

ACS WASC Words 2016-2017

“Be the change that you wish to see in the world”

Mahatma Gandhi



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Inside this Issue:

Thoughts from the Chair	3
Executive Director's Update: New Work, New Study	4
A Transforming, Powerful, Coherent Process: ACS WASC Focus on Learning Accreditation	5
ACS WASC Accreditation as a Tool for Defining Quality Education	7
Substantive Changes in Accredited Schools	8
Accreditation Actions, 2015-2016	9
Committee Statistics, 2015-2016	9
ACS WASC Membership, 2015-2016	9
ACS WASC Words of Wisdom	10
Commission Update	14
International Update	15
Office Update: Burlingame and Temecula	16
Serving on an ACS WASC Visiting Committee	18

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Mission

ACS WASC advances and validates quality ongoing school improvement by supporting its private and public elementary, secondary, and postsecondary member institutions to engage in a rigorous and relevant self-evaluation and peer review process that focuses on student learning.

Territory

ACS WASC extends its services worldwide to approximately 5,000 public, private, independent, church-related, and proprietary pre-K–12 schools. ACS WASC provides assistance to schools located in California, Hawaii, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Fiji, Asia, and other parts of the world.



Thoughts from the Chair

Damon Kerby | Chairperson, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



To the outside observer, the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) must seem like an enormous, monolithic entity.

ACS WASC oversees the accreditation of nearly 5,000 schools in California, Hawaii, Asia, and other parts of the world. Its goal is far reaching and ambitious, in that it seeks to promote continuous improvement in every member school it accredits. ACS WASC creates accreditation documents and protocols, coordinates hundreds of visiting committees each year, and has staff in offices in both northern and southern California. Its imprimatur is necessary for high schools whose goal it is to send students to the University of California (UC) system. Any institution this large must be rigid, bureaucratic, immovable, and impervious to change. Or so it must seem.

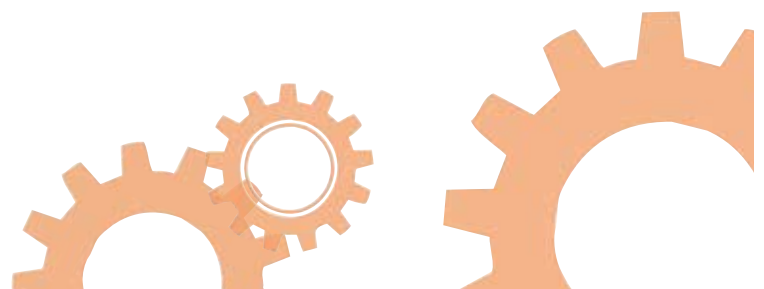
One of my great surprises in becoming involved in the work of ACS WASC, however, is how far from accurate this “monolithic” descriptor is, how un-impervious the organization truly can be. I am consistently amazed by the intricate dance that ACS WASC must do to maintain partnerships with the many organizations with which it partners.

The ACS WASC Commission is composed of 32 members from 21 different organizations representing the wide variety of public and private schools in the regions it serves. For many of these organizations, ACS WASC has negotiated a customized joint protocol, one which is distinct to, and meets the needs of, that particular constituent group. As an example, I represent the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) on the ACS WASC Commission; over a five-year period, CAIS re-envisioned its entire accreditation protocol, ensuring that it both met ACS WASC criteria and served independent schools as well. After the document’s careful vetting by staff, the ACS WASC Commission approved the use of this accreditation model

for independent schools. Other constituent groups, including Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, and Christian schools, have done the same. In each case, care has been taken to ensure that the models meet the needs of the schools in each organization, while strongly adhering to ACS WASC principles and criteria.

As you might imagine, this makes for complexity, but it also makes for great richness. ACS WASC staff consistently show remarkable flexibility in dealing with schools from our different partner organizations; they are constantly both teaching and learning in these complex interactions.

At the ACS WASC Commission level, the different constituent groups experience how their colleague groups handle particular aspects of evaluation and school improvement; all are enriched by the discussion. The partnerships between ACS WASC and its members, while not immediately visible to the casual outside observer, are what give ACS WASC its vitality, its openness, and its ability to evolve over time. So, far from being the monolithic, unreceptive, and immutable institution it might seem, ACS WASC is constantly growing, constantly changing, and constantly being responsive to the groups it serves and with which it partners — enriching all those involved.





Executive Director’s Update: New Work, New Study

Fred Van Leuven, Ed.D. | Executive Director, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



2016 has been a banner year. To improve our services to schools, the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) has increased its local interactions and support for public and private schools, made significant changes to school protocols, and completed a historic, independent academic study

highlighted on pages 10–13 in this edition of *ACS WASC Words*.

Recent additions to the ACS WASC school protocols include:

- Adopting and incorporating iNACOL standards to help schools review the effectiveness of their online programs
- Adopting the International Task Force on Child Protection recommendations to assist schools to review the ever-important student safety issues
- Significantly increasing our work with the California, Guam, and Hawaii State Departments of Education to streamline the accountability process and reduce redundancy.

Here is a summary of what is new:

Local Efforts: Many school communities are realizing that the process of school review for the self-study is more important than the actual self-study report; in fact, writing the self-study report is just the first step. The real strength of the ACS WASC accreditation process is the ongoing review of data, developing the important action plan, and then monitoring and amending the work based on the school’s issues — all of which translates to yearly monitoring. Recent changes in state requirements, such as LCAP, require a district annual progress report — the self-study could, and should, align with these efforts.

Department of Education Work: ACS WASC is strengthening and aligning its accreditation processes with schools’ local, state, and federal accountability requirements. Our goal is to have the ACS WASC process incorporate these requirements with

the schoolwide action plan — meeting all of the accountability requirements and also serving as the foundational base for “how” schools review their improvements.

ACS WASC accreditation is not a “one-size-fits-all” protocol; in fact, ACS WASC is the only regional accreditor that does not require schools to use a uniform approach. This can be a critical time-saver since individual states have different accountability requirements which are further complicated with the addition of federal mandates to the local district requirements. ACS WASC has protocols for public schools that take into account each state’s vocabulary, timeline, and criteria, as well as having strong relationships with each state department of education. All parties agree that reducing duplicative paperwork and streamlining the processes are in everyone’s best interest. In California, for example, aligning the LCAP, LEAP, and Single Plan for Student Achievement will greatly help entire school communities better focus and monitor the required work. Making sure the state and federal requirements are included in the annual review process is pretty logical. All public schools are under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) federal mandate and ACS WASC is working with each state entity, not to become the ESSA police, but to provide a process to monitor and improve student learning, thus fulfilling this mandate.

ACS WASC “Self-Study” Results: Included in this newsletter is a summary of a recent, independent academic study conducted to review the ACS WASC accreditation process. Visit the ACS WASC website to see the study findings. The results have already made an impact on our work, including the following takeaways: school principals want more help monitoring their schoolwide action plans and need greater district office support and involvement; principals want the ACS WASC process to have greater alignment with state and federal mandates; and, finally, schools need additional support after the ACS WASC team leaves. We are working to put these requests into place to further assist schools with their self-improvement efforts.

If you would like to learn more about meeting high standards of effectiveness and quality, please contact either our Temecula or Burlingame offices.

A Transforming, Powerful, Coherent Process: ACS WASC Focus on Learning Accreditation

Marilyn S. George, Ed.D. | Associate Executive Director, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



Reflection! Reinforcement! Renewal!

The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) has been committed to a transforming, coherent *Focus on Learning (FOL)* process that empowers schools to develop an integrated, connected improvement process. Schools

are engaged in reflection, assessment, and evaluation culminating in the implementation of an updated action plan that is monitored and continually reassessed based on the impact on student learning and well-being. The driving concept questions that challenge schools throughout the ongoing school improvement process are the following:

- How well are all our students achieving?
- Is the school doing everything possible to support quality achievement of all its students?

Historically since the early 1990s, the ACS WASC staff and Commission and regional educators began to discuss revising and refining the accreditation process. This led to the formation of revision committees that included public and private school representatives as they discussed important thoughts about education in the 21st century, school change, learning and teaching, organizational development and leadership, self-evaluation, accountability, and results-oriented processes. Examples of references used at that time were writings by Michael Fullan, Carl Glickman, Peter Senge, and Phillip Schlechty. The revision committees centered their work on the two overarching concept questions shown above. What evolved from this work was ACS WASC's *Focus on Learning*, the dynamic self-evaluative process that has become widely accepted as integral to the core of education — successful student learning.

During the 1994–1995 school year, 41 schools piloted the new *Focus on Learning* process. Since that time ACS WASC has gathered feedback from schools through written and verbal comments and special debriefing meetings and made continual

refinements and modifications to the criteria and the process. The feedback from the process has continually reinforced these key points:

- A strong focus on student learning
- A schoolwide examination of the instructional program
- School renewal efforts
- Promotion of collaborative leadership
- Engagement of all staff and other stakeholders in meaningful dialogue
- The sharing of ideas and materials among staff
- The internal use of existing resources
- The celebration of the strong elements of the school's program
- An increased awareness by students of the school's schoolwide learner outcomes.

A critical ongoing question as we look at the *FOL* process to support schools as an underpinning for transformation and coherence is the following:

How can the accreditation process be a viable structure for all the external demands yet maintain its commitment to support a school in developing its internal capacity for being accountable to high-quality achievement of all students served?

For the first time in its history, ACS WASC recently engaged an outside research group to conduct a formal study on the *Focus on Learning* process and its impact on schools. This formal study was structured to learn more about how schools view and use the foundational ACS WASC principles and basic design elements of the *Focus on Learning* process, as shown below.

ACS WASC believes that a school will find it invaluable to:

- Demonstrate that through its program there is evidence that its vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes are accomplished. It is paramount



A Transforming, Powerful, Coherent Process: ACS WASC Focus on Learning Accreditation – *Continued*

that a school knows “Who are we? What do we believe? What are our intentions, e.g., the schoolwide learner outcomes?”

- Evaluate where the students are in achieving the schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards.
- Use multiple ways to analyze data to demonstrate student achievement, including student and staff perceptions/interviews, examining student work, and observing students engaged in learning.
- Evaluate its program effectiveness in relation to: (1) its impact on student learning based on schoolwide learner outcomes, critical student learning needs, and academic standards and (2) meeting an acceptable level of quality in accordance with the ACS WASC criteria.
- Align its prior and current prioritized findings to a schoolwide action plan focusing on student achievement.
- Ensure there is an ongoing improvement and accountability process.
- Ensure that there is a culture of involvement and collaboration of leadership, staff, students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders.
- Ensure there is a culture that nurtures and supports the well-being of all students.

Although we believe that these elements can provide the basis for an integral, aligned, and connected school system in which the school is viewed as a professional learning community, ACS WASC was eager to learn more through the external evaluative study.

Interestingly, a recent publication by Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn entitled *Coherences, The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, Systems* has reinforced these transforming attributes of the ACS WASC *Focus on Learning* process. Fullan and Quinn provide a coherent framework for leadership that consists of four major aspects: focusing direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, deepening learning, and securing accountability. Fullan and Quinn state: “The Coherence Framework, and especially its focus on deepening learning

outcomes, is crucial at this particular juncture in history . . . Put another way, we are not talking about mere coherence of existing elements, but a radical transformation into deep learning with all of its associated parts. This is the coherence challenge!” [Fullan & Quinn 2016, p. 136]

As we continue our formal evaluative studies and work with educators throughout our region, ACS WASC is committed to a “growth mindset” and is ready to further refine the *FOL* process to address the identified challenges or opportunities. The *Focus on Learning* accreditation process is indeed synonymous with continuous school improvement that focuses on the trustworthiness of a school as an institution for learning by all students — **We Are Student-Centered.**



Focus on Learning: A Reflective Cycle

References

Fullan, M. & Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence. The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, Systems*. Ontario Principals’ Council and Corwin.

Lieberman, A. & Miller, L. (2016). “Harness the Energy of Collaboration.” *JSD, The Learning Forward*, Vol. 37, No. 1, February.

ACS WASC Accreditation as a Tool for Defining Quality Education

Ginger Hovenic, Ed.D. | Director, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



“What we have here is a failure to communicate.” The oft-quoted line from the 1960s movie *Cool Hand Luke* could well describe the crux of the problem we are experiencing in today’s changing political and social landscape as our society continues to struggle to define quality education. We have been so besieged by the growing and increasingly complex problem of educating young people

in recent years that we have failed to find and communicate a common definition of precisely what we mean by quality in the education system with all stakeholders.

ACS WASC has developed a tool to examine the key components of what is a quality education in a school improvement design. This tool has provided the framework for school stakeholders to have input as they work together to quantify and describe quality education at their site. The five ACS WASC categories for school improvement and quality education are the essential foundation for everything that happens at a school: Organization and Governance, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and School Culture. Schools that use this process consistently remark that these categories are the drivers that make change.

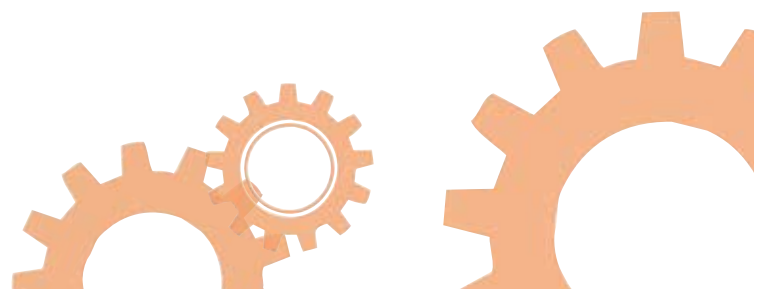
We need to get serious once and for all about the role parents *must* — not can — play in the discussion. We need to go beyond the obligatory parent-teacher conference and Back to School nights and engage in what matters the most for them — quality education for their child. Having everyone involved in the conversation and in the direction the school is taking makes all the difference in the world. When people feel that they are part of the process they take on part of the responsibility for making it happen.

ACS WASC accreditation is an ongoing cycle of quality. It is a process schools use to monitor student learning and set school improvement goals. So what does this look like?

Teachers, staff, parents, students, and administrators sitting down together and working collaboratively using the indicators and prompts from the self-study as they dive deep into discussions around providing quality education for all students. They ask questions about how do we know our students are learning and what evidence is there that relates to decision making regarding our services and programs offered to students. They also ask do we have a clear purpose and governance structure that aligns with and ensures that this happens.

Remember, parents are teachers too and they share in the responsibility of their child’s education. Visitors should be welcome, volunteers appreciated, and parents expected to participate.

Without question, a quality education matters because it affects the lives of all students and the society in which we live. It is important that the ACS WASC process becomes a permanent part of school practice, not a one-time or occasional event, for everyone at the school. Using the tools of communication through the ACS WASC accreditation process develops the habits of collaboration, discussion, inquiry, assessing progress over time, and data-driven decision-making that are necessary for ongoing quality education for all students.





Substantive Changes in Accredited Schools

Changes in educational institutions are inevitable, but some changes are more significant than others and impact the school in substantial ways. The accreditation of a school is based on conditions that exist over a particular span of time which culminate in an accreditation visit. Subsequent substantial changes of the school need to be reviewed by ACS WASC to determine if those changes will affect the school's accreditation status.

ACS WASC policy states that if a substantive change occurs in an accredited school, continuation of accredited status or inclusion of the substantive change in the school's previous grant of accreditation or pre-accreditation shall require:

- Prior application to the Commission regarding the proposed change
- Approval of the application by the Executive Director
- A one-day revisit by a one- or two-member team appointed by the Executive Director
- Subsequent approval by the Commission.

A school shall be considered to undergo a substantive change and be required to initiate a substantive change procedure with ACS WASC if the school experiences a change in:

- Location of school
- Addition of or transfer of programs to new or different buildings
- Grade level configuration
- Type of school
- Ownership and/or control
- Legal status or form of control of the institution
- Opening a branch or classroom extension
- Established mission or purposes
- Addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, in terms of either the content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when ACS WASC most recently evaluated the institution.

All changes should be reported within ten days to the Commission, and the visit must occur within 90 days. An independent audit of the school's financial condition may be required at the discretion of the Executive Director. Failure to notify ACS WASC as required of substantive changes as described above is grounds for the Commission to issue a show cause as to why the institution's accreditation should not be revoked.

The Substantive Change Policy can be found on the ACS WASC website. If a substantive change visit is required, a visit fee will be billed. Please contact the ACS WASC office for any needed clarification or additional information.

ACS WASC Membership, Accreditation Actions, and Committee Statistics, 2015–2016

ACS WASC Membership, 2015-2016

The school membership of the Accrediting Commission for Schools continued to grow during the 2015–2016 school year. Currently, approximately 200 applicant schools are preparing for their initial accreditation visit with ACS WASC.

EVALUATION AREA	# OF SCHOOLS 2013–2014	# OF SCHOOLS 2014–2015	# OF SCHOOLS 2015–2016
California	3,873	3,901	3,969
Hawaii	264	290	323
Out of State	58	58	59
Pacific Islands			
American Samoa	10	10	16
Federated States of Micronesia	1	1	1
Guam	36	40	44
Marshall Islands	5	5	5
Northern Marianas	1	1	1
Palau	1	1	1
Africa	3	6	6
Asia	217	242	231
Australia	—	1	1
Europe	1	3	4
India	1	2	2
Mexico	1	2	2
Middle East	33	34	20
TOTAL	4,518	4,597	4,685

Accreditation Actions, 2015–2016

ACS WASC accreditation is based on an accreditation cycle of quality, with a self-study visit occurring every five to seven years. Please visit the ACS WASC website for additional details.

Self-Study Visits

Awarded full accreditation status	695
7 year	35
6 year	150
6 year with a mid-cycle review	465
5 year	6
2 year	31
1 year	6
No status given	2

Initial Visits

Awarded initial accreditation	130
Awarded candidacy status	67
Denied candidacy status	3

Visiting Committee Statistics, 2015–2016

The 2015–2016 school year was a record year for visiting committees. Over 3,278 visiting committee chairs and members, many serving on multiple visits, participated on teams during this past school year. A special thanks to the chairs and members who served on the 1,604 teams during the school year! See page 18 for information about serving on a visiting committee.

Self-Study Visits	695
Initial Visits	200
International Mid-cycle Visits	24
Mid-cycle Visits	485
Probationary Visits	38
SEP Previsits	27
Special Progress Visits	29
Special Visits	8
Substantive Change Visits	74
Three-Year Term Revisits	11
CIS Preparatory Visits	3
CIS Five-Year Renewal Visits	7
Corporate Review Visits	—
Appeal Visits	3

Total Committees1,604



ACS WASC Words of Wisdom: An Initial Evaluation of the ACS WASC Accreditation Cycle of Quality for Schools

During this past year, the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) conducted a study to gather information about the accreditation process through Desertfrost Consulting Group, Inc., a California assessment, research, and evaluation consultancy. This study had several evaluation purposes to gain a deeper understanding of: (1) how ACS WASC-accredited schools implement the self-study process, (2) the relationship between ACS WASC accreditation and ongoing school improvement, and, (3) the effects of the ACS WASC accreditation process on schoolwide improvement and improved student learning. This initial formal study was *exploratory*, i.e., to learn more about the understanding of the ACS WASC *Focus on Learning* accreditation process and its impact on school improvement. The impact was studied through the survey results and the perceptions and experiences of the school principals interviewed.

As an *initial* assessment and evaluation effort, the study provides ACS WASC with important insights into the relevance, application, and benefits of the ACS WASC *Focus on Learning* model that sheds light on necessary revisions, additions, or refinements to the accreditation process. This initial phase only focused on gaining a deeper understanding of how California public high schools implement the ACS WASC model in relation to how the model is communicated and used. In the future, a focus on the impact of the ACS WASC accreditation process is anticipated as well as the inclusion of a broader range of public and private schools accredited by the Commission worldwide. As ACS WASC's formal evaluation efforts continue, the expectation is that there will be an extension of the collective understanding around these principles and design elements.

The study was grounded in three guiding evaluation questions that reflect the scope of this initial study and provide the framework for the final analyses and interpretation of the survey and interview data. (*See the insets on pages 11 and 12 for additional details.*)

1. **Evaluation Question One:** How do the ACS WASC accredited schools use the ACS WASC principles as tools to implement ongoing cycles of inquiry that address these questions?
2. **Evaluation Question Two:** What is the relationship between the implementation of the ACS WASC *Focus on Learning* accreditation process and ongoing school improvement and its effectiveness?
3. **Evaluation Question Three:** What is the long-term effect of the ACS WASC accreditation process and the use of its principles or tools on supporting schoolwide improvement and improved student learning?

As an organization, ACS WASC works in a complex and dynamic educational environment and must be responsive to the needs of schools and their immediate communities, while also attending to the challenges of a larger political milieu. To accomplish this, ACS WASC must be both adaptive in its approach toward servicing schools and steady in its core purposes. Core values guide the ACS WASC model; these values are relevant not only to schools accredited by ACS WASC but also to ACS WASC itself. The ACS WASC school improvement model is framed around a data-informed, collaborative, and formative process.

Therefore, the methodology used was a mixed methods or developmental evaluation that included quantitative and qualitative methods (online survey and follow-up interviews); the interview data was used to extend the understanding of the survey data. This type of approach was not designed to judge program impact or effectiveness, but rather to capture the dynamic features of the organization's system and to illuminate innovative strategies and ideas in preparation for future formative and summative evaluation efforts. Through this approach the study captured essential orientations of high school principals throughout California toward the ACS WASC accreditation process and their perceptions of how it has influenced their schools in the sustaining of ongoing cycles of inquiry and ongoing school improvement processes that result in more powerful teaching and learning for all students.

The study consisted of a survey of 2,100 public high school principals in California and interviews of 30 randomly selected California public high school principals from schools that were either in the first or fourth year of the ACS WASC six-year cycle. The types of public schools in the study included comprehensive, alternative/continuation, independent study, charter, juvenile, and online comprehensive schools.

The majority of responses came from comprehensive public high schools. To select the 30 interviewees, the researchers used the regions identified by the California County Superintendents Education Services Association (CCSESA); interviewees were contacted by the ACS WASC Executive Director prior to the scheduled one-hour interview to ensure their understanding of the purpose of the interview. Survey participation was not required for interview participation. There were eight interview questions that were aligned with the survey questions with the goal of a deeper understanding of the survey results. The results of the interviews were transcribed and the researchers then conducted a triangulating and combining of the survey and interview results based on the three guiding primary evaluation questions.

The succinct “big picture” findings are that ACS WASC:

- Has a strong accreditation model that is widely respected
- Fosters school conditions for high-quality student learning and ongoing improvement through data analysis, reflection, inquiry, and discussion
- Provides a process for regularly examining programs, processes, and data around school goals
- Builds a professional culture to support the schoolwide action plan
- Validates school’s efforts for improvement.

Evaluation Study: The Guiding Evaluation Questions

Question One: How do the ACS WASC accredited schools use the ACS WASC principles as tools to implement ongoing cycles of inquiry that address these questions: [Formative and Developmental Foci]

- **Question 1A:** How does a school know that all students are achieving the desired schoolwide learner outcomes and the essential academic standards that prepare students to be globally competent, e.g., college and career ready?
- **Question 1B:** Is the school doing everything possible to support the defined high-quality learning? The principles for this question are as follows:

- Understanding and accomplishment of the vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes?
- High achievement of all students in relation to schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards?
- Use of multiple sources of data analysis regarding student achievement (quantitative and qualitative)?
- Assessment of program and operations regarding impact on student learning using ACS WASC criteria concepts?
- Alignment of a comprehensive schoolwide action plan to areas of greatest need?
- Ongoing improvement and accountability process?
- Total involvement and collaboration of stakeholders?

Question Two is composed of two components (summative focus):

- **Question 2A:** What is the relationship between the ACS WASC *Focus on Learning (FOL)* accreditation process and ongoing school improvement?
- **Question 2B:** To what extent was the ACS WASC accreditation process effective through its influence on the following:
 - Development of school evaluation processes and procedures that support student learning?
 - The refinement of the vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes as the foundation for student achievement and school improvement?
 - Development of a constructive school culture that engenders professional collaboration across the school and its stakeholders in pursuit of successful learning for all students?
 - Development and support of effective communication structures and systems within the school and between the school, the district office, and the community?
 - Development of a broad-based planning, implementation, and monitoring process that fosters ongoing schoolwide improvement efforts related to student learning?

Continued on Page 12



ACS WASC Words of Wisdom: An Initial Evaluation of the ACS WASC Accreditation Cycle of Quality for Schools — *Continued*

The study also emphasized important opportunities for ACS WASC in the following areas:

- Provide increased support to schools in the self-study and follow-up processes, e.g., monitoring and using assessment evidence to change practices and refine school goals, and operationalizing the cycle of inquiry beyond the planning and implementation phases
- Work with districts and school boards on the understanding of accreditation as an ongoing school improvement process
- Ensure the ACS WASC process facilitates alignment of the SPSA and LCAP
- Facilitate greater parent and community involvement in the school's improvement efforts
- Move forward with strengthening a consistent process for the work of the visiting committees.

The detailed report will be posted on the ACS WASC website. On the following page are some sample results from the preliminary presentation given at the June 2016 ACS WASC Commission Meeting.

- Development, implementation, and monitoring of the schoolwide improvement plan, i.e., the SPSA aligned to the LCAP?
- Evaluation of collegial strategies used to implement innovations?

Question Three is composed of two parts (effect focus):

- **Question 3A:** What is the long-term impact of ACS WASC accreditation processes on schoolwide improvement and improved student learning?
- **Question 3B:** To what extent did the ACS WASC principles or tools support the long-term implementation of the following:
 - The school's capacity to:
 - Diagnose organizational strengths and weaknesses
 - Identify opportunities for growth, and
 - Implement appropriate self-corrective strategies and initiatives?
 - A culture of collaboration, shared decision-making, and self-reflection among staff and important school stakeholders?
 - A schoolwide action plan that is based upon a shared vision for successful student learning and global competence, i.e., college and career ready?
 - Student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards?
 - An ongoing learning community and professional development for all staff in support of powerful teaching and learning for all students?
 - Organizational systems, policies, and procedures that focus all fiscal, material, and human resources toward the attainment of successful learning for all students?
 - The school sustainability of ACS WASC initiated improvement initiatives over time (despite a variety of external forces, e.g., changes in leadership, teaching staff, and other key stakeholders; through various district, state, and/or federal reform/policy initiatives, and changes in community demographics and economic factors)?



SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTION: My school's participation in the ACS WASC/CDE six-year accreditation cycle has positive effects on student learning.

Average Response:

- 5.05 (between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree")

Survey Comments:

- ACS WASC focuses on improvement, helpfulness of visiting committees

Emerging Interview Themes:

- Schools regularly examine programs, processes, data around school goals
- ACS WASC helps schools maintain focus on programs, students, parents, and community

Quote: *"I think the real value is in helping us become . . . more aware of what we are doing and how it is or is not supporting our students' learning."* (Interviewee #18, May 2016)

SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTION: The benefits of ACS WASC/CDE accreditation are . . .

Survey Comments:

- Improvement focus, fosters data analysis, reflection, and discussion. Provides validation of school's efforts to improve
- Uneven VC feedback; alignment between ACS WASC, SPSA, LCAP (a common theme)

Emerging Interview Themes:

- Fosters schools' capacity for internal reflection and inquiry
- Helps schools maintain a focus on educational programs and students
- Reminds us to regularly look at programs, processes, and data

Quote: *"The value is that it incorporates what the school should naturally be doing and brings it to the forefront . . ."* (Interviewee #3, April 2016)



ACS WASC COMMISSIONERS

(listed by the organizations they represent)

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Western Catholic Educational Association

Chad Colden
Nina Russo
Sally Todd
Vacancy

Commission Update

The Commission is comprised of individuals representing the various constituencies of ACS WASC. The Commission convenes three times a year.

2017 Commission Meetings

Winter

January 30-31, 2017
San Diego, CA

Spring

April 24–25, 2017
Burlingame, CA

Summer

June 26–27, 2017
Burlingame, CA

ACS WASC Commission Members

Members who left the Commission this June include: Richard Bray, Thomas Butler, Rodney Chamberlain, Carlyn Fujimoto, Martin Griffin, and Russell Weikle. We deeply appreciate the excellent service provided by these Commissioners and wish them well in their continued service to others.

ACS WASC welcomes the following new Commission members: Ron Carruth, Odie J. Douglas, R. David Gaudi, and Derek Minakami.



ACS WASC Departing Commissioners

L-R: Martin Griffin, Rodney Chamberlain, and Russell Weikle

International Update

Harlan E. Lyso, Ph.D. | International Consultant, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



More than two decades ago, the ACS WASC *Focus on Learning (FOL)* accreditation protocol transformed accreditation from a compliance model based on what the school did to a focus on why schools exist — enhancing student learning. Through its emphasis on schoolwide learner outcomes and challenging criteria, the process

enabled schools to more clearly:

- Define *what* students learn
- Develop innovative strategies to enhance *how* students learn
- Utilize quality assessments to evaluate *how well* the students have learned.

A school's constant reflection on these components of learning is fundamental to the *Focus on Learning* process.

ACS WASC has not rested on its laurels, but has regularly reviewed and enhanced the process to ensure that *FOL* remains relevant in a constantly changing environment and challenges schools to maximize student learning. This past summer with input from a number of international educators, a thorough review of the international version of *FOL* resulted in adjustments ensuring that *FOL* assists schools in identifying and addressing the critical issues facing international schools today. These enhancements include:

- Strengthening threads throughout the document that ensure that schools focus on preparing students to be globally competent and internationally minded
- Providing additional guidance in how schools must address student protection and the guarantee of a safe and secure learning environment integrating the results of the recently published AAIE documents on child protection
- Ensuring congruency between *Focus on Learning* and the Common Ground Collaborative, after valued conversations with CGC Co-Director Kevin Bartlett

- Refining the section on governance, especially related to the increasing number of proprietary international schools
- Additional refinements to the finance section to ensure that schools are sustainable and evidence funding that supports a serious commitment to student learning
- Developing and refining rubrics that assist schools to analyze their programs based on criteria and indicators
- Reorganizing the structure of the self-study categories to provide greater congruency and reduce redundancies.

ACS WASC is committed to ensuring that any international school undertaking the *Focus on Learning* process will be challenged to reflect deeply on (1) defining what students should learn; (2) how best to design learning experiences to maximize student learning; (3) assessment strategies that confirm how well students have learned and enable the school to adjust learning experiences accordingly; and (4) organizational structures, processes, and procedures that maximize the school's effectiveness and guarantee a safe and stimulating learning environment. The recent revisions to the *Focus on Learning* protocol provide international schools a thoughtful, cohesive, comprehensive, and rational means of assessing their effectiveness in maximizing student learning and developing strategies to further enhance the quality learning opportunities their students experience.

It should also be noted that ACS WASC is committed to assisting international schools that wish to collaborate with multiple accrediting and/or authorizing agencies. ACS WASC has negotiated memoranda of understanding with the Council of International Schools and the International Baccalaureate Organization, providing schools an opportunity to conduct non-duplicative self-study efforts and host accreditation visits with either or both of these organizations simultaneously with ACS WASC accreditation.



Office Update

Northern California Burlingame Office



L-R: Frances Rivette, Christine Toti, Susan Lange, Lino Gantan, Ari Nishiki-Finley, Alice Hauser, Alexandria Silva, Albert Chan, Kelly Richards, Joanne Cacicedo, Beni Malla, William Snyder, Judy Abbott, Christian Punzalan, Francesca Lorenzo, Kristen Chow, Cynthia Newton

Southern California Temecula Office



L-R: Alicia Hutchinson, Denise Jagoda, Emily Barton, Kathy Frazier, Ginger Hovenic, Elizabeth Oberreiter

New ACS WASC Director



Ms. Nancy S. Brownell joined ACS WASC as an ACS WASC Director in October 2016.

Ms. Brownell has over 40 years of experience as a teacher, administrator, school board member, and educational leader.

Her most recent positions were Senior Fellow at the California State Board and Department of Education; Assistant Superintendent, Sonoma County Office of Education; and School Board Member, Rescue Union School District.

Ms. Brownell has supported schools and districts through positions in county offices and the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA). She served on the original developmental committee for the *Focus on Learning* process and has chaired many ACS WASC visiting committees.

Ms. Brownell will be working on behalf of ACS WASC with the California State Board of Education, the California Department of Education, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, and other groups to support and enhance the use of the accreditation process as an important vehicle to support the accountability goals of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

New ACS WASC Staff



Dr. Kathy Frazier joined the ACS WASC team in July 2016. She brings a broad range of classroom and administrative experiences at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels, including serving as a teacher, principal, director of schools, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. She currently

serves on the board of trustees of the California League of High Schools and was a past state president of the California League of Middle Schools.

Dr. Frazier will be representing ACS WASC on the California Middle Grades Alliance. She is very community-oriented and is a member of CAMEO, the professional auxiliary of the Assistance League of Long Beach, which mentors high school students and she is a member of the Dean's Superintendency Advisory Group for the University of Southern California. Kathy also serves as a Doctoral Cohort Mentor and Adjunct Professor for Brandman University in the Organizational Leadership Doctoral Program. Dr. Frazier attended the University of Southern California for her three academic degrees. On a personal note, she loves the ocean and spending time with her husband in Catalina.



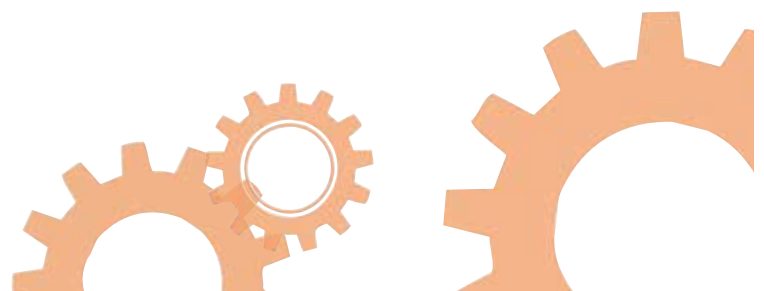
Kelly Richards joined ACS WASC in August 2016. She has a K-6 Multi-Subject Teaching Credential and has worked as a reading tutor. Kelly has a Bachelor of Science degree in nutrition. Prior to working for ACS WASC, Kelly travelled the world working as a flight attendant for Virgin America. When Kelly is not

working, she enjoys spending time with her French bulldog, Dodge, and travelling and checking out local craft breweries.



Will Snyder joined the ACS WASC office in April 2016. He was born and raised in the Bay Area, where he has lived his whole life. He is working to obtain an Associate degree in business administration at the College of San Mateo, and he plans on enrolling in business school so that he can also receive a Bachelor/Master

degree in a business management-related field. When he is not working, Will enjoys spending time with his family, his girlfriend and her three daughters, cooking and barbequing, swimming, taking day trips to the coast, or staying in and watching movies. His hobbies include fishing; drawing, painting, and crafts; and hiking and camping. He is a very passionate sports fan of baseball, basketball, soccer, and sometimes football.





Accrediting Commission for Schools
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Serving on an ACS WASC Visiting Committee



Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC

Northern California Office
533 Airport Boulevard,
Suite 200
Burlingame, CA 94010
Phone: 650 696-1060
Fax: 650 696-1867
mail@acswasc.org

Southern California Office
43517 Ridge Park Drive,
Suite 100
Temecula, CA 92590
Phone: 951 693-2550
Fax: 951 693-2551
mailsocial@acswasc.org

ACS WASC Overview

The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC), a world-renowned regional accrediting association, provides assistance to schools in California, Hawaii, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Fiji, Asia, and other parts of the world; currently serving approximately 5,000 schools.

ACS WASC's philosophy centers upon three beliefs: a school's goal is successful student learning; each school has a clear purpose and schoolwide student goals; and a school engages in external and internal evaluations as part of ongoing school improvement to support high-quality student learning.

Accreditation is integral to a school's perpetual cycle of assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring. The ACS WASC accreditation process fosters excellence in elementary, secondary, and adult education by encouraging school improvement. ACS WASC accreditation recognizes schools that meet an acceptable level of quality, in accordance with established, research-based ACS WASC criteria.

Visiting Committees

ACS WASC accreditation visits range from one-day initial visits to three- or four-and-½ day full self-study reviews.

Visiting committees are composed of two to eight members, one of whom is the chairperson. A committee is comprised of educators representing a wide range of educational experience and expertise. Training workshops are provided and new members work closely with experienced chairs.

Visiting team members review the ACS WASC criteria and study reports from the school in preparation for the visit. During the visit, the team observes the school in operation and other evidence; reviews student performance data; observes students engaged in learning; and dialogues individually and collectively with administrators, teachers, students, and other stakeholders. The visiting team then prepares a report outlining the team's findings for the school and ACS WASC Commission.

Why Serve?

- Learn about a variety of educational strategies, approaches, and practices
- Observe programs in action
- Develop and cultivate new professional relationships
- Provide insights and reflections as a fellow educator
- Work together to ensure the high achievement of all learners
- Demonstrate one's professional commitment to quality education
- Give back to the educational community

"Serving as a visiting team member is by far the best professional development opportunity available in education today. Taking the time to see a school from all facets does so much for the perspective that we bring back to our own sites."

Shawn Marshall, ACS WASC VC Member
Riverside, CA

Please contact our office or visit the ACS WASC website: www.acswasc.org for further information.

The ACS WASC Member Data Sheet can be found on the ACS WASC website at
www.acswasc.org/vc/serving-on-a-visiting-committee

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**ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

Northern California Office

533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 200
Burlingame, CA 94010
650 696-1060
mail@acswasc.org

Southern California Office

43517 Ridge Park Drive, Suite 100
Temecula, CA 92590
951 693-2550
mailsocial@acswasc.org



ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS, WASC

533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 200

Burlingame, CA 94010-2009

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Northern California Office
533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 200
Burlingame, CA 94010-2009
650 696-1060
mail@acswasc.org

Southern California Office
43517 Ridge Park Drive, Suite 100
Temecula, CA 92590-3615
951 693-2550
mailsocial@acswasc.org

Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC

Fred Van Leuven, Ed.D., Executive Director

Marilyn S. George, Ed.D., Associate Executive Director

www.acswasc.org