

# NWAIS

## Northwest Association *of* Independent Schools

*Villa Academy*  
*December 7-10, 2014*

NWAIS Accreditation Visiting Team Report  
FINAL DRAFT

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## School Profile

**Name of School:** Villa Academy

**City:** Seattle

**State:** WA

**Grade Range:** Preschool to 8th grade

**Division Structure (if applicable):** Preschool, Lower (K-5) and Middle (6-8)

**Founding Date:** 1977

**Size of Board:** 26

**Current Board Chair:** Randy Bannecker

**Date of Appointment:** 2013

**Length of Term:** 1 year (extended for an additional term which expires July 2015)

**Current Head:** John Milroy

**Date of Appointment:** July 2011

**Brief Description of Campus, Facilities, and Surrounding Community:**

Villa Academy sits on over 30 acres of green space, including Lake Washington waterfront. The school purchased its historically significant 1924 building in 2007. It houses all of the academic programs with surplus capacity. The school draws primarily from the local Laurelhurst, Windermere, Hawthorne Hills neighborhoods, which are all less demographically diverse than the greater Seattle area.

**Total Number of Employees**

**(Full-time):** 60

**(Part-time):** 19

**In completing the following items, count each employee only once.**

- **Administrators:** (full-time): 8 (part-time): 0
- **Teaching Staff:** (full-time): 31 (part-time): 6
- **Instructional Assistants:** (full-time): 1 (part-time): 7
- **Non-teaching staff:** (full-time): 20 (part-time): 6

**Total Opening Enrollment:** 400 (Academic Year: 2014-2015)

**Enrollment at last accreditation visit:** 403 in 2006-2007 school year

**What is total budget:** \$7,648,884

**What percentage of total revenue comes from: (percentages should add up to 100%)**

- **Tuition:** 86.5%
- **Annual Gifts:** 5.8%
- **Investment/Interest Income:** .1%
- **Other:** 7.6 %

**Provide Tuition Range:** \$5,955 (3-yr-olds) - \$18,345 (Academic Year: 2014-2015)

**Tuition Reductions (include financial aid, tuition remission)**

- **Amount of Tuition Reductions awarded:** \$704,493 (Academic Year: 14-15)
- **Tuition Reductions as a percentage of gross Tuition Revenue:** 10.6%
- **Percentage of students receiving tuition reductions:** 16%

## NWAIS Accreditation Visiting Team Members

Name	School
Veronique Dussud (Chair)	French Immersion School of Washington
Jeff Stroebel (Vice-Chair)	Open Window School
Katie Salgado	St. Mary's School, Medford, OR
Calley Hart	Open Window School
Julie Grasseschi	Forest Ridge School of the Sacred Heart
Sofia Gorder	Rowland Hall
Susan Lansverk	University Prep
Arionda Feeney	Westside School
Laurel Loveland	Teton Valley Community School
Josh Arsenault	Epiphany School
Tom Strouse	Billings Middle School

## Table of Contents

Section	Page Number(s)
School Mission Statement/Philosophy	6
Introduction	7
Major Commendations and Recommendations	9
NWAIS Self Study Process	10
School Mission	11
School Program Overview	11
School Program PreSchool	13
School Program Lower School	15
School Program Middle School	16
School Program Music	17
School Program Arts	18
School Program Religion	19
School Program World Languages	20
School Program Physical Education	22
School Program Co-Curricular Programs	23
School Program Technology	24
School Program Library	25
School Culture	26
Commitment to Diversity	27
Institutional Leadership	28
Finance	30
Administration	31
Institutional Advancement	32
Enrollment Management	34
Human Resources	35
School Plant	36
Health and Safety	38

## **School Mission Statement and Vision**

Villa Academy's Mission Statement is: *"Villa Academy is a Catholic independent school dedicated to excellence in the education of the whole child and guided by the Cabrinian tradition of educating compassionate hearts and confident minds."*

### **Vision**

Villa Academy's vision is to engage compassionate and confident learners for lives of infinite possibility.

### **Core Values**

#### **Cabrinian Tradition**

The Cabrinian tradition of teaching is dedicated to educational excellence and the development of the whole child to fullness of person. Our graduates are well on their way to emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical, and social maturity as they initiate their high school experience and seek new opportunities to learn, grow, and give to others.

#### **Learning Community**

Our graduates possess a mastery of academic and social skills through a deep, inclusive, and rich learning community that features excellence in instruction, curriculum, and facilities, and is consistent with a child centered educational approach. At the time of graduation, students have developed the essential academic and social skills to succeed in high school and later in life.

#### **Cultural Competence**

Our graduates have a cultural competence achieved through knowledge of the needs and attributes of many communities and are beginning to prepare for the day when they will take a place in these communities as competent, concerned, and responsible members.

#### **Compassion and Service**

Our graduates are on the threshold of moving beyond self-interest in their relationships to treating others with kindness and compassion as required by our faith.

#### **Pursuit of Excellence and Expectation of Integrity**

Our graduates have a desire and ability to pursue excellence in their lives. They are persons of integrity who conduct themselves accordingly in their personal relationships and their work in the community.

## Introduction

The Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus built the Villa Academy property as an orphanage in 1924. They continued to run the orphanage until 1950 when they had to close the orphanage, but the Sisters maintained a school, Sacred Heart Villa.

In 1977, an independent, self-perpetuating Board was created to govern the school, which became Villa Academy when the Sisters left their convent and agreed to lease their property to Villa.

In December 2007, the Villa Academy Board of Trustees raised enough capital to be able to buy the school buildings and surrounding property from the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. In securing this property, a clause was included requiring the purchase of additional frontage property by 2013, which the Board did last year.

In January 2007, Villa hosted a visiting team for NWAIS reaccreditation. Two major recommendations were made: developing a strategic plan and refining its diversity statement.

In July 2011, the Board of Trustees appointed John Milroy Head of School, and he hired new staff to add or replace those already at Villa. Under his and the Board's leadership, a new emphasis in branding the school and increasing enrollment became major goals.

As the Visiting Team arrived to Villa Academy on Sunday evening, we were greeted by a beautiful and impressive building all decked out in Christmas lights highlighting its interesting architecture. What an incredible campus in a park setting to have in Seattle.

As we entered in the building and were welcomed warmly by Board members, the Head of School, staff and faculty, and parents, we felt we were in a school that has strong traditions and also a stated openness to teach Twenty-First Century skills to its students.

All constituents at Villa are proud of their school; many refer to "our school" and this pride shows when they enthusiastically explain who they are and their educational beliefs.

The heritage of Mother Cabrini's vision is everywhere, old pictures are displayed in cases in hallways and in the parlor, and students made several references to the history of the school and its deeply rooted traditions. The education of the whole child in the Cabrinian sense - educating compassionate hearts and confident minds - is evident and embraced by the whole staff and parents.

The Visiting Team, having last minutes changes to its roster, was nevertheless ready to visit and learn about Villa on Monday morning. We arrived in a beautiful setting with the sun rising over the lake, displaying Villa's beautiful grounds. The team had a separate, well-organized room with plenty of coffee and goodies to fuel us. All quickly connected seamlessly to the school wireless network and eagerly started meeting with faculty and staff.

Of note, several of the team members had the pleasure and honor to attend Mass at St Bridget with the whole K-8 student body and the whole staff. The team noted the student-led and participatory part of the Mass, which was very age-appropriate, the school hand-bell Choir led all the music in the liturgy. A student in 3rd grade shared with a Visiting Team member how much he is looking forward to participating each year in the Mass.

The Visiting Team was welcomed everywhere and had very genuine conversations with the Head of School, staff, faculty, Board members and students. We enjoyed visiting classrooms where students were engaged and happy to learn. We regret not meeting with more parents, but those who were asked to meet with the team were very enthusiastic about the school and how their

children benefit from being enrolled at Villa. We appreciate the parents volunteering to help the Visiting Team if needed and their obvious support of the school.

The team members appreciated the sense of warmth and welcoming community at Villa displayed everywhere and especially in the students' enthusiasm, kindness, eagerness to learn, and pride in "their" school.

The Visiting Team was very impressed with the overall quality of the program Villa Academy offers its students. Great evidence of the success of the school's mission to educate students in the Cabrinian tradition of "compassionate hearts and confident minds" can be found throughout our report. The quality of the program stems primarily from two factors: a community abundantly filled with members totally invested in the mission of the school and a unique facility that both serves as a living reminder of the school's mission and heritage and offers enormous learning opportunities for its students.

Villa's ninety-year-old building is both its greatest asset and liability. Its dramatic presence and historical relevance to the school's mission is irreplaceable. When asked "what is one thing you hope never changes about Villa," an eighth grader quickly responded, "the building." A facility approaching its second century entails challenges that can easily be lost in its charm. In purchasing the building, Villa inherited a range of deferred maintenance that is challenging to quantify, let alone finance. Seemingly modest renovations incur enormous expense in order to meet modern code and standards. This is the huge "hidden cost" that is part of Villa's financial reality.

Villa is unique in the community of Seattle area independent schools. It is independent from the archdiocese but closely and vibrantly tied to its Catholic identity. The degree to which its families see Catholicism as central to Villa's appeal varies, which is to be expected. Conversations with parents and admissions staff indicate that families come to Villa primarily as an independent school that is close to home. If they did not choose Villa, many would attend other, more highly priced, independent schools. Villa provides incredible value to its families, an education on par with the best area independent schools at a price significantly below all other similar offerings. The school has the potential to transition beyond being primarily a neighborhood school. If successful, this will bring additional enrollment revenue but accompanying challenges as the school community becomes more diverse in a variety of ways. Attracting and admitting a more diverse student body will also create a need for careful thought as to how to maintain an inclusive, mission-focused culture. Attention to diversity was a major recommendation of the last accreditation process, and the current Visiting Team renews the need for the school to devote a comprehensive focus upon diversity moving forward.

The essential question that the Visiting Team must pose is whether Villa can continue to be such a bargain and remain sustainable for the future. The school is not currently charging the full cost of its program, with the difference being deferred maintenance, low faculty compensation, and staffing needs in many areas.

## Major Commendations and Recommendations

### The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. A mission that strongly and clearly permeates all aspects of the program and practices of the school.
2. An excellent overall program that is mission-focused on educating the whole child in the Cabrinian tradition.
3. Recruiting, hiring, and supporting a well-qualified and mission-aligned Head of School that has provided the school with strong and focused leadership.
4. Institutional leadership that is focused on the school's major priorities. The school is positioned for the Board to transition appropriately from an operational to strategic role.
5. A dedicated, passionate, and collaborative faculty with a united commitment to the mission.
6. Students who are the best indication of the success of the school's mission. They are engaged, kind, welcoming, supportive of each other, and appreciative of their teachers and their school.
7. A school community that possesses a strong sense of place and tradition that manifestly honors the school's Cabrinian historical legacy.

### The Visiting Team Recommends:

1. (Finance, Indicators #1, 2 and 7) A Board of Trustees holds the school in trust, not only for current students and families but for those of the future. Building upon the strong administrative/board partnership, communication, and transparency that has developed over the past four years, *the school leadership must facilitate a candid, community-wide conversation regarding the unique realities of the school's finances.* Villa is providing a tremendous value to current families but is not completely funding its existing program. *The Visiting Team recommends that the school's tuition model should be reviewed in light of the long term sustainability of maintaining the personnel and facilities that contribute to the current success of the school's mission.*
2. (Commitment to Diversity, Indicator #2) The school's seven-year response to the 2007 accreditation report in reference to diversity falls significantly short of what is expected in regard to a major recommendation. In the year prior to our visit, the school has begun to take positive steps, including the formation of a standing Board level Diversity Committee. The diversity work to date does not demonstrate a degree of urgency or a systemic approach that reflects an understanding of how diversity affects all areas of school life. *The Visiting Team recommends Villa prioritize committing time and financial resources to develop a diversity plan that articulates the value of increased diversity at the school, defines what is meant by diversity for the school, and outlines a strategy for developing an inclusive and diverse community. Included in the plan would be measures for success so the school can evaluate its progress towards its goals.*
3. (School Plant, Indicator #3) Deferred maintenance in all areas of the facility is the most unique and challenging factor to the long-term sustainability of Villa Academy. *The Visiting Team recommends that the school engage in facilities and financial planning to detail specific deferred needs and costs and then map out a strategy to meet those needs and decrease reliance on capital campaigns.*

## NWAIS Self Study Process

The school has conducted a self-study that provides for reflection and for broad participation of the school community in a way that illustrates the school's commitment to continual school improvement.

### **Observations:**

Villa Academy engaged in a broad-based Self Study that examined every aspect of the school. The Self Study coordinators allowed faculty and staff to work effectively, taking primary responsibility for their areas of expertise while providing for peer review throughout the process. Faculty reported widespread support for the process and appreciation that the coordinators organized the process so that the considerable time it required did not seem excessive or totally dominate the available collaboration and professional development time throughout the year. The Self Study provided the Visiting Team with an easy to follow GoogleDocs report with links to all required documents. After consultation with the Head of School, the Visiting Team elected to report on many of the academic disciplines holistically by division.

The Visiting Team notes that neither of the two major recommendations of the 2007 accreditation process have played out as originally intended. The school committed to the development of five-year strategic and financial plans. The strategic plan, approved in 2009, was very lengthy and both strategic and operational in nature. It no longer serves as a strategic road map, and school leadership has wisely focused on two key objectives the past two years: preparation for a capital campaign and increasing enrollment. Similarly, the financial plan is not updated or used to clearly guide financial decisions. The second major recommendation, to refine the school's diversity statement and further delineate the meaning of diversity and its impact on the school community has not received the sustained attention that normally would be associated with a major recommendation (see Standard 5 - Commitment to Diversity).

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. A broad-based and thoughtful Self Study.
2. Use of Google Docs to create a Self Study that provided all relevant documents in an easily accessible and environmentally responsible format.

### **Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Indicator 3) Develop and document a process to ensure that the recommendations of the visiting team receive thorough consideration and that the major recommendations command the strategic focus of the school.

### **Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. A broad-based, inclusive Self Study process often stimulates conversations within various

parts of the school that do not normally have an opportunity to meet. The school should seek to develop structures that continue the cross-divisional interactions that were so valuable in the Self Study process.

2. The Self Study served the Visiting Team well; the only area of suggestion for the future is to ensure greater consistency in the degree of description in the Program section reports pertaining to specific academic disciplines.

## School Mission

The school's mission is understood and supported by all constituencies.

### **Observations:**

Villa Academy's Mission, along with its Vision and Core Values, is displayed prevalently everywhere in the school. It guides educational decisions made by all from the Board, to the Head of School, to the staff and faculty. All constituents are proud to be at Villa and they all emphasized how they value the whole child approach to education at Villa.

The school's current mission was adopted in 2004 and has not been changed or modified since. Throughout the self-study, it was emphasized to all constituencies that the mission was the basis for all self-reflection upon the school.

The mission states that Villa is a Catholic independent school, and one aspect of its dual identity doesn't seem to overpower the other. The Cabrinian tradition is rooted in the educational approach to teaching and was observed in many daily activities through religious studies and community service activities. Being an independent school is what Villa aims to achieve and what parents are looking for; however, the tuition structure is much lower tuition than most independent schools in the area

A specific emphasis has been put in the educational experience of Villa Students to prepare them for 21st Century Skills while maintaining the excellence called for in the mission.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. Well-articulating its mission and putting it in the center of all decisions.
2. The staff and faculty "living" Villa's mission.

### **Recommendations:**

No Recommendation

### **Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. While the parents understand Villa's core values and vision, they do not know the school

mission. Explore ways to make the mission even more visible to parents.

## School Program Overview

The school provides a mission-congruent educational program designed and implemented to promote the development of its students and in keeping with NWAIS core values. The program benefits from ongoing assessment and research, is supported by necessary resources and services, and provides for the assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.

### **Observations:**

While visiting Villa Academy, the team was acutely aware of the school's commitment to its mission of educating the whole child while guided by the Cabrinian tradition of educating "confident minds and compassionate hearts." Throughout the building, there were examples of student learning and service to others. Examples of both include complex art displays, lively discussions about relevant learning, teacher and student facilitated conversations, writing and mathematical thinking, all documented in the hallways and several outreach collections.

Aligned with the indicators in the Self Study document, there is a deliberate focus on free and open inquiry in all classrooms. In the Lower School, this is exemplified through the use of projects, writer's workshop, student choice and use of rubrics for assessment. Similarly, in the Middle School, students are encouraged to challenge their thinking and engage in learning that deepens their understanding of the world. Additionally, there is a shared consensus regarding instructional pedagogy and an understanding of the ways in which students learn best. Generally, teachers structure classes to provide instruction and supported practice independent work time. The methodology is developmentally appropriate and supports growth throughout a student's experience at Villa Academy.

Regarding the use of assessments to drive instructional decision making, Villa students engage in two different external assessments. Students in fourth grade take the Washington State Measure of Student Progress (MSP) with students in grades 2-3 and 5-8 take the CTP4. The Visiting Team inquired as to the reasoning behind two different assessments. It was explained that because of the geographic location of Villa Academy and its proximity to distinguished public schools, having similar data as those schools would serve as a noteworthy accountability measure.

As a school community, teachers have spent a great deal of time creating curriculum maps using Atlas Rubicon. This tool was first introduced about five years ago, and teachers seem to use it in a variety of ways. In conversations with new teachers, it is evident that the mapping provides a basis of support from which teachers can extend and grow. Of particular note, the maps are created in a way that promotes and supports the collaborative nature of the staff. Teachers are able to work collectively on one map to document the projects specific to the grade level, not just the individual classroom. The Visiting Team was impressed by the commitment to update curriculum maps by both the teachers and the administrative team.

Services to support and nurture students are appropriately scaffolded across all grade levels. Learning specialists in both divisions provide both small group and one-to-one academic support for students. Student learning needs and accommodations are clearly communicated to and

supported by divisional faculty. While there are structures for sharing student learning information when a student moves from lower to middle school, it was unclear to the Visiting Team whether or not these systems are adequate and consistent.

The school is in a continuous process of deepening and developing a full scope and sequence for the Outdoor Program. To that end, they have made wide commitments to the development of a greenhouse, and an Organic Garden Education Center. They are continuing to develop ways in which their classes and advisories use the large natural space at the school. From 3rd through 5th graders building forts, to 4th graders mapping in the tradition of Lewis and Clark, and students in the middle school finding a 'sit spot' to sit solo for gradually increasing amounts of time in the woods or practice camp-craft prior to a wilderness experience, the outdoor education element of the school is in a state of tremendous growth and added commitment from the school. To further the scope of this developing program, the students in the upper grades take three day wilderness trips to Nature-Bridge in Olympic National Park, North Cascades Institute in North Cascades National Park, Frenchman's Coulee on the Columbia Gorge, and a high and low ropes course at Lutherwood Camp and Retreat Center near Bellingham, Washington. These trips enrich the experience and learning done in the outdoor area at Villa, and develop tighter mentoring relationships between students and teachers that extend and are readily evident in the classroom. Currently, the school is developing a relationship with Homewaters Program out of the Islandwood Education Center, and considering working with the YMCA B.O.L.D and G.O.L.D. program to add a weeklong seventh grade backpacking experience to the program as well.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. A committed faculty that is dedicated to supporting each student and the overall school mission.
2. Strong program congruence to Villa Academy's mission.
3. Initiating a unique and integrated outdoor program.
4. An excellent articulation and purposeful integration of 21st Century Skills across all subject areas in both divisions of the school.

### **Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Indicator # 7) Increase vertical meetings across divisions with a particular eye toward student progression from Preschool to Lower School to Middle School in order to further align practices, documentation and curriculum.

### **Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Continue conversations with faculty members to help them integrate outdoor education opportunities.
2. Examine structures and schedules that would allow for increased opportunities for conversation among the Learning Support Team.

## School Program - Preschool

The school provides a mission-congruent educational program designed and implemented to promote the development of its students and in keeping with NWAIS core values. The program benefits from ongoing assessment and research, is supported by necessary resources and services, and provides for the assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.

### **Observations:**

The preschool classrooms are very clearly living the mission of educating the whole child as well as fostering compassionate hearts and confident minds. The Visiting Team witnessed empowered and engaged students exploring the world around them with care for selves, others, and school. The outdoor space provides a world of exploration that lends itself to a rich curriculum of gardening, fairy house building, digging, and imagining. Teachers value physicality and take every chance to get the kids moving, be it in music class or to play a competitive game of soccer. The program clearly values each individual child by providing a safe, warm, and caring environment where students are made to feel special. Teachers execute developmentally appropriate differentiation and take advantage of teachable moments within student conversation. Deep knowledge and respect of students and their families was apparent. Curriculum is driven by an aim to build social and emotional intelligence. In one teacher's words, Villa preschool "hugs the mission" of the school.

Over the past decade, a successful preschool model has organically evolved as a valued part of Villa Academy. There is a conscious push to further establish and develop the preschool to strengthen the comprehensive PS-8 identity of the school. The team observed a need and articulated desire for more focused leadership, increased enrollment, a clearer vision and value system from which teachers can work, a renovation of space both inside and out, a stronger look at curriculum and assessment, and the development of an after school enrichment program that serves working parents.

Preschool teachers spent the summer developing a mission and vision for curriculum and assessment that has unified them as a team. They are now implementing what they see as a more intentional curriculum. Further developing this curriculum and vision together may be imperative as they move toward developing and branding the preschool as the beginning of the entire Villa experience, culminating in eighth grade. The team distinguished a discrepancy between the written preschool curriculum document and what was seen in the classroom. While the program is child-centered and allows for play, the curriculum and methodology is not viewed as wholly child-initiated. The instruction and curriculum observed by the Visiting Team was predominantly teacher directed and modeled.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. A professional, dedicated and, caring preschool faculty
2. Large, safe, and well used classroom spaces both indoors and out
3. Strong adherence to DEL licensing standards
4. A unique and comprehensive outdoor student garden

**Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school :

1. (Indicator #14) Assess whether the Preschool program would benefit from the addition of a division head that would act as the Lower School and Middle School directors currently function.
2. (Indicator #14) Develop a strategic plan specific to the preschool program to have intentional goals for the expansion of an early learning center with professional input from internal and external early childhood educators.
3. (Indicator #14) Align the preschool curriculum guide, marketing pieces, and what is currently happening in the classroom.

**Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Consider all-day programming to meet the needs of working families. For 3-year-old students who stay all day, the current practice of moving between three different programs and teachers within one day may be challenging (P3, enrichment and extended day)
2. Consider more access to learning specialist for 3-5 year old students to identify learning needs that can often present themselves as behavioral issues. Faculty could also benefit from support in this area.
3. If potential structural upgrade happens for an early learning center, consider hiring an early childhood classroom and play area design specialist. Villa's facility has so much space and potential for creative classroom design and incorporating the classroom environment as a learning tool. It is possible to enhance children's learning and educators' experience within the current space. This is an exciting time to think about possibility for the early learning center vision!

## School Program - Lower School

The school provides a mission-congruent educational program designed and implemented to promote the development of its students and in keeping with NWAIS core values. The program benefits from ongoing assessment and research, is supported by necessary resources and services, and provides for the assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.

**Observations:**

Lower School students at Villa Academy enjoy a content-rich program that supports various learners with a caring and compassionate approach. The academic program is balanced to align with the school's "whole-child" approach to education. The typical school day includes a dedicated hour for math and language arts as well as time for science and religion. Beginning in Kindergarten, students participate in a variety of specialist classes, including Visual Arts, Music, World Language and Physical Education.

The classrooms are designed to support a variety of learning styles. In conversations with the Lower School Director, there has been an intentional shift around the language used to discuss learning needs. Teachers are now asking the question “what do kids need to be their best self?” and designing the physical space as well as the academic expectations to answer this question. Examples of this practice include alternative seating choices in classrooms, flexible groupings, use of a third core teacher in order to provide more individualized attention and student choice in ways to demonstrate learning. When visiting classrooms, it was evident that teachers utilized the physical space to best meet the needs of students and program. Most direct instruction was delivered in the soft space area (floor/carpet) and students have independent workspace at tables or desks.

Teachers at each grade level expressed a sincere commitment to collaboration and continual improvement. Classrooms are geographically located in close proximity to each other, which allows for fluid movement of children during shared lessons. Teachers have common planning time during the week, and it was expressed that this time is often used to discuss current and upcoming projects. The team approach is evident in a variety of ways, including shared responsibility for planning, reflection on how to improve lessons, alignment of program and grade-level expectations. The Lower School Director’s motto is to “never leave your partner hanging” and this was very evident in the team’s conversations with faculty members.

**Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. A commitment to whole-child education, which clearly includes the academic, social, emotional and spiritual development of each student.
2. The development of a strong team at each grade level. This collaborative model provides support for new teachers and an opportunity to share ideas and expertise with one another.
3. A growth-mindset that sets a standard for excellence for both children and adults.

**Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Indicator # 5) Evaluate the way in which Lower School student progress is shared with parents and align the progress report to better match the skills, standards and attributes of a Villa learner.

**Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Continue conversations and reviews of K-5 writing programs in order to provide more alignment of the writing program.
2. Evaluate the cost-benefit of adding an additional teacher to focus on K-5 science education.

## School Program - Middle School

The school provides a mission-congruent educational program designed and implemented to promote the development of its students and in keeping with NWAIS core values. The program benefits from ongoing assessment and research, is supported by necessary resources and services, and provides for the assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.

### **Observations:**

In visiting the classrooms of the Villa Academy Middle School, the Visiting Team was struck by the powerful and effective learning climate created by the students and faculty. Three characteristics were of particular note to the team: the mentoring relationship among students and faculty, the deep inculcation of the mission of the school into every aspect of student life and instruction, and the seamless incorporation of technology into every classroom in the middle school.

In the Villa middle school, students and teachers have collaborated to develop a climate of academic safety and risk-taking. Students seem to trust the faculty to meet them where they are and to be accepting of their academic challenges as well as their strengths. One middle school student shared his struggles with ADHD and how one of his teachers worked with him to structure a long-term project in a manner that he could be successful. In five different math lessons covering 6-8th grade, students were observed to be motivated, willing to work toward the learning objective, and appropriately challenged. This was the case in the humanities and science classrooms as well. In the humanities rooms, teachers roamed the room checking in with individuals on work, and allowing for growth in each case. Assignments in language arts and social studies were intrinsically differentiated, allowing high-level learners to stretch, while offering a chance for remediation to those students that needed it. In science classes, students worked collaboratively and in jigsaw structure to develop expertise, and provide creative and effective instruction to their peers.

A second characteristic that was of immediate note to the Visiting Team was the incorporation of teaching to the whole child through the lens of the Cabrinian tradition of compassionate hearts and confident minds. Students maintained a collaborative rather than competitive environment in the classrooms, and demonstrated kindness in their minute interactions as well as their deeper engagement with the community. Students asked to lead the Hail Mary and shared prayer intentions that ranged from concerns about a nervous puppy to the health of a very sick family member. Students consistently articulated their comprehension of the school's religious underpinnings as being grounded in greater depth to the way one carries one's self in the world as opposed to a more doctrinal approach to the school's Catholic tradition.

Lastly, the school has incorporated the use of technology seamlessly into the academic program throughout the middle school. A laptop program for their middle school students is well administered and ELMO document cameras allow teachers to highlight various concepts across the curriculum. Students use iMovie to create short films that detail their understanding of math concepts in a fun and creative fashion. They work to research conflicts across the globe on their laptop or create Google Slides presentations. In each case, students viewed the technology in the classroom as an intrinsic tool for enhancing their work.

**Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. An effective and well-developed advisory program.
2. A strong, collaborative faculty culture.
3. An excellent scope within the math program.
4. A mentoring relationship between students and teachers that promotes academic risk-taking through a genuine sense of safety.
5. A well-managed and administered one to one laptop program.

**Recommendations:**

NONE

**Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Continue efforts to align the Middle School Humanities program with the Lower School program in terms of writing curriculum and determining the role of Common Core State Standards.
2. Clarify the long term direction of the overnight expeditionary learning element of the outdoor program to ensure faculty and administration are aligned. Currently, there seems to be two schools of thought: that the school will continue to contract with the YMCA B.O.L.D and G.O.L.D. program to help outfit and lead this program, or that the school should develop internal means of fully administering some of its overnight expeditionary learning opportunities.

## School Program - Music

The school provides a mission-congruent educational program designed and implemented to promote the development of its students and in keeping with NWAIS core values. The program benefits from ongoing assessment and research, is supported by necessary resources and services, and provides for the assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.

**Observations:**

The music program at Villa Academy is very much a part of the larger fabric of school and lives in the hearts of the students. The scope and sequence of general music builds logically K-8 and builds skill, artistic voice, and historical and cultural context to music of all types while also facilitating collaborative projects that reinforce academic subject areas. This diverse and consistent music experience also serves as a strong scaffolding for students who want to pursue music more seriously at Villa. Band, starting in fourth grade, and Liturgical Choir, beginning in fifth, offer opportunities for students to pursue a passion for music. Because of a strong foundation, students learn more complex music curriculum with ease. The band and choir support the community as well as the mission of the school through a variety of performances. The growing band program has created a need for a more appropriate teaching environment as

well as instrument storage. Notable is the close and caring relationships between the students and the music faculty. Because they have these teachers every year for five to nine years, they know, trust and care for one another. This is a contributor to the overall sense of community that is present at Villa.

**Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. A very strong scope and sequence that lends itself both to experiential learning and excellence.
2. A music department that perpetuates community through building long term and caring relationships cross divisionally, across subject areas, within each grade, and between teacher and student.
3. A music program that supports the mission well.

**Recommendations:**

No Recommendation

**Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Develop a unified mission and vision for the instrumental, choir and general music courses.
2. Consider the needs of the music program in future facilities planning.
3. Look at shifting space, time, and/or programming to create opportunities for students to take choir and band classes within the school day in an attempt to include everyone interested.

## **School Program - Art**

The school provides a mission-congruent educational program designed and implemented to promote the development of its students and in keeping with NWAIS core values. The program benefits from ongoing assessment and research, is supported by necessary resources and services, and provides for the assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.

**Observations:**

The art program seems to be addressing far more than was written in the Self Study document. Because the art department consists of only one faculty member fore nine different grade levels, the program ultimately lies in the values, aesthetics, and skills of that particular faculty person, guided by stat and national art standards. The Visiting Team observed that the students are committed to and excited about art as a part of their larger school experience and are skilled for their age. Students are smiling while they work and giving positive feedback to friends as they work alongside one another. Art is prevalent around the school, and kids are accustomed to seeing expressions of self, community, and peers around the building to represent identity and

community. Courses aim to explore skill development, personal voice, art appreciation, and theory through each project. The art room is an environment where students can express who they are freely without judgment or expectations, thus making mistakes and exploring solutions without feeling a sense of failure. The curriculum is a spiraling one that deepens as the child matures. Additionally, projects are created to support or culminate academic curriculum. Perhaps what was most exciting to the Visiting Team was to see how students who have a high level of interest or skill are commissioned to create specific works for the community through a guided process that mimics that of a real professional artist.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. Utilizing art as a visible medium that supports the mission of the school creates community, and addresses state and national standards.
2. The approach to art that provides fantastic exposure and additionally gives students a life-long appreciation for art.
3. Art classes that value process and risk-taking.
4. Offering differentiation in all courses.

### **Recommendations:**

No Recommendation

### **Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Consider the length and/or frequency of the art classes in the Middle School to ensure students have adequate time with the creative process in the more advanced courses.

## **School Program - Religion**

The school provides a mission-congruent educational program designed and implemented to promote the development of its students and in keeping with NWAIS core values. The program benefits from ongoing assessment and research, is supported by necessary resources and services, and provides for the assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.

### **Observations:**

The school clearly articulates its Catholic identity through its religion curriculum. The mission is posted across campus and the Cabrinian tradition is fully understood by all members of the wider Villa community. Classroom and hallway displays show the school's Catholic identity through student work and projects (e.g. Lives of the Saints, celebration of Advent, prayer tables, God's Creation). The school celebrates their monthly Masses at St. Bridget Parish located across the street and Father Stephen Okumu, pastor at St. Bridget's, visits the school and serves as a member of the school's Board of Trustees. The students clearly know Father Okumu and appreciate his connection with them. Daily prayer occurs in each classroom in a developmentally

appropriate manner. Each Monday, the whole school uses the public announcement system to participate in prayer lead by a student leader. Catholic identity is fully evident at Villa in both direct instructional practice and cultural expression.

Catholic Social Teaching is strongly and effectively integrated throughout the Villa program and its religion curriculum. Age-appropriate, intentional and consistent community service experiences, consisting of both direct service relationships and “donation projects,” are woven across all aspects of the school, and faculty and students have an understanding of the relationship between faith and service. The school population is less than 50% Catholic, and yet all students participate in prayer services, Mass and class without exclusion or overt differentiation by religious background. Teachers report teaching religion class in a manner that it is inclusive to students from all faith traditions.

Villa students in both lower and middle school can clearly articulate that religion class is a place where all ideas and faiths are welcome and supported; students see their religion instruction focused on how they are to be as people. The Visiting Team observed students feeling strongly connected to the Cabrinian and Villa traditions that celebrate and recognize their Catholic, Cabrinian identity and heritage.

Middle School students expressed an appreciation of the small chapel located in the former Convent. Students appreciated and valued the quiet reflective nature of this sacred space. Due to on-going, clarifying conversations with the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart regarding space use agreements, the small chapel is currently not available for use by groups of students. Gaining final confirmation of the school’s use of that chapel will be beneficial to the development of student and staff prayer life and serve as a resource to religion teachers.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. Articulating the religion curriculum through the dual lens of “traditional” Catholic curriculum and the seven components of Catholic Social Teaching.
2. Highly integrated community service activities that are specifically addressing the seven components of Catholic Social Teaching.
3. The strong alignment of the religion curriculum with Archdiocesan religion framework: Knowledge of the Faith, Liturgical Education, Moral Education, and Life of Prayer.
4. The commitment to and intentional tracking of Catechetical Certification for all teachers of religion as required by the Archdiocese of Seattle.

### **Recommendations:**

NONE

### **Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Begin the re-alignment as appropriate of the school religion curriculum to the recently published (Fall 2014) Archdiocesan Religion Standards.
2. Provide continued opportunity for cross-divisional religion teacher work in the area of teaching Catholic religion curriculum in a manner that is inclusive to students from all faith

backgrounds. With the continued growth of the school, the student body will likely become less Catholic. It will be important to continue to grow in purposefulness and intentionality around strategies for teaching religion in an inclusive manner so that all students and faith traditions can be honored and respected within an independent Catholic school.

## School Program - World Languages

The school provides a mission-congruent educational program designed and implemented to promote the development of its students and in keeping with NWAIS core values. The program benefits from ongoing assessment and research, is supported by necessary resources and services, and provides for the assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.

### **Observations:**

The world language program at Villa Academy offers K-8 classes in Spanish and French and has an after school opportunity to be introduced to Mandarin. The stated goal for the Spanish and French program is to establish the foundations necessary to be successful in a second year French or Spanish class at the High School level, and that goal is definitely met and surpassed by their well organized and coordinated curriculum. Villa has a well-established, cohesive K-8 French program. Students meet for 30 minutes twice a week for K-3, 45 minutes twice a week for 4-5, and for 45 minutes four times a week for 6-8. The Spanish program, which was more recently added to the Lower School curriculum, is still building and has yet to develop classes for grades 3 and 4 but otherwise mirrors the amount of time spent with the French program. The Spanish program is expected to be complete from K-8 and of equal rigor and depth to the existing French program within the next few years. Students make their choice of which language to pursue in first grade. Average class size seems to vary from 15-25.

The world language faculty consists of three full time teachers, supported by an assistant for helping with classroom management in the younger and larger Lower School classes. One teacher does both French K-3 and Spanish for grades K-2, which will be expanding to include grade 3 next year. The veteran French teacher covers grades 4-8, and a Spanish teacher for grades 5-8 was added to the faculty a year ago. All of the foreign language faculty have ample experience and training in their target languages and cultures.

Classrooms vary in size. The two used for Middle School and 4th and 5th grades are large and have space for the students to work at their tables as well as space to move around and do more active activities. The classroom for K-3 is quite small for the desks of over 20 students and still have room for them to move around and practice what they are learning kinesthetically. All classrooms are well supplied with technical equipment and are dedicated expressly to foreign-language instruction. They are well decorated with eye-catching and stimulating posters, maps, flags, supplemental textbooks, and enrichment books in the target language. All rooms have an ample supply of whiteboards and bulletin boards, as well as a Smart Board, laptop, and Elmo

document camera. Students in grades 6-8 use their own laptops, and technology has been very well integrated into the curriculum, greatly expanding the students' exposure to the target language in many different ways.

The world language department consists of a strong dedicated staff that is well prepared to instruct students in their languages. Teachers are uniformly energetic, enthusiastic, supportive, and caring in their interaction with students, who seem on the whole clearly engaged with their lessons and eager to improve their skills. The quality of instruction observed by the team was exemplary. Teachers employ a variety of methods, both traditional and innovative, in presenting course content. Use of the target language in the classrooms by the teachers as well as techniques used all seemed to be very appropriate for both the level and age group being taught and enough of the material is reviewed and recycled to accommodate students new to the program or language being taught. Faculty members relish the independence they enjoy in improving and planning their cohesive and well-coordinated program from K to 8th grade.

**Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. The strong commitment to educating students in and exposing them at an early age to one of two world languages and to developing not only proficiency in, but also an appreciation and awareness of different cultures and perspectives, and the challenges and rewards of intercultural awareness and communication.
2. A strong faculty, eager and prepared to share their love for and commitment to their target language and culture.
3. A supportive environment for students to take risks and try out their new language in many different ways.

**Recommendations:**

NONE

**Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Consider providing the Lower School K-3 Program a larger teaching space.
2. Plan ahead for and develop strategies to assist students entering the MS languages without any previous background in their chosen world language. The number of students in this situation is likely to increase with the projected increases in enrollment.
3. Intentionally educate parents regarding what progress and fluency to realistically expect from a world language program that meets for 30 minutes twice a week.

## School Program - Physical Education

The school provides a mission-congruent educational program designed and implemented to promote the development of its students and in keeping with NWAIS core values. The program benefits from ongoing assessment and research, is supported by necessary resources and services, and provides for the assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.

### **Observations:**

The physical education program at Villa Academy provides students with a safe, structured and highly active learning environment. The program curriculum is based on national and state standards in health and fitness and focuses on maximizing student participation and effort. Students in kindergarten through 8th grade gain exposure to a wide range of activities in a purposeful effort to find those activities that they most enjoy and thus will continue to pursue on the path to lifelong fitness.

Students are aware of daily routines and procedures, and in the older grades take an active role in leading warm-up activities. The resulting transitions are efficient and serve to maximize activity time for students of all ages. The campus and grounds of Villa Academy represent another strength of the program as physical education classes utilize the gym, grass play fields, blacktop play surface and outdoor wooded space for lessons. A multifaceted approach that includes skill development, team sports and individual fitness allows students the opportunity to develop an appreciation for leading an active lifestyle.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. A physical education program that provides a safe, challenging and highly active experience for students.
2. Providing instruction that is clear and concise with curricular goals for the physical education program that align with state and national standards for health and fitness.
3. Fully utilizing the beautiful facilities and grounds for the physical education program and to enrich the educational experience for students.

### **Recommendations:**

NONE

### **Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Look for ways to continue to increase the instructional time spent in physical education for all students.

## School Program - Co-Curricular

The school provides a mission-congruent educational program designed and implemented to promote the development of its students and in keeping with NWAIS core values. The program benefits from ongoing assessment and research, is supported by necessary resources and services, and provides for the assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.

### **Observations:**

The School provides robust programming, both before and after school. The Extended Day Program and summer program opportunities are thriving components of the school outside the school day. The Extended Day Program at Villa serves the majority of the students PreK through 8th grade and helps to contribute to the thriving community and culture at Villa. From arts to athletics, technology, and clubs, kids participate in many ways. The program aims to provide a broad exposure to learning, cater to the whole child, and develop relationships across divisions. It provides a nurturing environment for students to experience downtime and to develop mentoring relationships between kids of different age groups.

In addition to the above listed opportunities, Villa Academy provides students with an after school athletics program that includes CYO sponsored sports and activities. This program focuses on participation and building skills in a fun, safe and supportive environment.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. Furthering the mission and building community through programming beyond the scheduled day.

### **Recommendations:**

NONE

### **Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Would benefit from the Enrichment Programs Director working closely with the Institutional Advancement team to brand, define, and market the extended day program in a way that showcases the excellent programming, and supports the strong student work.

## School Program - Technology

The school provides a mission-congruent educational program designed and implemented to promote the development of its students and in keeping with NWAIS core values. The program benefits from ongoing assessment and research, is supported by necessary resources and services, and provides for the assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.

### **Observations:**

The school use of technology as a tool across the curriculum is evident in all classrooms. Presentations and content interaction through Smart boards is a norm for both students and teachers. The K-5 technology curriculum is well developed and progresses intentionally across each grade.

Lower school students use an Apple computer lab while middle school students purchase individual laptops for daily use in class. The school has historically offered families the option to purchase PC or Apple computers; however, in recent years, families have chosen only Apple laptops. The school has arranged for families to access discounted pricing through Apple and provides real time assistance with hardware or software challenges that occur. All middle school students must have a working laptop in class at all times, which is achieved through use of loaner laptops (mostly Chromebooks) that allow students full access to the Google drive documents used throughout the school. The technology support for hardware is well-run and allows the faculty and students to implement the overall educational program using student or faculty laptops as a seamless, consistent tool across all subject areas.

Middle School students and faculty do not receive software or technology integration support through the school's current teacher or specialist structure. Teachers reported that their efforts to more effectively integrate technology into their classrooms would be enhanced by an integration specialist or a teacher who is given duties to explore new software and applications. The school does not yet have an avenue for developing technology curriculum through coding, tinkering/maker-space, or robotics.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. The strong technology integration across all grade levels as evidenced through high use of Google drive and technology supported project-based learning.
2. The clear and effective manner in which middle school students manage their personal laptops and consistently arrive to class with a laptop that is in working order.
3. The strong and highly effective hardware support for both student and staff laptops. This support system is excellent in structure and operates with flexibility and positive problem solving.

### **Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Indicator # 13) Develop a plan that addresses the lack of a technology integration specialist in the middle school program.

**Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Explore the potential of integrating other technology experiences into the middle school program. Opportunities for robotics, programming (coding) or tinkering take many shapes in a variety of middle school programs across the greater Seattle area; as Villa seeks to promote its middle school program to a wider constituency of students, providing for robotics, coding or tinkering curriculum and/or experiences will be important.

### School Program - Library

The school provides a mission-congruent educational program designed and implemented to promote the development of its students and in keeping with NWAIS core values. The program benefits from ongoing assessment and research, is supported by necessary resources and services, and provides for the assessment of student progress consistent with the school's mission.

**Observations:**

The school's library program is seamlessly woven across all subject areas of the school. While direct instruction time within the library decreases for middle school students relative to lower school students, the curriculum for developing information literacy is intentional and well articulated. Teachers indicate that the skills students learn through their library instruction match well with the needs of the curricular areas. They also report that collaboration between teachers and the library program result in excellent outcomes for students, including the work across the eighth grade year with each student's culminating project.

The library has a large number of volumes across all reading levels with a slight nod to fiction over nonfiction titles. They subscribe to all of the standard, online databases for K-8 schools so that student research is well supported. In addition, middle school students are all using public library cards and taught to use the online research resources available through the Seattle and King County Public Libraries.

A love of reading and a connection to books permeates the Villa community, which is evidenced through the librarian's annual creation, publication and emphasis of lists of "nifty fifty" new titles in all reading levels (picture books, short chapter books, young-adult fiction) and postings outside staff and classroom office doors listing "current book being read" with short blurbs of why the book is great.

**Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for :

1. Their excellent library and information literacy curriculum that is purposefully woven into all curricular areas, K-8.
2. The wide and rich variety of volumes and online resources available to students for personal reading goals and to faculty and students for use in curricular areas.

**Recommendations:**

NONE

**Suggestions:**

NONE

## School Culture

The school has an intentional culture, which supports the school's mission and NWAIS' core value of free and open inquiry.

### **Observations:**

When you walk into Villa there is an immediate sense of community. The neighborhood feel and strongly rooted sense of tradition permeates a school that is welcoming, warm, charming, and purposeful. The mission is lived through the people at Villa. Guided by the idea of the compassionate heart and confident minds, the Visiting Team immediately experienced a culture of self-respect, care for others, and reverence for the school itself. The people in the school are positive, inclusive, engaged, and proud to be a part of something larger than themselves.

The community cohesiveness is almost infectious, inviting those who come to Villa to join in something positive and collaborative. Students talk about enjoying small classes, knowing each other and teachers well, and feeling welcome to express their ideas freely. There is a clear belief among students that each person is unique and special in different ways, and students are encouraged to capitalize on who they are. Students also express how lucky they are to have so many incredible opportunities to lead or become a part of the larger fabric of the school in ways that expose their personal strengths. One child said: "The teachers give us a lot of trust, but we return it." Another reports that Villa is "not so big that you are unknown by others." Faculty feel supported by parents and administration and report their experience at Villa to be rewarding. One teacher happily noted that parents "scramble" to volunteer when asked.

The Board of Trustees reports that the school has professionalized and "meets all the bases" of a whole child education. The arts are cross-divisional, create community across parent, teacher, and student lines, and represent the community at large, at many school events. Athletics, robust afterschool programming, clubs, summer camps, large community events, and most recently, the outdoor education programming cultivate many venues and opportunities for the sense of community to grow organically and to continue to evolve. Over the course of the visit, the Visiting Team heard that administrative transparency was a value school wide and that communication channels were always open.

Diversity has started to come into focus as part of the Villa culture. People of many perspectives from many geographical areas have only begun to hold a stronger voice at Villa Academy. Villa feels a need to further their understanding how to frame identity, diversity, inclusion, and community as the school becomes more diverse.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. Honoring the historical legacy and sense of place that is Villa.
2. Maintaining an intentional culture of service learning and compassion through the Cabrinian tradition.

**Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Indicator #1) Work to define and cultivate inclusivity as the school works to increase interaction with the community at large (commonly referred to as efforts to “thin the walls” of Villa)

**Suggestions:**

No Suggestions

## Commitment to Diversity

The school has created a program, culture, and inclusive community of students, families, trustees, faculty, and staff that reflects many perspectives and diverse backgrounds.

**Observations:**

In conversations with the Visiting Team, Villa parents, board members and faculty/staff indicate that there is a culture of acceptance and respect for diverse backgrounds and perspectives, guided by the Cabrinian tradition of compassion towards others. Villa has long considered itself a “neighborhood school” and exists within a residential neighborhood that is relatively homogeneous, even within the context of the city of Seattle. In looking at what diversity means to the Villa community, the Visiting Team observed a focus on racial/ethnic diversity and sexual orientation and a hesitation to acknowledge the socio-economic and geographic (in addition to other forms of) diversity that will come with “thinning the walls” and expanding beyond the local neighborhood.

In a parent survey for the Self Study, a theme of “inner circle vs. outer circle” emerged, and questions posed by the Visiting Team with parents, administrators, and faculty indicate that these two circles do indeed exist. It became clear in multiple conversations with faculty, staff and parents that not only is this circle evident to adults, but that students themselves are aware of the gulf between those families on the “inside” versus those on the “outside.”

A major recommendation from the 2007 accreditation team was to refine the existing Diversity Statement and examine the issue of diversity and its impact upon the school community. In reading Villa’s 2010 Response Report, the Board responded in several ways to this recommendation, but in the current Self Study there is no mention of diversity efforts prior to 2012. The Board created an Ad Hoc Diversity Committee in 2012, but the Board did not adopt the Commitment to Diversity and the establishment of a standing Diversity Committee until April 2014. The Visiting Team struggled to find a definitive list of who (faculty, staff, parents, board members) sits on the Diversity Committee.

Villa clearly has a desire to be inclusive and diverse, but the community doesn’t appear to have a strong understanding of what diversity means to Villa, or the challenges that a student, faculty or family of differing racial, socio-economic background or coming from beyond the immediate neighborhood of the school faces in a predominantly white, historically Catholic, upper middle class environment. Discussions with the Visiting Team indicated a concern that families who do

not reside in the neighborhood or are not able to volunteer during the school day feel less engaged and included in the Villa community.

While less than 50% of families/students consider themselves Catholic, in conversations with the Visiting Team, faculty and staff indicated that being Catholic (or having a strong background in another Christian faith tradition) was very important. All job applicants must apply through a process identical to applying for jobs in an Archdiocese school. This could be a perceived barrier to applying for applicants who do not consider themselves Catholic.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. A commitment to financial aid - approximately 14% of students receive tuition support, which adds to the socio-economic diversity.
2. Moving most Villa Parent Association meetings from Friday mornings to evening events, allowing more working parents to attend and feel included in the Villa community.
3. Establishing a relationship with Rainier Scholars.

### **Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Major Recommendation #2) The Visiting Team recommends Villa commit time and financial resources to develop a diversity plan that articulates the value of increased diversity at the school, defines what is meant by diversity for the school, and outlines a strategy for developing an inclusive and diverse community. Included in the plan would be measures for success so the school can evaluate its progress towards its goals.
2. (Indicator #3) Clearly designate direct responsibility for coordination of all diversity efforts to a specific faculty or staff position.
3. (Indicator #2) Reconsider both definition and goals to encompass religion, family makeup/structure, sexual orientation, geographic location, and socio-economic status. The current definition and goals surrounding diversity recognize only racial/ethnic diversity.
4. (Indicator #3) Consider changes to the hiring process to enhance recruitment of a more diverse faculty and staff, and prioritizing those aspects of diversity that match the mission of the school. This could include creation of a recruitment budget, potential HR personnel, and examining changes to the application process. (Also in Human Resources section)

### **Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Acknowledge that the greatest benefactor of a more diverse Villa community is the institution itself, which includes those individuals who are in the majority. The focus on the Cabrinian tradition of compassion for the less fortunate is noticeable throughout the school, and there is a strong emphasis on giving back. While this can be a focus of community service activities and efforts, it should not guide the school's conversation regarding diversity. Diversity is not about helping the minority, but expanding the views of the majority. An overt focus on helping "less fortunate individuals" can often erroneously reinforce stereotypes.

## Institutional Leadership

NWAIS schools are self-governing and self-supporting with an institutional leadership structure consisting of a governing board and a Head of School operating in a constructive partnership which provides for the effective oversight, planning, resource development, and day-to-day management adequate to sustain the school's mission and vision.

### **Observations:**

The Visiting Team met with the Head of School and with some Board members on separate occasions and the first thing to note is the reciprocal trust and working relationship between the Board and the Head of School.

The Villa Board has 26 trustees; most are current parents with 6 trustees who are not parents. The Board is responsible for the long-term sustainability of the school and demonstrated its responsibility when hiring the current Head of School.

The Board has an executive committee that meets once a month and the whole Board also meets monthly. There are several committees: finance, building and grounds, development, marketing and communications, and trusteeship. The Board chair serves only a one-year term, although the last two chairs have been willing to serve for one additional year. Through its committee structure, the Board has often assumed operational duties in the school due to the lack of administrative staffing. With the reorganization of the administrative team, the Board is clearly moving toward a more strategic role. This process may also encourage more sustained Board leadership as required the time commitment will lessen.

The yearly goals of the Board and Head's are aligned. It was noted that the Board made the wise decision not to follow the very extensive strategic plan developed several years ago in favor of a more strategic focus on two key priorities: enrollment and building a master plan to launch a capital campaign.

As the Board enters in a more long-term strategic role, it will need to consider how each member can fully support the financial responsibilities associated with a major capital campaign along with being the owner of a beautiful but 90-year-old building.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. Hiring a new Head of School that can take Villa to the next level and establishing a great working relationship with him.
2. Realizing that the strategic plan was not working for Villa as it was too complex and did not have a financial plan attached to it.

### **Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Indicator #5) Consider having at least a 2 years if not 3 years term for the Board Chair as Villa has major undertakings in the future.
2. (Indicator # 3) Recognize that the Board's role is to be strategic and to leave the hands-

on, day-to-day operations to the administration and staff. Continue to move toward delegating more operational authority to the administration and staff.

3. (Indicator # 4) Develop at the Board level a strategic and financial plan that addresses the main issues faced by Villa; with maintenance of an old building as a priority.

**Suggestions:**

1. (Indicator #11) The Trustees evaluate their own level of giving as ambassadors of the capital campaign and any fundraising efforts conducted by the school.

## Finance

The school practices sound financial management and its financial operations, resources, planning, and oversight are adequate to support the school's mission and vision and to sustain the school's long-term viability and stability.

**Observations:**

The school has strong financial leadership in the Business Manager and Finance Committee of the Board. The Business Manager is very knowledgeable about the financial operations of the school and manages a well functioning and efficient Business Office. She develops and closely monitors the annual budget on a regular basis to insure the school stays on plan. The Business Manager also oversees human resources.

The relationship between the Finance Committee and the Business Manager appears to be effective as they provide oversight of financial management, investments, and insurance. They have made recent improvements in the monthly financial reporting to the Board, and the Board feels well informed when making financial decisions.

The school incurred a significant amount of debt in 2007 to purchase the school property. Additional borrowing was added in FYE 2014 to purchase the 49<sup>th</sup> Ave. frontage property, resulting in total borrowing of \$7.8M as of 6/30/14. Their new borrowing relationship requires a \$2.0M liquidity covenant that they must maintain in order to be in compliance, and as a result, the Business Manager monitors cash balances carefully.

The school developed a long-range financial plan based on the strategic plan in 2012-13. The financial plan is not a dynamic tool that guides financial decisions as they move further from when it was originally created. It is not updated or recalibrated each year based on new information and plans nor is the plan compared to the actual results.

While the school has been consistently making efforts to fund PPRSM, with the purchase of the facility the school has inherited a large deferred maintenance backlog. The amount of deferred maintenance has not been completely identified or quantified.

There is a history of donor support for the school through the annual fund, auction, and prior capital campaigns, though not to the levels they have targeted. Villa raised \$4.8M for the purchase of the school property when their goal was \$7.0M. They are working to cultivate a stronger culture of philanthropy in order to fund the numerous needs of the school.

**Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. Negotiating and financing the purchase of the school property through bond financing and a strong capital campaign component.
2. Developing a long-range financial plan that incorporates the initiatives from the Strategic Plan.
3. Strong oversight of financial management by the Business Manager and the Finance Committee which has assisted the school in generating positive net income and funding of reserves.

**Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Major Recommendation #1,) A Board of Trustees holds the school in trust, not only for current students and families but for those of the future. Building upon the strong administrative/board partnership, communication, and transparency that has developed over the past four years, *the school leadership must facilitate a candid, community-wide conversation regarding the unique realities of the school's finances.* Villa is providing a tremendous value to current families but is not completely funding its existing program. *The Visiting Team recommends that the school's tuition model should be reviewed in light of the long term sustainability of maintaining the personnel and facilities that contribute to the current success of the school's mission.*
2. (Indicator #2) Use the long-range financial plan model more actively to assist in budgeting and financial management: compare the actual and budget to the plan each year, and revise the plan annually based on new information.
3. (Indicator #1) Prioritize the growth of the PPRSM balance in order to fund the deferred maintenance identified in the long range facility plan that is not able to be funded in a timely manner in a capital campaign. Develop a PPRSM policy for managing the reserve.
4. (Indicator #1) Continue to examine the long range plan assumption for tuition increases of 4.5%, given the increased need for PPRSM reserves as well as other needs identified in the updated financial plan.

**Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Developing a cash flow projection model that will assist the Business Manager in monitoring and projecting the cash balances and informing the Finance Committee about the school's ability to meet their liquidity requirements.

## Administration

The school has an effective administration that enables the school to implement the school program in accordance with its mission, to carry out school policy, and to comply with applicable laws and regulations.

### **Observations:**

Villa Academy is blessed with a very lean, yet highly effective administrative team. Much change in personnel and structure has occurred since the last accreditation report. A new Head of School has redefined the role in a manner appropriate to a school of Villa's size and maturity. He operates more as a school president or CEO, focused on key priorities and providing strategic leadership to all areas of the school. Faculty indicated that they appreciated the Head of School's ability to communicate the strategic direction of the school and a significant increase in administrative transparency. Two experienced division directors are empowered to serve as the "principals" of the Lower and Middle School and both appear to inspire great confidence and support from their respective faculties. They indicated that they feel supported by the Head of School and trusted to administer the day-to-day functions of their division. Admissions, development, and marketing functions have been combined under the Director of Institutional Development. A Business Manager and two part-time support staff lead the business office. Technology and Facilities directors round out the administrative team that reports directly to the Head of School.

The Self Study indicated the need for additional administrative and support positions for the school to truly meet its full potential. The Visiting Team agrees with this assessment. With limited resources, the school will need to prioritize its needs and may need to educate the community that additional administrative personnel are necessary, not only to expand the program, but sustain the excellence that is already in place. With so many needs, careful planning and prioritization will be required to sequence additions in the most effective manner.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. An experienced and highly effective administrative team that operates within a culture of trust and collaboration.
2. Reorganizing the administrative structure to focus on the essential priorities of the school.

### **Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Indicator #2) Plan for and prioritize possible additions to the administrative team to ensure that the school can effectively conduct the school's program in fulfillment of the mission.

### **Suggestions:**

1. Consider the reassignment of the Facilities Director to report to the Business Manager, promoting greater cohesion between facilities and financial planning as well as lessening the number of direct reports to the Head of School.

## Institutional Advancement

The school has an institutional advancement program that sufficiently supports the mission and program of the school.

### **Observations:**

The Institutional Advancement team model is relatively new to Villa, and as such the team members, with the exception of the admissions assistant, all have tenure of fewer than 3 years at Villa. It is obvious that the members of the advancement team have fully thrown themselves into learning about the mission, program and community culture as they also seek to communicate it effectively to prospective and current families. In conversations with the Board of Trustees, it was clear to the Visiting Team that a top directive to the Head of School upon being hired in 2011 was to assess, evaluate, and change the direction of both the development and admissions departments to form a more cohesive and professional advancement team. The advancement team has made great strides in re-branding Villa and, at the directive of the Board and Head of School, placed a focus on “thinning the walls” to make Villa more well known and expand the geographic base of its enrollment. In an effort to rebrand the school, the marketing material doesn’t always align with the actual program. (Example: Preschool being child initiated in marketing material, but not in the classroom).

Villa has long had the feeling of a neighborhood school, and parents frequently cited the strong sense of community as a key reason for why they choose to be enroll their children at Villa. Although families feel this strong commitment to the community, it has not fully translated to families understanding the need to make Villa a philanthropic priority. The advancement team will clearly need to continue to educate the community as they grow a culture of philanthropy at Villa. It will be a challenge for the advancement team to both broaden beyond being a neighborhood school while at the same time strengthening the sense of community and willingness to give. Fundraising efforts focus around VillaNow (Annual Fund) and the Auction, and both have been successful in the past.

Villa is embarking upon an ambitious Capital Campaign, and the IA team will depend upon support from all constituents of the school. The ultimate vision for Villa will require more than a single Capital Campaign.

Conversations between the Visiting Team and the Head of School and Advancement Team indicate that approximately 60 families are solicited with a targeted ask amount of over \$3,000 (Leadership Level) for VillaNow. Other families are encouraged to give at the level at which they are comfortable. Several conversations with parents indicated to the Visiting Team that by not being asked to give a specific amount (the gap between tuition and actual cost per pupil was cited) some families are not giving as much as they could.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. Instituting the Institutional Advancement model and within a short time creating a strong team. The challenge of having so many new team members and new positions can not be understated, and the Institutional Advancement Team is commended for doing so much work in such little time.

2. Stepping back from a Capital Campaign two years ago in recognition that the community was not in a place for it to be successful.
3. The support from the Board of Trustees and Head of School for the Advancement Team. Board members clearly understand the importance of the team and that the success of Villa as an institution depends upon the success of advancement efforts.
4. The success of fireside chats with Head of School and Advancement Director with new families. They are a great way to make them immediately feel like members of the community and to educate them from the very beginning about the importance of supporting Villa both monetarily and with other resources.
5. The increased professionalism and positioning of the Villa brand. It is obvious on many levels from the website to promotional materials.

**Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Indicator #1) Institute a review process that ensures that the marketing is accurately reflecting what is happening in the classroom and the before and after school programming.
2. (Indicator #4) Continue to make efforts to reach out to community (98105) to enhance the standing and recognition of Villa within the neighborhood, as well as establishing a place in the broader Seattle community.

**Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Recognize that, as Institutional Advancement team becomes more familiar with the school, the Board may need to transition to a broader, more strategic role. The Marketing and Communication Committee of the Board has provided much needed help and guidance to the Advancement Team.
2. Consider utilizing the four alumni who sit on the Board of Trustees to support developing a stronger alumni relations program.

## Enrollment Management

The school has defined what it means by a mission appropriate student and has an enrollment management program that sufficiently supports the mission and program of the school.

**Observations:**

Enrollment at Villa is a part of the Institutional Advancement Team, and the entire IA team works in concert with the Director of Admission and Enrollment to recruit and retain mission appropriate families. The warmth of the team and their obvious excitement for the program make for a welcoming introduction for prospective families.

In conversations with parents, the Visiting Team found that families looking at Villa often consider other independent schools, area public schools and occasionally parochial schools. In deciding to

attend Villa, many parents indicate that the whole child curriculum, community feel, and facility/grounds strongly influenced their decision. They also express appreciation that Villa is a value relative to other independent schools. Those families who are primarily attracted to a Catholic education do not mind paying more (in some cases, nearly double parochial school) in tuition, as they recognize that the smaller class size and beautiful facility are reasons for the difference in cost.

In the Self Study (page 116), Villa acknowledges breaking from NAIS best practice in order to assist families, and often operates on a case by case basis, not necessarily entirely based upon the demonstrated ability of the family to pay. The school has planned to establish a Financial Aid Task Force to develop a comprehensive and consistent philosophy.

The Board of Trustees has ambitious enrollment plans, and Villa can accommodate the increased enrollment without significant changes to staffing or facility usage. The Advancement Team is hopeful that an increase in brand awareness and the change from “passive to active recruitment” will help to reach these enrollment goals. The restructuring that took place with the creation of the IA team has taken the marketing/communications job responsibilities from the Director of Admission, which allows for more focused outreach and recruitment.

The school’s admissions process for applicants involves three separate “appointments” - a visit/playdate, grade level appropriate testing, and a parent interview. These interactions begin to build relationships with prospective families and eventually can lead to those families feeling valued and appreciated once they are members of the Villa community. However, it was unclear to the Visiting Team whether or not these appointments helped to determine if a family or student was mission appropriate. The relatively low yield (hovering slightly below 50% at the kindergarten level and just over 60% across all grade levels) indicate that most remaining applicants are accepted, regardless of information collected in the application process. Enrollment targets appear to be primarily budget and board driven, and greater input from the Institutional Advancement team is desired.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. Greatly revamping the opportunities for families to find out more about the program. Significantly more parent tours occur and the two Open Houses are well attended and are staffed by Villa parents eager to share their experiences with prospective families.
2. Holding events focused on retaining students such as “Kindergarten, Ready or Not” and the “Jump up to Middle School” - It is easier to retain a student than to recruit one.
3. Developing the Villa brand and using it consistently to build brand awareness to prospective parents.

### **Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Indicator # 2) Evaluate and communicate to the Board of Trustees what a mission appropriate student/family will mean in the context of growing enrollment.
2. (Indicator # 3) Follow through on plans to establish a Financial Aid Task Force to assist in developing a comprehensive financial aid philosophy as it relates to the mission of the school.

3. (Indicator #4) Consider greater coordination between the Board and Institutional Advancement Team to identify achievable and realistic enrollment targets.
4. (Indicator #5) Evaluate whether an increase in enrollment expectations is possible without an increase in budget or staffing.

### **Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Consider creating a formal sibling/staff admission policy that includes a timeline that would allow the school to offer admission to siblings before the common admissions date.
2. Re-examine the admissions process and consider whether streamlining it would ease the duties of the Admissions department without sacrificing the ability to identify mission appropriate families.
3. Continue to market the strengths and benefits of the middle school years within a PS-8th program to enhance retention and continue reaching out to families at area schools ending at 5th grade (independent and public) to increase recruitment in the middle school years.
4. Investigate whether a transportation program would enhance the enrollment of mission-appropriate students.

## **Human Resources**

The school has policies and practices in place to ensure that employees are well qualified, adequately compensated, appropriately supported through effective evaluation and strong professional development, and are sufficient in number to support the school's efforts to achieve its mission.

### **Observations:**

The Human Resource function is largely the responsibility of the Business Manager, though the hiring process is decentralized and there are a number of people handling various pieces of the process. The Business Manager has significant experience in HR processes and compliance, though she is not an HR professional. She calls on the expertise of an employment attorney when needed.

Conversations with the two division heads indicated that the format and structure of teacher evaluations has been inconsistent. Division directors engage in fall goal setting with faculty and summative conferences later in the year. The school constantly encourages reflective practices and teachers reported frequent conversations with division directors. The school has informally used the Third Domain of the Danielson Framework as a reference for discussions on pedagogy.

The school has increased the funding for professional development over the last few years. There are funds available to faculty for their personal areas of growth, as well as funds for groups of faculty to attend conferences and for speakers to come to campus. However, there is a lack

of structure and direction in the planning for professional development, no themes or areas of concentration are used to guide the choices.

Villa has a strong faculty mentor program. Teacher mentors are paired with newly hired faculty and given 24 hours of summer planning to spend time with their mentee.

**Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. Initiating a compensation and benefits study in order to assess where the school should use their resources to strengthen their salaries and benefits.
2. Hiring only certified teachers.
3. A teacher mentor program that is highly effective for assimilating new faculty into the community.

**Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Indicator #2) Develop a more standardized faculty evaluation process that reflects best teaching practices.
2. (Indicator #3) Develop an overall plan for faculty professional development in order to best use resources and have common learning objectives amongst the faculty.

**Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Consider performing HR assessment by HR professional to insure compliance, given that there is not an HR professional on staff.
2. Consider a tiered structure that did not require full evaluations of each teacher on a yearly basis would enable division directors to fully engage in a substantive professional improvement process with a portion of the faculty each year.
3. Consider changes to the hiring process to enhance recruitment of a more diverse faculty and staff, and prioritizing those aspects of diversity that match the mission of the school. This could include creation of a recruitment budget, potential HR personnel, and examining changes to the application process. (Also in Commitment to Diversity section)

## School Plant

The school's plant supports the mission and program of the school and is maintained over time in a manner that is sustainable.

### **Observations:**

Villa Academy is a beautiful 10-acre campus that is an integral piece of the mission and culture of the school. In 2007, the school purchased the property from the Missionary Sisters. In 2014, the school purchased the additional 49<sup>th</sup> Ave. frontage property, which completes intended land purchases. Villa continues to lease the remaining 20 acres of property for no fee, allowing them use of great outdoor spaces all the way to the shore of Lake Washington that are used in a variety of programs. The school has a knowledgeable, hands-on Director of Facilities who orchestrates the various aspects of maintenance of the facilities. He has two staff members and a third is in the process of being added. The Building and Grounds Committee provides strong expertise and leadership, working with the Director of Facilities and Head of School.

With the purchase of the property, the school takes on the responsibility of managing a significant backlog of deferred maintenance. Because the majority of the buildings were built in the 1920's and were not well maintained over many years, the school knows that they have a large need for facility updates. The amount of deferred maintenance has not been completely identified or quantified. The school has developed informal lists of deferred maintenance over the years, but there is not currently an up to date, prioritized, complete list to work with.

The school has completed a number of recent deferred maintenance projects, including a complete re-roofing of the buildings. This was included as a requirement in the financing for the purchase of the facility at a cost of ~\$900k. In addition, they completed the restoration of the brick and windows on the northeast corner of the building, which was an important example to parents of what is needed to take care of the facility properly.

The school has revised its Campus Master Plan. The overall plan has three projects and multiple phases, with a total cost of \$50M to complete all of the projects. The size of the projects and timing in the plan appeared ambitious to the Visiting Team. A portion of the first project totaling \$8.0M is currently being planned as a capital campaign project. The project covers \$4.5M in deferred maintenance, including the restoration of the brick façade, refurbishing of windows and remodel of the convent for an expanded preschool.

### **Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. Dedicated facilities and grounds staff that maintains an aging facility with insufficient resources.
2. Developing a comprehensive Campus Master Plan to guide the school as it remodels its campus to meet the needs of the school programs.

### **Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Major Recommendation #3) Deferred maintenance in all areas of the facility is the most unique and challenging factor to the long-term sustainability of Villa Academy. *The*

*Visiting Team recommends that the school engage in facilities and financial planning to detail specific deferred needs and costs and then map out a strategy to meet those needs and decrease reliance on capital campaigns.*

2. (Indicator #3) Consider using a professional facility auditor for this project as they would also address best practices in preventive maintenance and compliance and would supplement the knowledge of the staff and Building and Grounds Committee members.
3. (Indicator # 4) Work with the Finance Committee to prioritize the increasing funds allocated to PPRSM in the long range financial plan in order to make progress on the most critical items that are not included in the first capital campaign project.

### **Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Consider the investigation of partnership with historic preservation organizations in order to access potential outside funding for building preservation.

## **Health and Safety**

The school has established and effectively implemented policies and procedures that promote a safe and healthy school environment consistent with the mission of the school.

### **Observations:**

The faculty and staff of Villa Academy take seriously their responsibility to look after the safety and well-being of all members of the Villa community. Beginning with drop-off each morning, students are supervised by an adult before entering the building in an orderly fashion, youngest to oldest. There is ample evidence of structure and routine without sacrificing student autonomy. This theme continues throughout the school day with lunch, recess and dismissal supervision. Faculty and staff work together seamlessly in transitioning students around campus and ensuring their safety and security at all times.

The school demonstrates further commitment to health and safety with a proactive approach to managing student health concerns. The majority of campus is a nut-free zone and the lunchroom is set up to account for students with severe allergies. The focus on hand washing, particularly in the younger grades, reinforces healthy habits and helps prevent the spread of germs during lunch and recess periods. Student medications are stored in appropriate locations and reflect the needs/wishes of the families. Student record-keeping to track illness and injury is well organized and thorough.

Emergency procedures are clearly written and disseminated to the community through parent and faculty/staff handbooks. These documents represent a collaborative effort from the school's Health and Safety Committee and serve as a guide for action in the event of an actual emergency. Emergency supplies are present in all classrooms and on all floors as well as in a supply container on the grounds. There is an acknowledged need in the near future to inventory

these emergency kits and possibly to secure a new container to ensure emergency supplies for the whole school are adequately protected and up to date.

**Commendations:**

The Visiting Team commends the school for:

1. Providing excellent safety and security for their students at all times. Adequate staffing facilitates safe and efficient drop-off and pick-up and students are accounted for at all times while on campus including lunch, recess and transitioning between classrooms.
2. The importance of healthy eating habits is reinforced with cross-curricular emphasis on nutrition in physical education and science classrooms.
3. Villa Academy is progressive in its policies and procedures related to providing accommodations for students with allergy concerns. The introduction of “stock” epinephrine on campus for students and adults demonstrates a forward-thinking approach to emergency preparedness.
4. The Villa community is intentional about encouraging students to look after one another as evidenced through the buddy system and arrival and dismissal policies protecting younger children.
5. The buildings and grounds are well maintained and provide a safe and welcoming learning environment for students.

**Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends the school:

1. (Indicator #1) Work to continue to bring newly hired faculty and staff up to speed in regards to emergency procedures as well as familiarizing the faculty/staff with emergency supplies at their disposal.
2. (Indicator #2) The Visiting Team recommends replacing the emergency supply container and taking a thorough inventory of perishable items in the near future.

**Suggestions:**

The Visiting Team suggests the school:

1. Continue to participate in monthly emergency drills and consider varying the timing of drills in order to increase preparedness and address any issues as they arise.
2. Consider the use of walkie-talkies for all faculty/staff members on duty (arrival, dismissal, crossing guards, recess). In the event of an actual emergency, reliance on personal cell phones for communication may be unreliable/ineffective.
3. Work to streamline and standardize the process by which emergency backpacks are inventoried and stocked prior to each school year and ensure perishable items such as food rations in yellow emergency buckets are replaced when necessary.
4. Investigate ways to ensure that students and faculty in outbuildings such as the gym consistently receive all necessary communications in the event of a drill or actual emergency.