me.” “She has a big impact on me because she has encouraged me to pursue my passion, even into college.” “It’s more hands-on learning, more labs, more teachers making sure I understand what I am doing.” “Doing more activities to help me learn and always there for help.”

- A Campus Tour with the Opportunity to Spend Time with Directors from the Admissions, Financial Aid, and International Student Offices:

On the tour, the Team saw several new or renovated facilities since our last visit including a new fitness center, technology room, archives, and maker space that, in particular, reflected the school’s innovative repurposing of the new classrooms. Classrooms were lined with activities in progress; walls and even ceilings reflected the pride of progress made to date. A buzz of work, collaboration, and learning filled the air throughout the tour. Smiles were everywhere reflecting a joy of learning in the RPS community.

The autonomy offered both faculty and students was reflective of the easily observed high levels of motivation. Every corner we turned, there was yet something else new to see and hear about. The new Archive Room in the library provided a wonderful working space for students to engage with teachers doing ‘hands-on history’ about the school. Working through a vast pile of archival materials, students were preparing a 3-D display of the school’s 250-year history. Around yet another corner, the Team was introduced to a large group of students developing a theme for this year’s TEDx presentation. RPS uses every space for students to learn; no space modeled that better than the newly renovated Lower School classroom spaces designed for innovation centers, technology, world languages, and more. The quick one-summer turnaround of these spaces clearly represents the school’s nimbleness in responding to current challenges and needs.

- Meeting with the Three Division Principals:

The Team’s meeting with the three division principals reflected most all of the previous meetings held earlier in the day. Each principal was proud of how well the school had progressed and handled enrollment challenges over the last five years and the work completed to meet recommendations from the Decennial Report – but far more excited about current efforts to move the program forward. The next five years will be times of growth and improvement based on all the principles discussed with the Team. Confident and knowledgeable about her division’s program and pedagogy, the Lower School principal talked at length about next year’s work to better differentiate the program in the Lower School classes, organizing students by ability in skills classes rather than by age, as well as this year’s adoption of Singapore Mathematics. The Middle School principal reflected earlier

conversations about his division's work to have a 'true' PBL program and more cross-disciplinary classes, as well as the "Ideas and Innovation classes." The Upper School principal, new to the School since the Decennial Report, stated it clearly when he said: "The future is cross-disciplinary courses...and we are working towards that."

- Meeting with Parents from the PA, Grade Two, Four, Six, and Ten:

A small group of parents was able to come to campus and meet with the Team. Each parent shared stories of a teacher who or a program that had turned her child around. The parents were proud to talk at length about the caring and dedicated faculty to whom they happily entrust their children. Children who had grown and matured, overcome learning differences, learned to love school and learning, were engaged and excited — these were the children the parents described. They also commented on the good communication and partnership that exists between parents and the School. One said, "The school calls us when there is a reason to talk about my child; we don't have to call them first."

Parents expressed some concern about the declining enrollment with one telling the story of a friend who lives in the same neighborhood who passes the campus each day to work but has never 'stopped in' for a look because they do not think an RPS education is affordable, even though her family had an understanding of how excellent the school would be for her children. The parents expressed hope that RPS would be able to better market the school to such families so that they too knew they could afford RPS — as these other families were so much like them. They also prodded the Lower School — viewed as more traditional than the Middle and Upper Schools — to be innovative in order to assure continuity in pedagogy and approach across the three divisions.

- Meeting with Senior Administrative staff

The Team wrapped up the visits with the school's chief administrators including: the new Director of Advancement, the CFO, the Dean of Enrollment Management and Financial Aid, the Director of Campus Operations, Executive Director of Global Programs, and Director of The Innovation Center. It was clear from the meeting that Dr. Loy is well supported by his loyal direct reports, all of whom demonstrated a deep knowledge of all that is RPS, but an equally deep understanding of the challenges that confront the school at this time in its history, and a willingness to act boldly to meet these challenges. They take particular pride in their roles and contributions to all that has been accomplished over the years but did not strike the Team as anywhere near ready to rest on their laurels.

- Final Meeting with the Head of School

The Team completed its uplifting visit where it started ... in Dr. Loy's office. Dr. Loy was his usual humble self in redirecting all of the Team's praise toward his Board of Trustees, administrative team, and faculty. He was also his usual gracious self. He listened attentively to our reflections and was particularly open to any suggestions without being the least bit defensive. On the contrary, Dr. Loy's leadership over the past five years is an indication that he embraces and acts on feedback even from those considered "outside eyes" and appeared committed to giving the Team's input every consideration again this year. The Team left the meeting as certain as ever that RPS is what it is as a result of his extraordinary dedication and stewardship.

Section IV: Living its Mission - The Most Notable Changes Since the Decennial Visit:

The Team focused its attention first on the school's recent decline in enrollment and financial health. The Team next concentrated on each group's comments about what changes each had witnessed over the last five years, what the School is currently working on, and what changes each would like to see over the next five years. The Team was also deliberate in following-up on the recommendations and commendations made by the Decennial Visiting Team to learn what progress had been made and to ensure that RPS had not lost grounds in those areas of strength for which the Decennial Team had made commendations.

Moving quickly after the Decennial Report, RPS went to work rewriting its Mission to more concisely state to the public 'who' the school is and to provide internally the goal to which everyone works daily to achieve. The new 22-word Mission Statement is a success! Articulate and passionate, the verbs of the Mission Statement were highlighted throughout the Team's visit as examples of 'how' RPS meets its Mission. This was a clear indication to the Team that how the School meets its Mission is considered critical to the Mission.

The most notable change since the Decennial Visit has been the ongoing challenges in enrollment due to the changing demographics in Rutgers Prep's admission catchment area. Family household income in the school's catchment area has also changed dramatically resulting in a smaller percentage of the regional families thinking they are able to financially support a Rutgers Prep education.

Enrollment has steadily decreased over the last three years from 683 students to 644 students. The most significant decline in enrollment has occurred in Grades 1 - 7, while enrollment in the Upper School has remained healthy as has the Pre-K and Kindergarten enrollments. To maintain the healthy financial status of the school, RPS reduced the number of classes in the Lower School from two classes in each grade (Grades 1 - 5), and Grade 5 has moved back from the Middle School to the Lower School. Even though, as Dr. Loy states; "The Lower School teachers are asking if they could have done more, or could they have been better," the community remains extremely positive knowing that they will have, for the foreseeable future, a strong, vibrant, and always improving school, only smaller. As Dr. Loy stated: "Success is not based on the number of students, rather on what we do with our students."

The Team reviewed financial statements that demonstrate that even with smaller enrollments, the school's finances not only remain strong but have improved. This reflects, the Team believes, strong fiscal leadership and, as we learned, a significant hands-on approach with finances from the Headmaster. The Team came to believe through the review of the Five-Year Report, supplemental materials, and various conversations during the visit, the school needs a more dynamic financial model that reflects newer models found in other schools, that would allow the Headmaster to probe various 'financial levers' to help him make better strategic decisions for the future health of the school. The school needs to build on its current financial efforts with dynamic models and proactive staff that allow the school to become more visionary in its financial planning. The Team notes this point in the recommendations in this report.

To address enrollment decline, the school has initiated several specific steps of its Strategic Plan to better market the revised Mission Statement and newly implemented innovative programs. Celebrating its 250th Anniversary (the oldest independent school in New Jersey), the school worked to leverage the marketing of this event to improve its marketing and admissions position as well as increasing connections with alumni to improve fundraising, friend raising, and better leverage the long history in the admissions market. RPS has

made significant structural changes to support its new advancement efforts. New hires are allowing the school to become more proactive in its fundraising.

With a long-standing history of enrolling students from around the world, Rutgers is currently investing in a specific program bridging international students, mostly Asian, into its mainstream program. Requiring intensive language support, Rutgers Prep continues to strengthen its 'bridge-program' that includes homestays with local families, and its long-standing summer programs to not only enroll, but support through a successful transition these international students.

To remain a vital educational institution in the area, the school invested into new programming over and above those recommended in the Decennial Report. Professional Learning Groups were established across divisions to not only provide professional growth for faculty, but also in reaction to the Decennial Report's recommendation for increased vertical articulation in the program through better vertical alignment and connections. In-house 'think tanks' were developed to improve professional development to enhance and build on the practice of sending a few teachers to outside conferences. The Middle School Project Based Learning (PBL) program is a direct outcome of this new focus on in-house professional development.

Significant program innovation continues to be developed since the Decennial Report. A new Middle and Upper School schedule has been the driving force behind much of the program changes in those two divisions. The new schedule has necessitated changes in classroom pedagogy due to the longer class periods. Middle and Upper School teachers can now teach across divisions and better support vertical alignment and connections between divisions. Furthermore, students are able to enroll in more arts classes, and the school has responded by supporting this increase in enrollment in the arts. The improvements made possible by this new schedule are numerous, tangible, and critical to program success.

Because of Dr. Loy's strong belief in supporting the 'little bets,' as he refers to them, along with how his community understands his support of these 'little bets,' teachers are strongly supported in their efforts to experiment. Many of these ventures have and will continue to lead into more substantial program changes.

Section V - Commendations

Identify 15-20 commendations. These can be drawn from the documents and the visit – bulleted sentences.

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

- Investing the time, energy, and thinking required to develop an exemplary revised Mission Statement that informs those interested in the School of 'who' Rutgers Prep is and motivate those who work in the school by setting a clearly articulated goal to work towards. Now only 22 words long, the word choices incorporated in the Mission clearly describe the 'how' and imply the 'why' Rutgers Prep's Mission is vital to the continued growth of the school and its community.
- The efforts of the Board of Trustees and the Headmaster to share with the faculty and staff the process through which strategic goals are set and for incorporating the best ideas of the faculty and staff into this process through the use of an annual spring survey instrument.

- Setting clear and achievable goals in the current Strategic Plan that address the concerns for continued growth and improvement while also laying the foundation for innovation and creative program development supported by ongoing professional development.
- The development and implementation of a newly updated Faculty Evaluation Program that, connected with the improvements in professional development opportunities, ensures faculty growth commensurate to the pace of change implementing innovative and new programs.
- Taking the bold move to develop and implement a new academic schedule that has allowed for better vertical connections among divisions and within the program as well as improved classroom pedagogy while also reducing student stress.
- Developing new, exciting, and relevant programs for students.
- Encouraging and supporting new in-house professional development to larger cohorts of faculty, which was essential to successfully accomplishing the vast array of changes being made and considered.
- The consistency and care through which the school handles issues of behavior and discipline using the P.R.E.P. acronym to ensure fair, just, and understandable responses through which student learn. The P.R.E.P. acronym builds on the well-established and understood cultural norm of this community that prides itself on the priority placed on students' emotional, mental, and physical health.
- The progress made in ensuring a vertically aligned program in and among all three divisions. The results of the Vertical Articulation Team, yielded a program more aligned to the school's revised Mission Statement, while greatly improving and enhancing the connections among grades, courses, and divisions.
- The ongoing faculty professional development, new curriculum, and innovative pedagogy invested to develop program that meets the needs of a dynamically changing student population while always preparing students to be successful in the best undergraduate programs.
- Continued careful fiscal management allowing the school to maintain and improve program and implement new innovative programs to support the school's changing student population and recently declining enrollment while maintaining a surplus.
- Investigating challenges in appropriately securing the campus and numerous facilities and then employing a vast array of security improvements including 62 additional security cameras covering all buildings entrances and many driveways and parking lots; installing an electronic locking system for external doors; vigilance in monitoring unused external doors; and increasing the mobility of security personnel on campus.

- Hiring additional staff to enhance marketing and advancement efforts and for providing the direction and support necessary for much needed improvements in fundraising.
- Investing in staff, equipment, and materials to maintain a first-class campus and facility to support the program including careful attention to deferred maintenance.

Section VI - Recommendations

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

- Pursue what Dr. Loy refers to as “small bets” in order to address the challenges associated with managing RPS today: declining enrollment, increasing tuition, and expanding alumni engagement.
- Implement dynamic and nimble financial models with appropriate staff support such that the Headmaster has a tool through which he can experiment with various financial levers to learn future implications of decisions being considered and to relieve the Headmaster for the time currently required to manage financial decisions.
- Experiment and evaluate, as it does with program changes, various admission marketing models to ensure that families in the region are aware that they too might be able to afford an RPS education and to market the values proposition for investing into an RPS education.
- Market its financial assistance program, especially to upper middle-income families.
- Transition its procedures for the retention of school records into school policy ensuring that future generations of school leaders will continue the safekeeping of such records.
- Continue to strengthen its program’s vertical articulation by building on the work completed over the last five years to ensure these connections are maintained and strengthened as the School works to develop more innovative curriculum and pedagogy.
- Continue to focus appropriate energy and resources to develop necessary skills that faculty need to help meet the needs of the changing student population.
- Continue to be proactively deliberate each year to hire a diverse faculty and staff that reflects the diversity of the families attending RPS.
- Recruit more women to the Board of Trustees, as identified in the Self-Study.
- Resist any complacency and continue to change and improve as much over the next five years as the past five.

Section VII - Conclusion

RPS has met the challenges of a changing demographic that has resulted in declining enrollment as well as a changing student population with aggressive and bold innovative program changes, increased marketing, and solid financial stewardship. Challenges that have caused the serious decline of many independent day schools across the country have been turned into an imperative for change that has solidified a passion in every member of the RPS community to fulfill the new mission.

A sense of family and community permeates every aspect of life at RPS and is the foundation upon which the school has been able to weather recent changes with a dedication and diligence to not just persevere, but to improve and become stronger. A willingness to take risks, to experiment, and to implement lessons learned into new program solidly reflect the Mission. The strength of community and strong leadership from the Headmaster provide support for faculty, staff, and students to ‘pursue their passions.’ Faculty members, through their work with students and the ways in which they model learning for their students, ‘inspire students.’ A program that is willing to be creative and curious about ‘what if’s’ naturally informs students to ‘embrace intellectual curiosity and creativity.’ And through the most challenging of enrollment situations, the Headmaster ‘lead with confidence’ allowing the RPS community members to be confident in the changes being implemented.

The verbs ‘inspire,’ ‘discover,’ ‘pursue,’ ‘embrace,’ and ‘lead’ from the RPS Mission represent perfectly how RPS does what it does. Process, rather than product, is the great lesson learned by being at RPS. As Carol Dweck would point out, RPS is in a constant state of ‘growth mindset.’

The Visiting Team would like to thank everyone in the RPS community who helped write and gather information for the Five-Year Report and supplemental materials, as well as all those who took time from their day to meet with us. The Team appreciates your commitment to the school, and the devotion through which you have completed this task. As stated in the Decennial Report; “The community of Rutgers Prep is just that: a community.” What you have accomplished in the past five years is truly remarkable. With challenges that often overwhelm other schools, your community steps forward and into the future with bold and exciting steps ensuring RPS a vibrant and vital position in the education of students for many years to come. We thank you for welcoming us. We congratulate you on your accomplishments, and we wish you the best as you continue your work.

NJAIS STANDARDS for ACCREDITATION

I. MISSION/PHILOSOPHY

1. The school has a clearly stated mission/philosophy statement that is reviewed periodically and approved by the Board of Trustees.
STANDARD MET

2. The school communicates its mission/philosophy to all constituents.
STANDARD MET

3. The mission/philosophy informs school decisions and programs.
STANDARD MET

II. GOVERNANCE

4. The school is incorporated as a non-profit organization and has been granted by the Internal Revenue Service 501(c)3 status or an equivalent form of tax-exempt status.
STANDARD MET

5. The school and its governance structure are organized with independence from other organizations or individuals as to ensure its ability to fulfill its mission.
STANDARD MET

6. The Board reviews and maintains Bylaws and keeps minutes of meetings that conform to legal requirements while assuring that the school and Board operate in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
STANDARD MET

7. The Board develops and regularly reviews Board written policies in a Policy Manual.
STANDARD MET

8. The Board has sole fiduciary responsibility for the school and ensures that adequate financial resources and facilities are provided for the institution.
STANDARD MET

9. The Board has appropriate policies to support the creation, review, and approval of an annual operating and capital budget, as well as short and long-range financial plans.
STANDARD MET

10. The Board engages in regular strategic planning and documents in writing the school's strategic plan.
STANDARD MET

11. The Board understands its central role in development/institutional advancement and actively supports these efforts.
STANDARD MET

12. The Board provides a written contract for the Head of School that sets forth major responsibilities, a mutually agreed upon plan of evaluation of the Head, compensation and benefits, the term of employment, a required termination notice, and ensures the Head's right to address the Board with regard to situations in which the Head's position might be at risk.
STANDARD MET
13. The Board demonstrates effective boundaries between the policy-making role of the Board and the role of the Head of School as educational leader and manager of school day-to-day operations.
STANDARD MET
14. The Board ensures stability in transitions of Head and Board leadership and provides transition planning.
STANDARD MET
15. The Board has an effective process to identify, cultivate, and select new members to its Board.
STANDARD MET
16. There is orientation for Board members and ongoing professional development for the school's Trustees.
STANDARD MET
17. The Board has a regular, clearly defined, and well-administered program of evaluation for itself as an entity and for individual Board members.
STANDARD MET
18. The Board reviews annually and signs individually a conflict of interest and confidentiality statement.
STANDARD MET

III. SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

19. The climate and culture of the school reflect the school's mission/philosophy.
STANDARD MET
20. In keeping with its mission/philosophy, the school promotes an equitable, just, and inclusive community that inspires students to respect others and value diversity.
STANDARD MET
21. The school's admissions and financial assistance policies and practices are consistent with the school's mission/philosophy and include efforts for diversity in the student body.
STANDARD MET
22. The school employs methods of communicating with its stakeholders that are appropriate to the school's mission, size, and means.
STANDARD MET
23. There are clearly articulated channels by which members of all constituency groups (including faculty, parents, students, alumni) can communicate meaningfully with school administrators.
STANDARD MET

24. The school strives to maintain good relationships with the community in which it is located.
STANDARD MET
25. The school strives to promote a culture of global understanding that is appropriate to the school's mission, size, and means.
STANDARD MET
26. The school strives to promote a commitment to environmental responsibility for current and future generations.
STANDARD MET
27. The school makes full disclosure of its mission, policies, programs, and practices in the following written documents:
- a. Mission/philosophy statement, goals, objectives
 - b. Written statement of non-discrimination against any person in admissions, employment, or otherwise in any manner that is in violation of local, state, or federal laws. This non-discrimination statement is published in the school's brochures, website, Bylaws, and other documents.
 - c. Listing of faculty and staff that includes their relevant credentials
 - d. Published curriculum guide or document that gives full descriptions of all programs and activities, including graduation requirements
 - e. Guidelines and policies under which the school operates, such as handbooks
 - f. Enrollment contract that specifies tuition, fees, and all financial responsibilities
 - g. Discipline policy
 - h. Anti-bullying policy
 - i. Policies and procedures for addressing complaints by employees, parents, students, alumni
 - j. Religious affiliation of the school and family obligation, if applicable
- STANDARD MET**
28. The school has policies and procedures that govern the retention, maintenance, and use of personnel, financial, corporate, legal, health and safety, and student records, including print and digital records. All records are protected against catastrophic loss and are available only to authorized personnel.
STANDARD MET WITH COMMENT – While RPS has procedures for record retention, school policy must be written in greater detail.
29. The school has clearly defined policies and procedures that promote a climate of emotional and physical safety among students and between students and the faculty, administration, and staff. Discipline practices shall be humane and mindful of the inherent dignity in every student. Corporal punishment is not an acceptable practice.
STANDARD MET
30. The educational and extracurricular programs stem from the school's beliefs about teaching and learning, are consistent with the mission/philosophy of the school, and are reviewed regularly.
STANDARD MET

IV. PROGRAM

31. Congruent with the school's mission/philosophy, the school's programs demonstrate consideration for intellectual, social, physical, aesthetic, and ethical education of students. The

program encourages freedom of inquiry, respects diversity of viewpoints, and promotes critical thinking.

STANDARD MET

32. The school's published curriculum is informed by its mission/philosophy.

STANDARD MET

33. Consistent with its mission/philosophy, the school's program has sufficient range for the learning styles, developmental needs, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of the students enrolled in the school.

STANDARD MET

34. The school has a clear process for evaluating individual student progress and reporting to parents or guardians on a periodic basis.

STANDARD MET

35. The school provides adequate resources, (e.g. instructional materials, library, technology, and field trips) that support and enrich the academic program.

STANDARD MET

36. The school demonstrates responsible and ongoing understanding of current educational research and best practices consistent with its mission.

STANDARD MET

37. The school has in place a procedure for follow-up on graduate success, and utilizes resulting data to assess its goals and programs.

STANDARD MET

38. The school provides evidence of a thoughtful process, respectful of its mission, for the collection and use in school decision-making of data (internal and external) about student learning, for both current and past students.

STANDARD MET

39. The school's online education and/or distance education are congruent with its mission/philosophy. (Respond if your school utilizes online/distance education.)

STANDARD MET

V. TECHNOLOGY

40. The school has a technology program and plan that addresses communication, administration, and instruction.

STANDARD MET

41. The school maintains a website that provides useful information for all constituencies.

STANDARD MET

42. The school integrates technology skills and applications into the instructional program where appropriate.

STANDARD MET

VI. COUNSELING/HEALTH

43. The school provides guidance, appropriate placement counseling, advisory, and counseling services that are consistent with the school's mission/philosophy and educational program. The school has the responsibility to provide these services directly and/or by referral.
STANDARD MET
44. The school provides appropriate health services for students and employees that are administered and carried out by personnel who have appropriate training and experience.
STANDARD MET
45. The school meets all state requirements regarding the health services that it offers.
STANDARD MET
46. The school follows relevant state standards for maintaining health information on students and appropriate confidentiality guidelines when sharing information with school staff.
STANDARD MET
47. If food services are provided by the school, facilities and staff for food services meet applicable health and safety standards.
STANDARD MET

VII. SCHOOL FINANCE

48. The school has sufficient resources to maintain the program of the school and meet the needs of the students, faculty, administration, and staff.
STANDARD MET
49. The school has appropriate policies and procedures for managing the financial resources of the school including the following:
- a. An accounting system that allows for timely preparation of an income statement and a balance sheet, covering all school revenues, expenses, and funds
 - b. A budget-making process
 - c. A financial plan including historical and prospective data showing revenues, expenses, and fund balances
 - d. A professional annual audit, including management letter.
- STANDARD MET**
50. The financial responsibilities of the parents/guardians are stated and published.
STANDARD MET
51. The school helps support the needs of students receiving financial aid with regard to activities both on and off-campus.
STANDARD MET
52. The Board ensures that the school has adequate provision for risk assessment, mitigation, and management, including the transfer of liability, property and casualty risk through appropriate insurance.
STANDARD MET

53. There are controls, including appropriate segregation of duties, for managing the funds of each organization operating under the umbrella of the school.
STANDARD MET
54. The school has a development/advancement program congruent with its mission/philosophy and that can be reasonably anticipated to meet the current and future needs of the school.
STANDARD MET

VIII. PERSONNEL

55. The administration is organized in a manner enabling it to carry out the mission/philosophy of the school.
STANDARD MET
56. Faculty, administration, and staff members are sufficient in number to accomplish the work for which they are responsible.
STANDARD MET
57. The Head of School determines that all the members of the faculty, administration, and staff are qualified for their positions and responsibilities, and are committed to the mission/philosophy of the school.
STANDARD MET
58. The Head, either directly or through designees, employs and assigns all faculty, administration, and staff.
STANDARD MET
59. The school conducts comprehensive background checks for all employees before the first day of employment.
STANDARD MET
60. Faculty, administrators, and staff annually receive written information regarding their responsibilities, compensation, benefits, and terms of employment, all of which are administered fairly.
STANDARD MET
61. The school provides ongoing opportunities for professional growth.
STANDARD MET
62. The school has a clearly defined and well-administered program of evaluation for faculty, administration, and staff.
STANDARD MET

IX. SCHOOL PLANT/SAFETY/EQUIPMENT/SERVICES

63. The school's facilities and equipment are adequate to support its program.
STANDARD MET

64. The school maintains its facilities and equipment so as to meet applicable health, fire, safety, security, and sanitary standards, and have current documentation on file confirming the safety standards.

STANDARD MET

65. Preventative and emergency health, safety, and security procedures are clear and well documented, and include a crisis management plan for both on and off-campus activities.

STANDARD MET

66. The physical facilities and equipment are adequately maintained, and a plan is in place for their long-term protection and renewal.

STANDARD MET

X. RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS/HOMESTAY STUDENTS (if applicable)

67. The residential program is so conceived and staffed to fulfill that aspect of the school's mission, particularly with respect to the portion of the day outside regular classroom hours, including evening, weekend, and vacation activities.

STANDARD UNDER REVIEW

68. The residential program is a unified part of the total life of the school.

STANDARD UNDER REVIEW

69. The school provides for the needs of international students including an intentional curriculum, appropriate facilities, engaging activities, and adequate supervision of living arrangements to meet the needs of the students.

STANDARD UNDER REVIEW

XI. SCHOOLS AFFILIATED WITH RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS/FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS

70. There shall be a provision in the school's Bylaws for a Board of Trustees that shall be elected or appointed according to the guidelines established by the governing body of the affiliated religious organization/faith-based institution. An independent religiously affiliated/faith-based school will provide in the Bylaws a clear statement about its religious relationship and identity.

NOT APPLICABLE, THE SCHOOL IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION

71. A clearly stated policy, outlining the relationship of the school to its sponsoring organization and the responsibilities of each, will be included in the school's Bylaws and/or policy handbook.

NOT APPLICABLE, THE SCHOOL IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY SPONSORING ORGANIZATION

72. The school has a clearly articulated statement of its religious goals, and these are reflected in school practices and policies, and communicated to all constituents.

NOT APPLICABLE, THE SCHOOL IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION