



ACIS Thanks ISU Insurance

**For Sponsoring Workshops at the
36th Annual Leadership Conference**



ISU Insurance Services of Colorado (ISU) is a 139-year-old independent insurance brokerage firm, partnering with independent schools on their commercial insurance, risk management and employee benefits protection.



A Research-Based Look into

GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES



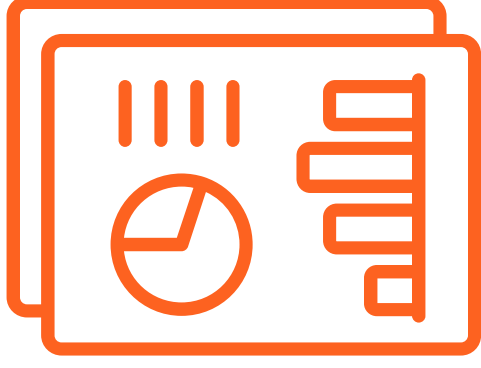
Bonnie J. Ricci
Executive Director
ICAISA



36TH ANNUAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE • OCTOBER 10-11, 2024



International Council Advancing
Independent School Accreditation





ICaISA

International Council Advancing
Independent School Accreditation

ICAISA Vision & Mission

ICAISA has a transformative impact on the independent school landscape by advancing accreditation globally.

ICAISA is the international leader in independent school accreditation. By working directly with accrediting associations, ICAISA advances excellence and upholds standards in order to ensure quality and accountability in independent schools across the globe.





Icaisa

International Council Advancing
Independent School Accreditation





**ACIS Interim Review Team
March 2024**

The ICAISA Interim Review Team affirms that the ACIS accreditation program rests upon a foundation of remarkable collegiality, collaboration, and support among the devoted Executive Director, the fully committed Board of Trustees, the sound, well-qualified Accreditation Committee, and a deep commitment to and appreciation for the accreditation process from member schools.

ACIS Accreditation Matters



When considering a school, your family has likely already identified a set of criteria for selection that matters to you – often aligning it with your values, standards, and expectations surrounding not only the academic experience but also the community you will soon join. With a vast array of options to consider in both non-public and public schools, it can be challenging to weigh all options equally. As they say, with choice, comes responsibility.



Since independent schools are responsible for their own funding, curriculum, and administration, independent schools are free to set and pursue their own goals. Accreditation provides a level of comfort and peace of mind in knowing that the independent school you are considering has made a commitment to operate at a level of excellence and standards determined by outside qualified education professionals. An independent school's affirmation to uphold the best possible outcomes for students by meeting these standards signifies a concerted level of commitment and quality in academia to you and your student – holding themselves accountable to stay relevant and to continuously improve.

THE ACIS DIFFERENCE

Unlike other accrediting bodies, ACIS is recognized by the State of Colorado, Colorado Shines, and the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). As a member in good standing of the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA), ACIS conforms to ICAISA's Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices. These practices and standards are considerably more rigorous, comprehensive, and ongoing than other accreditation agencies. Like its member schools, ACIS itself undergoes regular and comprehensive review for best practices in accreditation by outside experts from ICAISA.

Member schools in ACIS make a commitment to continuous school improvement when they join the association. A ten-year, continuous evaluation cycle holds them accountable for complying with the association's high accreditation standards. ACIS accreditation thereby provides a reasonable assurance of quality regarding the education and learning experience provided by its member schools.

ACIS member schools also benefit from the association's extensive professional development offerings, collegial networks to facilitate best practices, local, national, and international research to make data-driven decisions, and experienced consulting services. Because ACIS serves only Colorado schools, it is uniquely positioned to understand and support independent schools in the state. ACIS accreditation makes a meaningful difference.

7 REASONS WHY

HIGH STANDARDS

Our schools follow a set of rigorous standards that reflect the proven characteristics of good independent schools.

MISSION-PROGRAM CONGRUENCE

Accreditation by ACIS offers assurance that an independent school provides the character and quality of education claimed.

THIRD-PARTY ACCOUNTABILITY

The rigorous accreditation process of ACIS requires meaningful and comprehensive evaluation of the school by outside experts who validate strengths and hold school leaders accountable for addressing weaknesses.

SCHOOL VIABILITY

ACIS accreditation assesses the financial viability of our schools and whether the leadership is effective and can maintain long-term stability.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

To maintain our accreditation, school leaders must demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement.

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

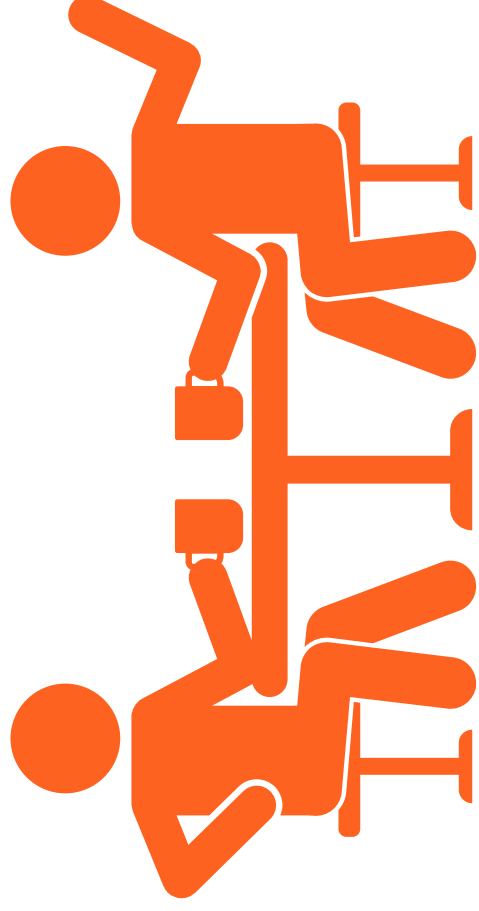
For students at the high school level, school accreditation facilitates acceptance into college. Students from accredited schools often receive priority consideration, while those from unaccredited schools must provide special evidence to demonstrate their readiness for higher education.

LEGAL COMPLIANCE

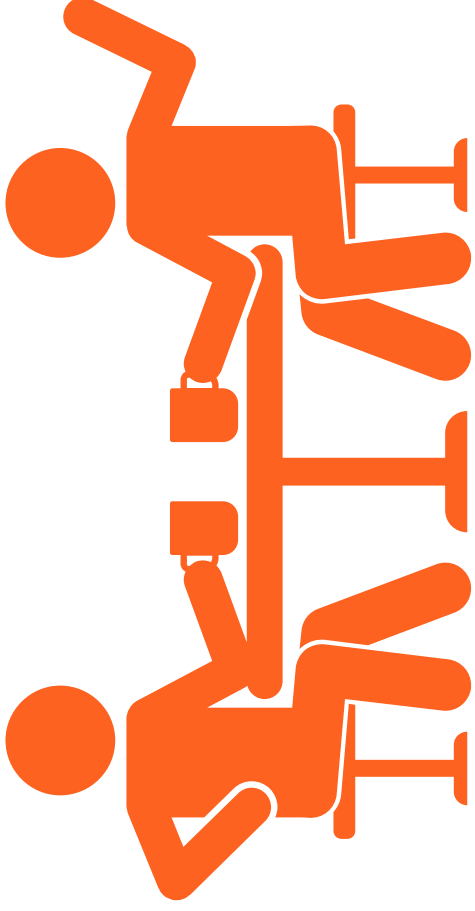
Accreditation ensures schools meet or exceed relevant government regulations involving health, fire, safety, sanitation, and other requirements.

[Learn MORE](#)

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**An Invitation:
Share with your table
the most challenging governance situation
you experienced this past year.**

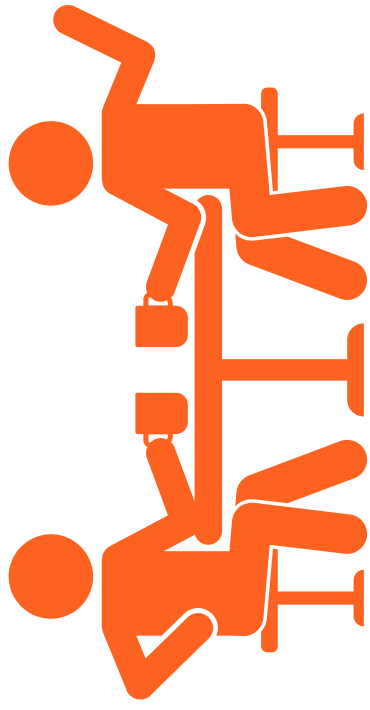


An Invitation:

Share with your table

**~~the most~~ a challenging governance situation
you experienced this past year.**

THEMES



FILL IN THE BLANK:

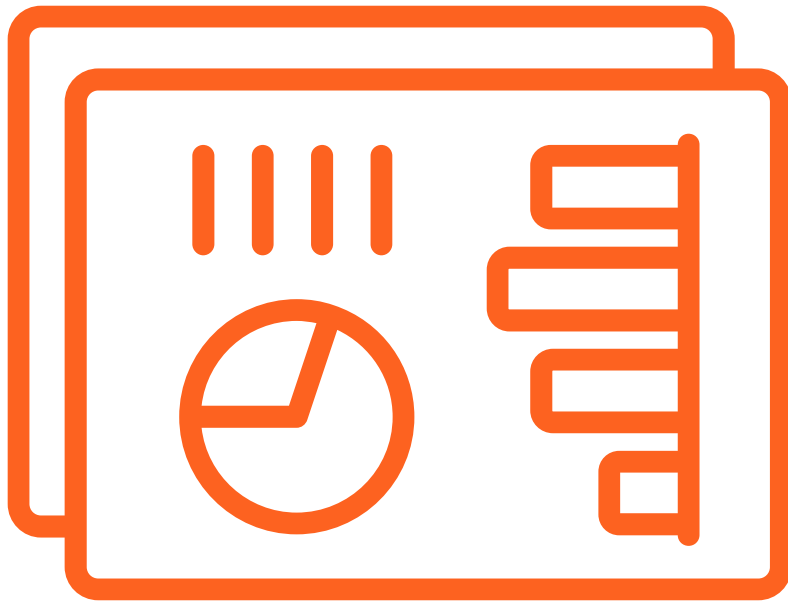
Governance challenges within schools are

_____.

FILL IN THE BLANK:

Governance challenges within schools are frequent, far-reaching, and deeply-rooted

But... much of the evidence is anecdotal.



THE
EDWARD E. FORD
FOUNDATION

RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Governance



[Link here](#)

THE
EDWARD E. FORD
FOUNDATION

ASSOCIATIONS
16

SCHOOLS
207

RECOMMENDATIONS
490

LEVEL 1 THEMES

FINANCIAL

STRATEGIC

FUNDAMENTALS

LEVEL 1 THEMES

FINANCIAL

STRATEGIC

FUNDAMENTALS



**WHICH LEVEL 1 THEME CONTAINED THE GREATEST
NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATIONS?**

LEVEL 1 THEMES

FINANCIAL

STRATEGIC

FUNDAMENTALS



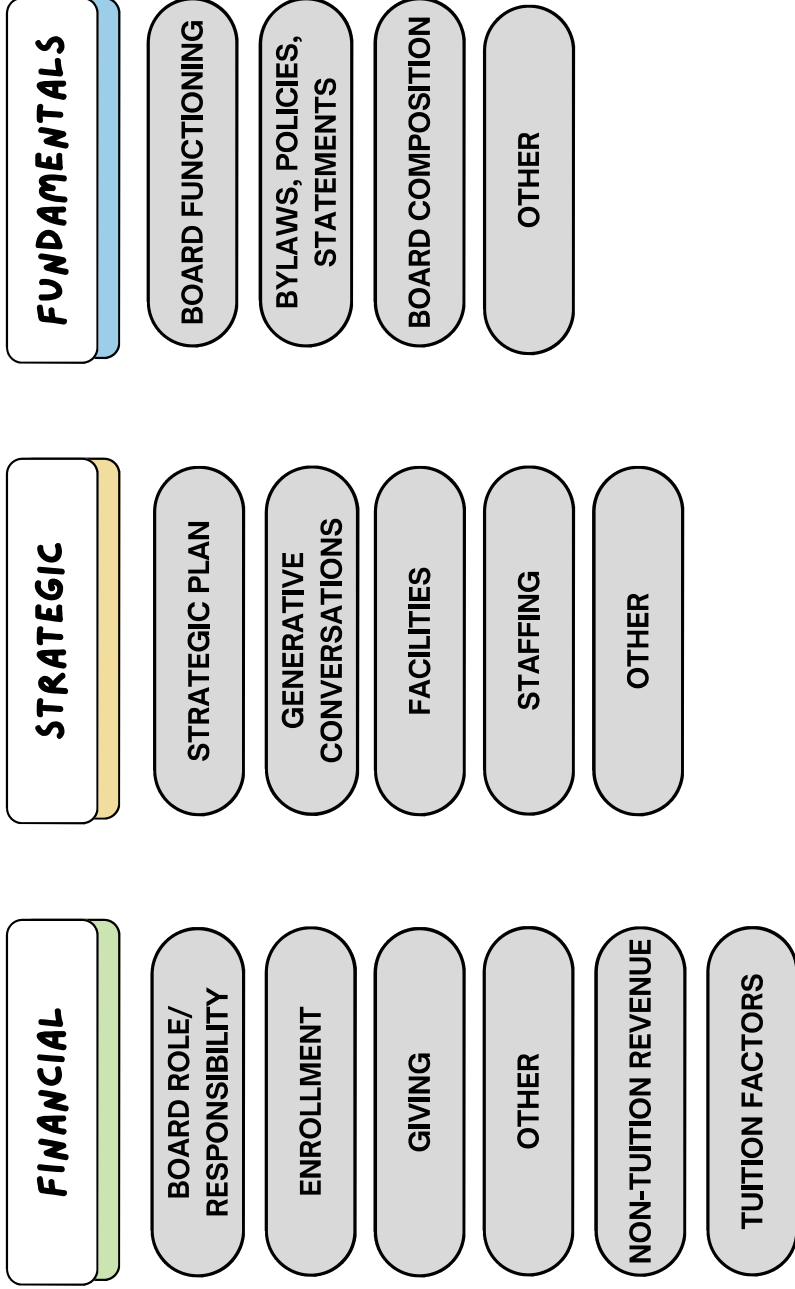
14%

33%

53%

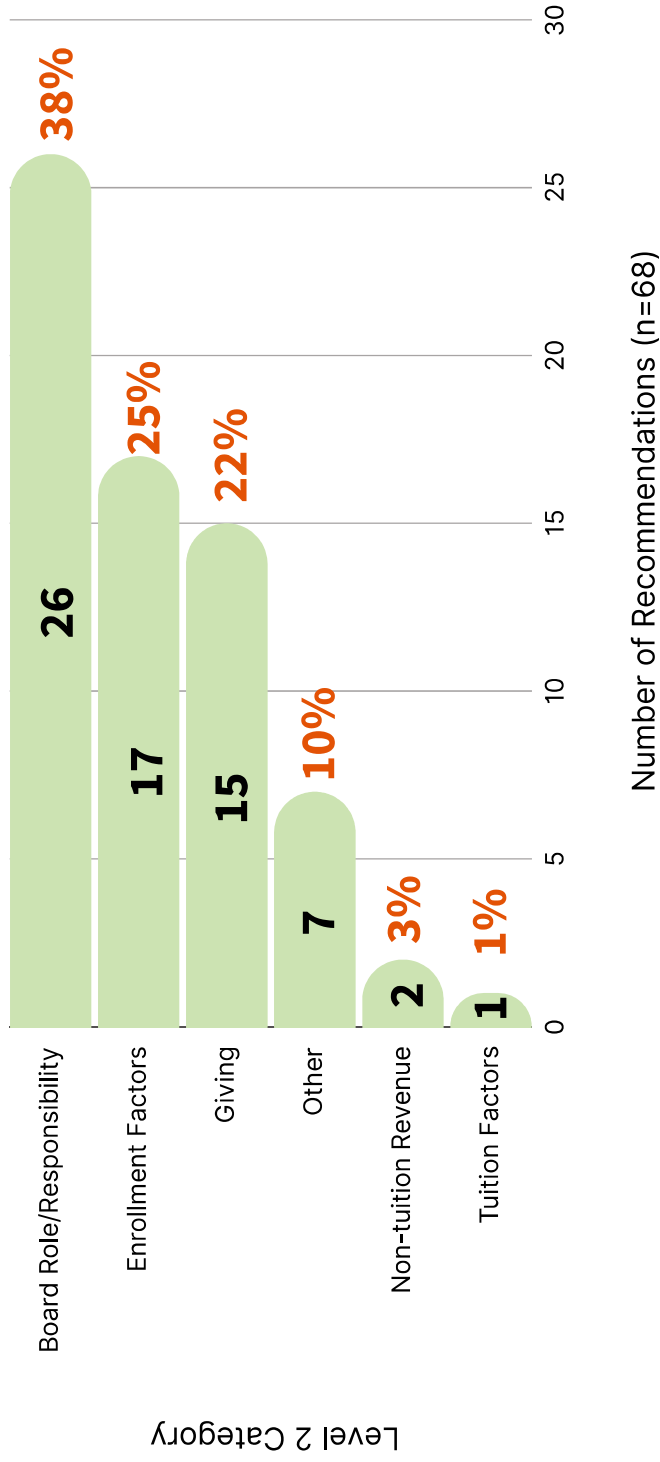
**WHICH LEVEL 1 THEME CONTAINED THE GREATEST
NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATIONS?**

LEVEL 2 THEMES



LEVEL 2 THEMES

FINANCIAL



Distribution of Level 2 Themes Among Schools with a Financial Recommendation

LEVEL 2 THEMES

FINANCIAL

“Build a strong foundation, define staff leadership responsibilities, and articulate a set of expectations for the Board’s leadership role in fundraising and ongoing philanthropic stewardship.”

Board Role/Responsibilities

Enrollment Factors

Giving

Other

Non-tuition Revenue

Tuition Factors

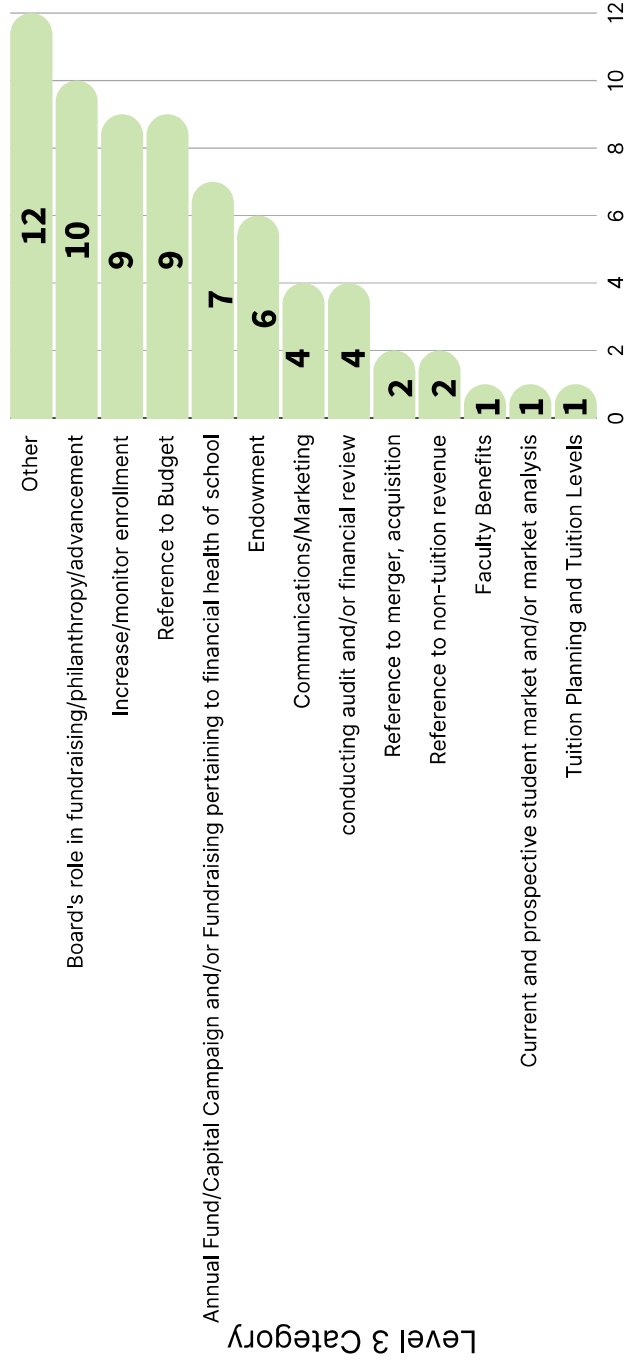
Recommendations (n=68)

Distribution of Level 2 Themes Among Schools with a Financial Recommendation

Level 2 Category

LEVEL 3 THEMES

FINANCIAL

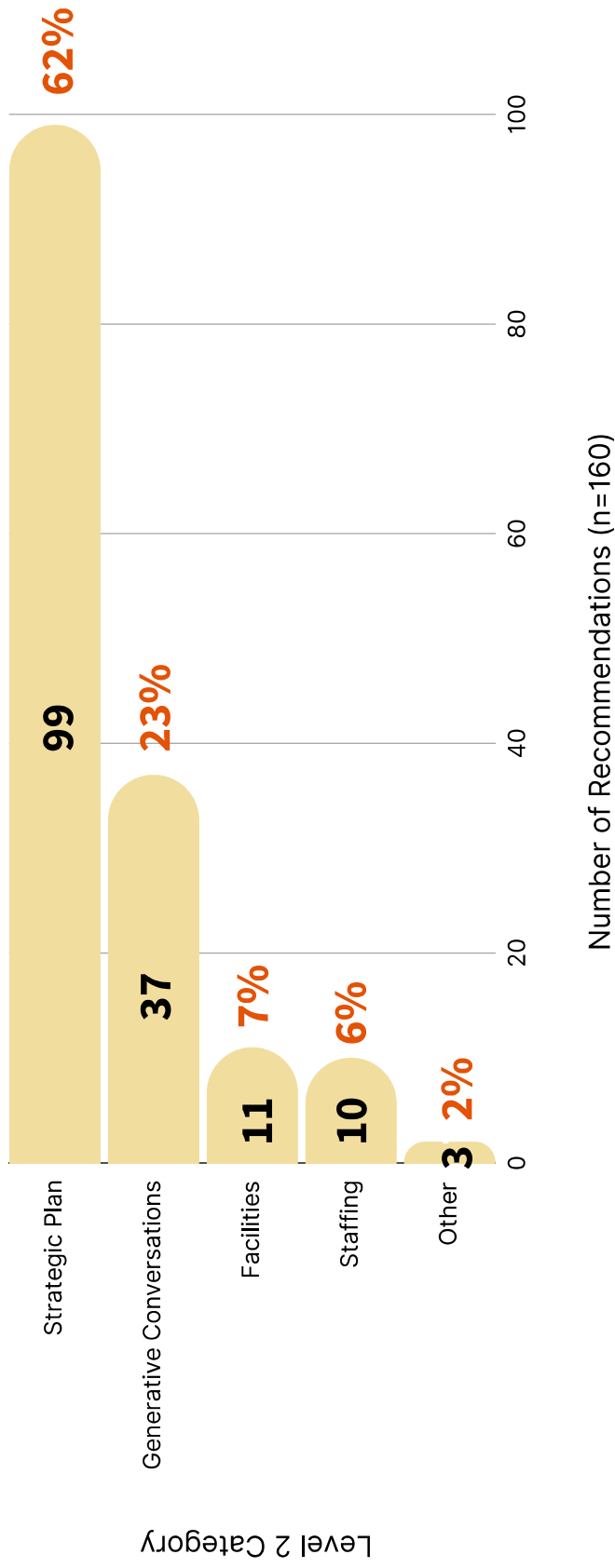


Number of Recommendations (n=68)

Distribution of Level 3 Themes Among Schools with a Financial Recommendation

LEVEL 2 THEMES

STRATEGIC



Distribution of Level 2 Themes Among Schools with a Strategic Recommendation

LEVEL 2 THEMES

STRATEGIC

“The Visiting Team recommends that the Board of Trustees, in collaboration with the Head of School and other constituencies as appropriate, initiate steps to create a new long-range strategic plan for the long-term health and sustainability of the school. Include programmatic, advancement, and financial goals for the School’s future.”

Level 2 Category

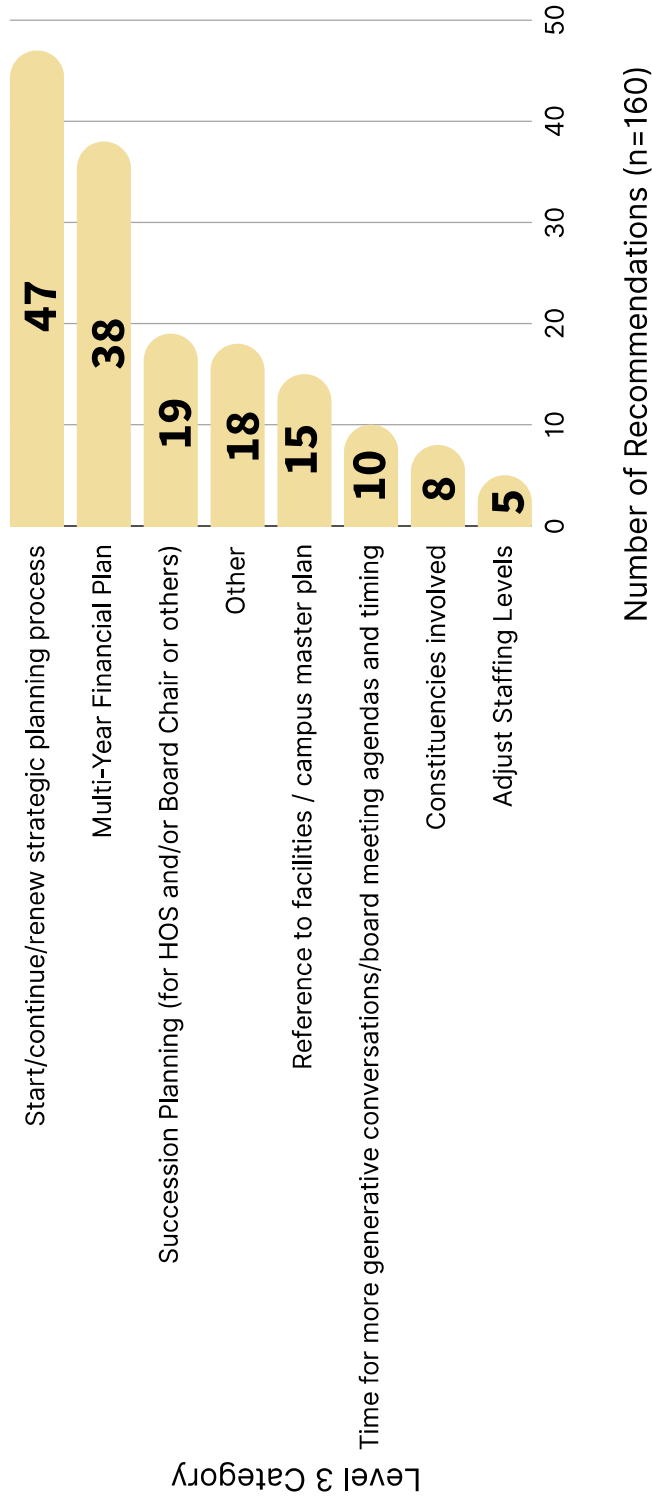
Generative

Implementation (11-13)

Distribution of Level 2 Themes among Schools with a Strategic Recommendation

LEVEL 3 THEMES

STRATEGIC



Distribution of Level 3 Themes Among Schools with a Strategic Recommendation

LEVEL 2 THEMES

FUNDAMENTALS

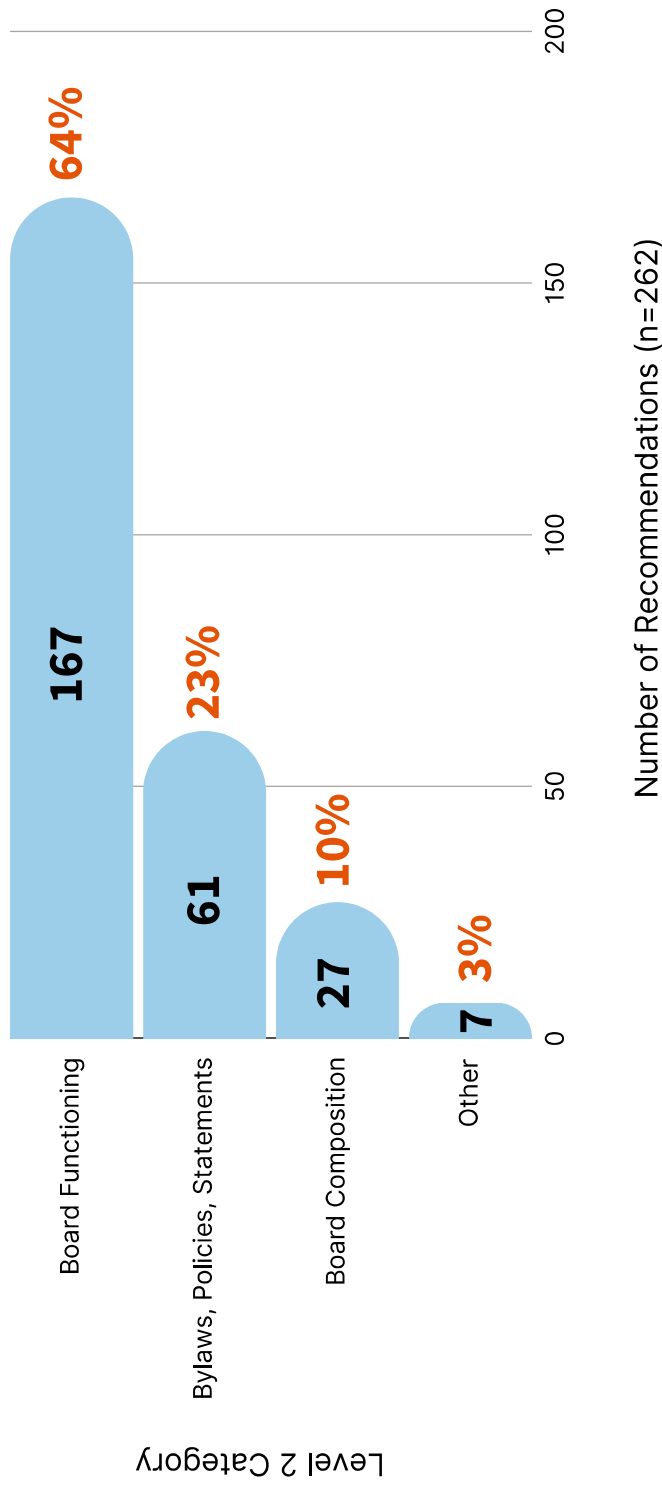


Figure 2: Distribution of Level 2 Themes Among Schools with a Fundamentals Recommendation

LEVEL 2 THEMES

FUNDAMENTALS

“Review by-laws, practices, and procedures of governance, in order to assure a consistent and strategic selection of trustees that will ensure a well functioning, sustainable board that follows best practices.”

Board F
Bylaws, Policies, S
Board C

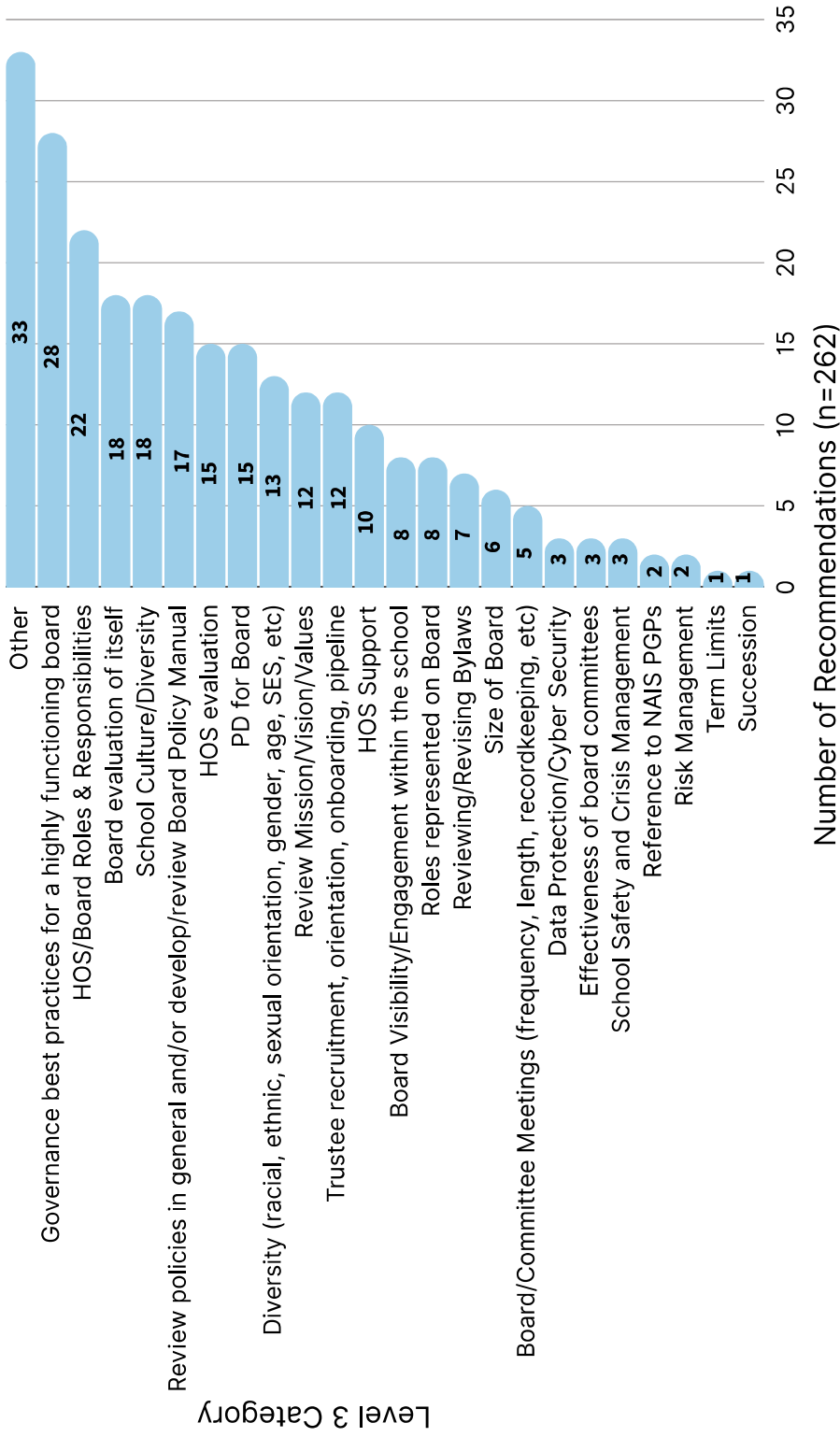
Level 2 Category

Number of Recommendations (n=262)

Figure 2: Distribution of Level 2 Themes Among Schools with a Fundamentals Recommendation

LEVEL 3 THEMES

FUNDAMENTALS



Distribution of Level 3 Themes Among Schools with a Fundamentals Recommendation





**Director of
Accreditation**



INSIGHTS

Research Project

With support from the Edward E. Ford Foundation, the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA) conducted a research project in 2023 to identify themes from nearly 500 governance major recommendations in accreditation visiting team reports. The lists below include the types of documents, manuals, policies, processes, and statements most frequently referenced in the major recommendations. Boards and leadership teams may find the information of value when reviewing their own manuals, policies, and processes. Please note the items listed here are important, but not comprehensive.

Board Documents

- Alignment of Board Documents, Manuals, Policies, Processes, and Statements
- Board self-evaluation process
- Board Policy Manual
- Bylaws
- Campus Master Plan
- Confidentiality Statements and Conflict of Interest Forms
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan
- Financial Plan
- Head of School Evaluation Process
- Head of School Support Process
- Position Statements Policy
- Review Process for Documents, Manuals, Policies, Processes, and Statements
- Risk Assessment
- Strategic Plan
- Succession Planning for Board Chair and Head of School Process
- Trustee Recruitment, Onboarding, and Retention Process
- Tuition and Financial Assistance Policy

Mission, Philosophy, & Curriculum

- Diversity Statement and Diversity Goals
- Evidence of Graduates' success
- Mission Statement and Vision Statement
- Portrait of a Graduate
- Program Philosophy for curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment
- School Virtues or Values
- Social-Emotional Learning Practices

Operations & Administration

- Cyber Security Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Financial and Budgeting Policies and Procedures
- School Safety and Crisis Management Process/Manual

For further details regarding this research project, please reach out to Bonnie Ricci at

bonnie@icaisa.org



[Link here](#)

Invitations for Consideration

- Bylaws, Policies, Statements in place for relevant and **emerging** areas
- **Fundamentals:** Board Evaluation, HOS Support & Evaluation, Board Composition
 - Roles & Responsibilities (HOS & Board)
 - Generative Conversations (Ask questions, don't seek answers)
 - Multi-Year Financial Plan
 - Risk Management and Mitigation

Reboarding

Ongoing professional learning for

ALL

board members



- **ACIS Leadership Conference**
- **ACIS Spring Governance Webinar on March 7, 2025
with Lynn Wendell**
- **Alan Smiley!**



National Association
of *Independent* Schools



Boardsource®





1990 - 2000

Headships
205

Average Tenure
20.2

Median Tenure
18.27

2000-2010

Headships
1,163

Average Tenure
9.85

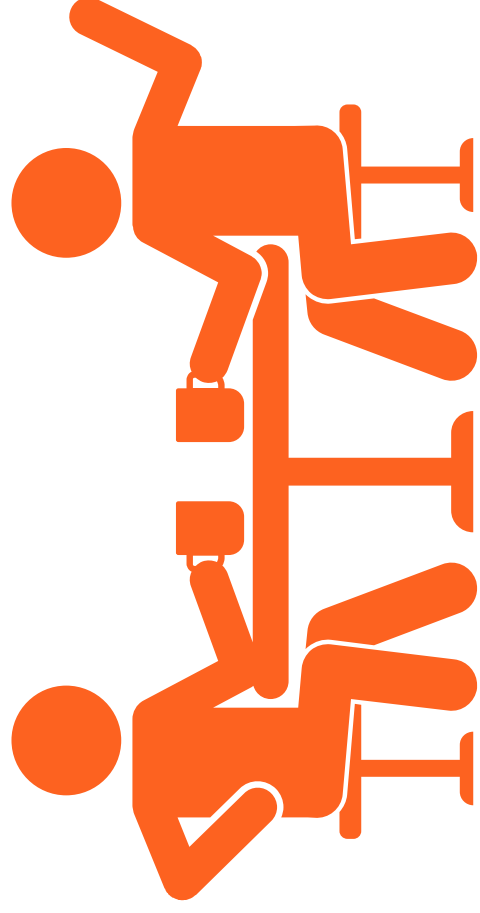
Median Tenure
8.26

2010-2020

Headships
2,285

Average Tenure
4.9

Median Tenure
4.25



Thoughts? Reactions? Comments? Questions?

Accreditation: Adapting & Evolving

ICAISA ESSENTIAL COMMITMENT #4:

Evaluate and Adapt the Accreditation Standards and Process

The Association adapts its accreditation standards and process in order to

- a) promote school quality and sustainability,**
- b) remain relevant in a changing world, and**
- c) respond to the emerging needs of member schools.**



Will Miller



**Associate Vice President
for Continuous
Improvement and
Institutional Performance**



Will Miller



“Today, I function as a strategic data translator, shepherding communication between assessment, data science, and executive decision-makers to ensure maximum impact and continuous improvement.”

Reevaluating Accreditation in Charged Climates



Rigor vs. Flexibility

The quest for balance between unyielding standards and the pliability to accommodate political winds is intrinsic to the reevaluation of accreditation in charged environments.



Adaptive Alignment

Case studies of adaptive accreditation demonstrate how the process can pivot to sync with the evolving educational landscape and societal shifts.



Institutional Autonomy

Pitting institutional missions against external political forces creates a tension that requires a nuanced approach to navigate successfully.

**Accreditation:
a Mark of Quality**

Thank You!

