

WASC Words 2011

“If we really want 21st Century learning,
then we need 21st Century assessment.”

~ Douglas B. Reeves, Ph.D.



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Western Association of Schools and Colleges
ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS

WASC Words 2011

WASC Mission

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.

WASC Philosophy

The Commission believes that the goal of any school should be to provide for successful student learning. Programs encompassing both the cognitive and affective components of learning should foster human growth and development and enable students to become responsible, productive members of the school community and our democratic society. Each school should develop a school purpose to reflect its beliefs. For ongoing program improvement, each school should engage in objective and subjective internal and external evaluations to assess progress in achieving its purpose.

WASC Territory

The Commission extends its services to public and private schools located in California, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and to American and international schools in East Asia and the Pacific Islands.



Thoughts from the Chair

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



Were one to ask educators to identify terms or phrases that effectively summarize the role that schools ought to be fulfilling, almost assuredly “*Focus on Learning*” and “*21st century skills*” would appear near the top of the list. For almost twenty years, long before we entered the

21st century and before many other accrediting agencies followed suit, these two phrases have been at the heart of the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) accreditation process, and rightfully so. Our schools MUST be about student learning while ensuring that the skills our students learn prepare them to be successful in the world.

Underpinning all that we hope to accomplish in schools are what WASC refers to as our expected schoolwide learning results (ESLRs). While specific ESLRs vary among schools, 21st century skills like effective communication, technological competence, critical thinking, and life-long learning are at the heart of successful school plans. Admittedly, these skills are harder to assess and document than are the standards and benchmarks of a typical curriculum. Despite the challenges encountered and creativity required in attempting to assess these skills, schools that attempt to do so can only add value to their programs. We simply must ensure that students who leave our schools are prepared to be successful. This necessarily involves not only content knowledge but also the development of 21st century skills.

The WASC accreditation process was never intended to be an activity conducted every few years to meet some external expectation. Rather, it provides a continuous school improvement process that enables the broader school community to focus on mutually developed goals that will enhance student learning and ensure that students are prepared to contribute meaningfully to our global community when they leave school.

One school superintendent concluded: “WASC has provided us with an effective school improvement structure, and as a result we have accomplished the following: 1) identified the essential areas needed in an effective school; 2) formed ongoing committees to nurture those essential areas; 3) provided the direction for committees to formulate action plans to strengthen those essential school components; and 4) increased the confidence that we are fulfilling our mission as a school in preparing our students for the future.” Such a process, when undertaken intentionally and followed up consistently, has the potential to benefit every single student in our schools. Is that not what we all desire for our own schools?

In addition to the dedicated efforts of the WASC staff, the WASC accreditation process necessarily relies heavily on volunteers serving on Visiting Committees. I believe there is no better or more economical professional development opportunity available than serving on a Visiting Committee. Our schools benefit from the volunteer efforts of Visiting Committee members when they come to our schools. WASC visits provide professional development to our volunteer educators AND service to our schools, a true “win-win” scenario. I would invite school leaders to actively encourage their professional staff members to serve on Visiting Committees and to receive WASC training.

As I begin my first year as chair of the Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC, I am honored to serve an organization whose primary purpose is to support schools in their efforts to become even more effective. We have an outstanding staff in our WASC offices both in Burlingame and Temecula. I would encourage you to contact the WASC office and draw upon the talents and resources that exist there. Working together as we “*Focus on Learning*” and develop “*21st century skills*” within our students, we can make real progress in the year ahead.



Executive Director's Update

David E. Brown, Ph.D. | Executive Director, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



A good friend and colleague, Dr. Hank Cram, serves as the Executive Director of the Middle States Elementary and Secondary Commissions. In a recent newsletter he attempted to “demystify accreditation,” and although he suggested his answer may be best suited as a cure for insomnia, I fully subscribe to

his conclusions about the value of accreditation.

For WASC, active participation in the ongoing nature of accreditation makes good schools better and great schools even greater. And, perhaps equally important is the fact that serious adherence to the accreditation protocol assists schools that are not performing well to embark on a continuous improvement path that is “manageable, attainable, and sustainable” over time.

Schools that take full advantage of the accreditation process have a clear sense of purpose and direction. They have developed an action plan that will help them bridge the gap between the ideals they seek for the students they serve and the reality of student performance. These schools are focused on priorities that ensure that improvement can be made and at the same time build a solid foundation of student academic performance data that enables the school to celebrate and share their successes with students, parents, and staff, as well as with the broader community.

The number of WASC schools continues to expand both in our U.S. region (California and Hawaii) and in the Pacific Islands and countries of East Asia. We have expanded the size of our Commission and our professional staff to ensure that schools are being well served and that individual acknowledgements and guidance play a significant role in the work we do. Effective accreditation work is just that — work. Nonetheless, schools

consistently tell us how much they appreciate the benefits of being directed well and that they are confident that their efforts to improve are truly benefitting students. And, those who serve on teams continue to receive “the least expensive and most productive source of professional development available anywhere.”

I am proud to be associated with an organization and a system that is genuinely interested in helping schools strengthen the education provided our students. Being accredited does communicate to a school's community that they meet essential criteria found in high-quality schools, but truly the value of being focused on school improvement gives our process its greatest benefit, and as Hank Cram summarized, the greatest value in accreditation comes from simply doing what “every school should be doing to help ensure that every child gets the quality education they deserve.”

We welcome your continued participation on Visiting Committees and as active members of school Focus and Home Groups. Your work establishes the foundation for a successful and productive self-study. In these challenging financial times, it is easy to become distracted from our task. Thanks to all of you who continue to forge partnerships and collaborate with colleagues to ensure that this work goes forward. On behalf of all the students and families in the WASC region, thank you for your great work.



Continuing the Improvement Journey After the WASC Visit: The “Now What?”

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



The WASC visit is over. The self-study involved teachers, administrators, support staff, students and parents, and the governing authority and provided great insight into the identified current and future learning needs of the students. The strength of the self-study tasks was in the analysis of student achievement data based on academic standards

and schoolwide learner outcomes (expected schoolwide learning results) and the analysis of the quality of the school programs and processes based on the WASC research-based schoolwide criteria; essentially, the school answered the “So What” question.

The visit was an opportunity to converse with other educators as they provided feedback and insight on the school’s next steps based on the WASC criteria. The purpose of the visit was to answer the following questions: Are students achieving and prepared for the 21st century (e.g., global citizens)? Where is the school now? Where is it going? Does it have a quality roadmap? The relief of the completion of the visit and the ensuing celebration should now propel the school forward into refining its schoolwide action plan (the single plan for student achievement for California public schools and the academic and financial plan for Hawaii public schools). Now the school can maximize the synergy of the visit and begin moving forward at a steady, well-planned pace to support the implementation of the schoolwide action plan. Thus, a question that one may ask is the following: *How can the WASC Focus on Learning accreditation process empower a school to have a single, clear, and meaningful roadmap?*

The answer lies in the uniqueness of the WASC *Focus on Learning* accreditation process — a dynamic results-based approach. *Focus on Learning* accreditation is integral to a school’s *perpetual cycle of assessment, planning, implementation, and reassessment* based upon student achievement.

The Expectations After the Visit

Modifying the Schoolwide Action Plan

All schools struggle with the realities of developing and using a clear, concise schoolwide action plan. The challenge for educators is to create a user-friendly action plan that focuses all stakeholders on improved student achievement. The school initially is expected to modify the schoolwide action plan using the feedback in the Visiting Committee Report. Through studying the critical areas for follow-up and the supporting key issues in the Visiting Committee Report, the Leadership Team facilitates the modifications and additions to the schoolwide action plan that were included in the school’s Self-Study Report. It is essential that the Leadership Team has dialogue with the teachers and the School Site Council (if appropriate) to obtain their input and to ensure their understanding and consensus of the updated roadmap that will guide the ongoing work of the school. The revised schoolwide action plan should be sent to WASC as soon as possible; the final deadline is June 1 or December 15 (for fall visits). The school must answer the following question affirmatively: *Has the school integrated all the critical areas for follow-up (major recommendations) from the Visiting Committee Report?*

The Ongoing Review and Refinement

Once the schoolwide action plan has been modified, the Leadership Team then guides the school in its implementation. Annually, it is critical to review the student/community profile, formative and other summative data, and the relation of that information to what has been accomplished or planned within the schoolwide action plan. In addition, the following questions should be asked:

- ▶ For each section of the schoolwide action plan, are the steps being taken appropriate?
- ▶ Are the steps making a difference?

The ongoing monitoring and critical analysis of the schoolwide action plan progress is paramount to school improvement. The WASC six-year accreditation cycle requires schools to annually update their profiles, review and revise their schoolwide



action plan as needed, and summarize the progress made. This progress should be shared with the Leadership Team and the governing authority, and there should an annual celebration of progress.

Making It Happen — Translating the Plan into Purposeful Action — Ensuring the School is a Learning Community

Although the accreditation process enables a school to create a schoolwide action plan, it is not a “magic answer,” just as any one specific program or design is not necessarily a “magic solution.” Indeed, the schoolwide action plan is a roadmap for:

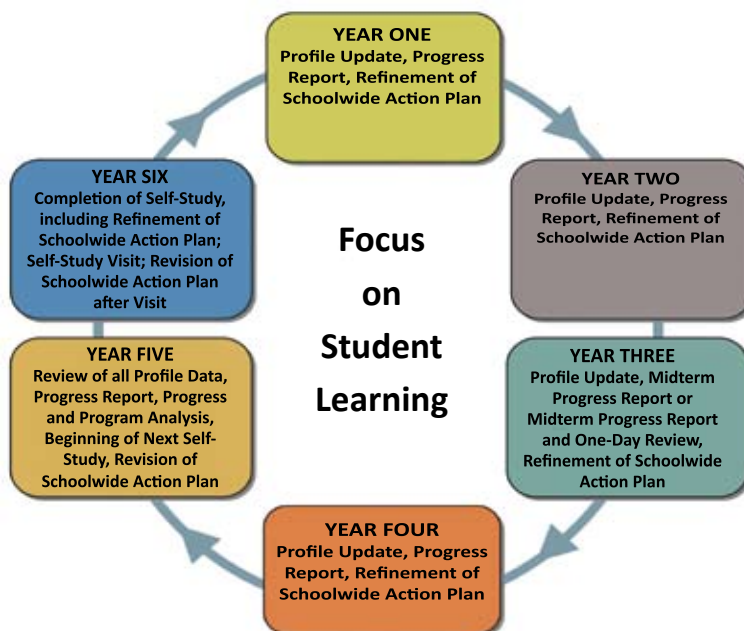
- ▶ a shared, collaborative focus and commitment to student learning
- ▶ regular reflection and analysis of data-based progress
- ▶ the continued building of the teaching and leadership capacity.

The challenge for a school is involving all staff in this improvement process, i.e., being active in the implementation strategies and the evaluation of the progress made in terms of student learning. The school leadership and staff must understand the focal points of the plan, and what is needed to be accomplished based on student critical learning needs, e.g., global competencies or

21st century skills, now and in the future. The questions schools must ask themselves are:

- ▶ What will be different for students:
 - One year from now?
 - Two years from now?
 - Three years from now?
- ▶ How will we measure the assessment of student progress?
- ▶ How do we modify the schoolwide action plan if there is no impact on improved student learning?

The WASC *Focus on Learning* process is a vehicle that supports the essential ideas of a school being a learning community through the schoolwide action plan. These ideas are the following: The school’s purpose is to ensure all students learn at defined high levels of achievement; if this is to occur, school staff and other stakeholders must collaborate on defined goals to improve the learning; and finally, all stakeholders must focus on results and gather and analyze evidence of student learning. Therefore, school leaders may want to maintain the schoolwide Focus Groups as an organizational structure or use their existing professional learning community groups to empower teachers and others to engage collaboratively in training, dialogue, and coaching that focuses on learning and the necessary changes.



WASC SIX-YEAR ACCREDITATION CYCLE



One resource that elaborates on the power of schools being professional learning communities is a recent publication: *Leaders of Learning* (Dufour and Marzano 2011).

Learning Forward's revised professional learning standards are another helpful resource. These seven standards are powerful guides designed to help schools engage educators in school improvement that focuses on high-quality student learning. The standards address the areas of learning communities, leadership, resources, data, learning designs, implementation, and outcomes. As schools implement their schoolwide action plans and move forward, using these standards to guide their work can be very powerful. If schools embrace a standards-based professional learning program that will improve educators' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, student learning results should also improve.

"The body of research about effective schools identifies collaboration among educators and professional learning as two characteristics that consistently appear in schools that substantially increase student learning" (Hayes et al. 2011).

In summary, school leadership teams will want to reflect and plan on the most-effective approach to sustain ongoing improvement using the best practices for professional learning. The WASC *Focus on Learning* accreditation process provides the overall foundation that empowers a school to:

- ▶ Change the school culture — modifying systems
- ▶ Connect stakeholders with a coherent vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes
- ▶ Invest in staff through training, dialogue, coaching, and support
- ▶ Involve staff in action focusing on learning and teaching
- ▶ Sustain change through showing results and commitment
- ▶ Build capacity for the work of learning.

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- Hayes, M., et al. (2011). "New Standards Put the Spotlight on Professional Learning," *JSD*, Vol. 32, No. 4. Learning Forward.
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Accreditation Actions, 2010–11

WASC accreditation is based on a six-year cycle, with a full self-study occurring every six years. Please visit the WASC website for additional details.

Full Self-Study Visits

Awarded full terms	476
6 year	122
6 year with a midterm review	347
5 year	7
Awarded other terms	160
3 year	126
2 year	32
1 year	2
No term given	1

Three-Year Term and Limited-Term Revisits

Awarded terms on revisits	211
3 year	140
2 year	27
1 year	44
Denials of accreditation	1

Initial Visits

Awarded initial term of accreditation	92
Awarded candidacy status	65
Denied candidacy status	3
No term given	1

Committee Statistics, 2010–11

The 2010–2011 school year was another active year for Visiting Committees. Nearly 2,940 volunteers, many serving on multiple visits, served on teams during this past school year. A special thanks to the committee chairs and members who served on the 1,427 teams during the previous school year! See page 18 for information on volunteering to serve on a Visiting Committee.

Full Self-Study Visits	637
Initial Visits	161
Three-Year Term Revisits	158
Midterm Review Visits	276
Midterm Return Review Visits	12
Limited-Term Revisits	68
Special Visits	10
East Asia Midterm Visits	13
CIS Preparatory Visits	3
CIS Five-Year Renewal Visits	—
Expanded Substantive Change Visits	8
Substantive Change Visits	77
Validation/Appeals Visits	4
Total Committees	1,427



Accreditation — A “Change Management” System

Lee Duncan, Ed.D. | Associate Executive Director, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



“It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out nor more doubtful of success nor more dangerous to handle than to initiate a new order of things.”

Machiavelli (1446–1507)

“Things alter for the worse spontaneously, if they be not altered for the better designedly.”

Francis Bacon (1561–1626)

I dare you to google “change management programs” — I did and found 58,000,000 sites to visit! My curiosity led me to this topic because of a truth that has impacted me this past year —

that the WASC accreditation process is a powerful change management system for schools. This process is changing education in our region one school at a time and is recognized worldwide as a process that works.

Dr. Douglas B. Reeves (2009) starts his book on leading change in schools with a tongue-in-cheek prescription:

*Here is a simple recipe for leading change. First, pour a truckload of evidence into an ungreased container. Stir in a crock full of inspirational rhetoric. Add two heaping portions of administrative imperatives. Finally, dump into the mix precisely one ton of fear. Bring to a boil.**

In his book, Dr. Reeves identifies key concepts involved in school change:

- ▶ Changing the school’s culture is where change begins
- ▶ Change produces resistance and frustration
- ▶ Change occurs through actions, not words
- ▶ Change requires professional development, collaboration, time, and meetings
- ▶ Building capacity for change requires coaching
- ▶ Implementing change hinges on leadership, time, and feedback
- ▶ Sustaining change requires a culture of commitment.

Dr. Reeves’ book is just one of many that reveal that change is and always will be a part of education. School change is debated in local districts, state assemblies, and in our national Congress. In the next year, every presidential candidate will have a plan to reform education. You can find change management workshops to attend — one in particular I found promised great things for \$2,100 per person for three days of training! There are change consulting firms, change programs, change workshops, models, and presentations, and if Google is correct, you have millions of options! What is interesting to me is that in investigating the world of change management and looking at Dr. Reeves’ concepts of school change, I find that nothing fits the educational model better than the WASC accreditation process. It is a dynamic change management system for schools.

Although national and regional debate on school reform is useful, the most appropriate and effective place for meaningful discussion on school change to occur is on the campus of each school. As stakeholders meet and evaluate their own setting, culture, student population, and learning needs, they can best identify what needs to be changed and how it can be accomplished in a timely and cost-effective manner. The challenge, however, is that many schools don’t quite know where to start or how to proceed. This is when WASC accreditation is especially meaningful and provides the structure needed to manage change on the site of each individual school. The end result is not only the national accreditation status and rewarding self-fulfillment for each school but is also the establishment of an ongoing system that will manage change into the future.

The WASC accreditation process starts with the important task of identifying the school’s mission/purpose and then establishing the schoolwide learner outcomes that will guide the school’s academic program. Focus Groups are created to work with the school’s Leadership Team so that all stakeholders have a means by which to provide input into the school self-study and school improvement processes.

* Reeves, Douglas B. (2009). *Leading Change in Your School*. Alexandria, VA: ACSD.



The accreditation process is built on three major components:

1. School self-evaluation, resulting in a written Self-Study Report
2. Peer review, resulting in a written Visiting Committee Report
3. A schoolwide action plan, resulting in ongoing school improvement.

These three components build a change management process that is structured, organized, and comprehensive in addressing the needs of the entire school operation. The process evaluates the school's governance structure, leadership and staff effectiveness, learning environment, curricular plan, instructional program, assessment processes, student services, parent involvement, resource development, and facility management. The WASC process manages change in every aspect of the school's operation with a focus on student learning. Since 1962, this WASC process has helped schools improve — changing education one school at a time!

Every school is a unique learning community complete with its own learning culture, leadership style, funding mechanisms, and educational expectations. The WASC process allows each school to chart its own course and celebrate its unique heritage and mission. WASC believes in debate, discussion, innovation, and meaningful change to bring 21st century learning skills into each school. It recognizes, however, that each school should have the freedom to create its own unique pathway to change that best meets the needs of its students and community.

So you ask, "What makes the WASC process so effective?" I believe there are core principles embedded into the WASC process that make it a change management system that works.

1. The WASC accreditation process is led by school stakeholders, those who are most connected, most concerned, and who stand to gain the most when change for the better occurs.
2. WASC accreditation is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. WASC schools are on a six-year cycle with specific responsibilities to ensure that meaningful change occurs year by year.
3. The WASC accreditation process focuses on student learning and bases "change-decisions" on what is actually occurring in the classrooms. Assessment data drives school improvement.

4. The WASC accreditation process allows each school to retain its own unique identity, culture, and mission. It allows each school to identify its important key issues that can be addressed in its schoolwide action plan.
5. The WASC accreditation process is connected to the latest research-based educational concepts, successful practices, and activities. These are applied uniquely to each school in the way that is most effective for each individual setting. The process does not try to impose a national reform agenda on every school; it is not surgery with a sword, but with a scalpel.
6. The WASC accreditation process allows for continuity over the years even if the school changes leadership, students, and faculty members — the management system allows for the normal changes that occur in schools.

Yes, education in America today has issues and is in need of change! Funding shortfalls, budget cuts, program cuts, arguments over teaching strategies, changing governance models, new focus on 21st century skills, and the role of unions in education will permeate the media and national debate. National debate, however, will not solve the unique issues on campuses across America. What is needed more than debate is a focus on each school as an individual learning community that has its own system in place to improve student learning.

The WASC process is such a "change management system." It provides exactly what each school needs to make meaningful change a reality. The accreditation process is not an antiquated notion — it is not an event — it is an ongoing process that produces meaningful change. It is needed today more than ever — WASC works!

In closing, may I offer my own recipe for school change:

First, pour a truckload of school self-evaluation into an ungreased container. Stir in a crock full of inspirational peer review from a WASC Visiting Committee. Add four heaping portions of improvement goals in the schoolwide action plan. Finally, dump into the mix precisely one ton of support. Allow to simmer ... and watch the school improve!



WASC Words of Wisdom — Excerpts

This year we asked our WASC volunteers for their comments regarding how the WASC process helps to foster school improvement. We also asked them to share ways schools are determining if students are achieving the schoolwide learner outcomes. We hope that you will find their responses to be as compelling as we did. The responses in their entirety can be found on our website. Enjoy!



The WASC criteria are goals used by educators to challenge all students to reach high achievement using sound educational practices. A student profile developed by the staff in preparation of the school’s self study provides the teachers and administrators with a roadmap of who their students are and what is necessary to challenge each student toward academic achievement.

KAREN ANDERSON — WASC member since 1981 — Served on over 50 WASC teams

The first thing schools need to do is make sure that students know and understand the schoolwide student goals. Teachers can also ask the students to list individually how they have achieved or are working towards the various goals. Another way is for teachers to examine various samples of student work to see which goals are being addressed.



JACQUELINE ANDERSON — WASC member since 1994 — Served on over 10 WASC teams



The WASC self-study process offers the most effective way for a school to address the 21st century skills needed by students as they face global challenges of the future. The most valuable way for a school to assess student outcomes that I have observed is through thoughtful orientation, both at the program and class levels.

JANET ARNEY — WASC member since 1988 — Served on over 20 WASC teams

WASC is an extremely effective process for continuing school improvement. The action plans provide the school with a process to gauge their ongoing efforts to impact student achievement in a positive direction. “Schools are either improving or declining, there is no plateau on which to rest,” this is a basic tenet of the WASC process.



ERNEST BOONE — WASC member since 1991 — Served on over 12 WASC teams



The WASC accreditation process focuses attention on discovering and successfully implementing ways to achieve core goals related to student learning. By emphasizing schoolwide goals and teaching student content standards, by clearly describing characteristics of proficient levels of work and performance expectations, and by evaluating the depth of student understanding on specific course expectations, school teams create an intense focus on clarifying what students need to learn, and monitor progress over time.

NANCY BROWNELL — WASC member since 1999 — Served on over 18 WASC teams

The WASC process demands that schools ask — “Is what we are doing right for *all* children?” The amazing power of the ESLRs is that schools are forced to ask themselves, “Do these learning goals reflect our vision, mission, and goals for every student, and are they measurable?” “How do we know that we are doing what we say or purport to be doing for every child?”



SUSAN CHARLES — WASC member since 1988 — Served on over 18 WASC teams



In my experience of chairing WASC visits, I have come to believe that the concepts professed in *Focus on Learning* can be applied to all instructional settings. Standards-based instruction that includes evaluation of student learning in a timely manner is a great way for schools, parents, and administrations to evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction program.

HENRY COWLES — WASC member since 2001 — Served on over 12 WASC teams

The WASC accreditation process leads the entire school community through an honest and productive analysis of a school’s strengths and limitations. This leads to a continuous school improvement process as participating schools strive to meet rigorous, research-based standards and 21st century skills.



STEVE COOVER — WASC member since 2000 — Served on over 15 WASC teams



The degree to which schools achieve success should be based on the schoolwide learning expectations. The students' success isn't necessarily based on how many students took AP classes or are going to attend four year universities, but are they going to be successful citizens in a democracy with the ability to use technology and think clearly and rationally.

JOAN DELZANGLE — WASC member since 1980 — Served on over 43 WASC teams



Schools that do the best job of providing their students with skills necessary to meet the challenges of the 21st century are those that have comprehensive, clearly defined, understandable, and measurable student outcomes. There is no better method than the WASC self-study process for bringing together all of the school's stakeholders to reflect and agree on what every student needs to know upon completing the school's program. The most effective schools review regularly their student outcomes and consistently measure their students' progress in achieving them.

ANN DESMOND — WASC member since 2002 — Served on over 33 WASC teams

There is nothing better than a school preparing for the WASC accreditation process. Every company in America has an "end of the year" report. This is OUR report. Schools have the opportunity to have an ongoing, objective look at themselves and a "common assessment" based upon the same criteria and data as all other schools.

NADINE ELWOOD — WASC member since 1998 — Served on over 24 WASC teams



The schoolwide development and assessment of expected schoolwide learning results continues to evolve in schools as they consider the necessary future skills of their students that will be part of a global society. Schools are utilizing multiple indicators such as ESLRs to ensure that all students are college and career ready in order to reach their postsecondary goals. Utilizing the self-study format, schools have become adept at employing data informed means to assess the meeting of schoolwide student goals.

SHEILA FOLAN — WASC member since 1992 — Served on over 32 WASC teams

The accreditation process serves as a catalyst of the ongoing school improvement process. WASC also serves as an accountability process to ensure that all schools provide the academic and personal support of all learners. WASC assisted our school to refine our Goals for Grads (ESLRs) to ensure that we design, institute, and measure the 21st century skills throughout the curriculum.

STEVE GRAYBEHL — WASC member since 1999 — Served on over 15 WASC teams



The WASC accreditation process helps schools to self-reflect, analyze data and develop plans of action that continuously lead to increased achievement for all students. The process helps schools continuously implement instructional change that prepares students for their futures as the leaders and developers of our ever-changing global society. With a clear vision of the goals for student achievement, I have seen schools backwards plan programs of studies and support for students.

MARTIN GRIFFIN — WASC member since 2001 — Served on over 18 WASC teams

Schoolwide learning goals assessment has been an "aha" moment for many schools. WASC supports them in taking the time to "drill down" whether the goals are relevant, current or need to be changed. Purposeful walkthroughs with probes to understand their goals have proven helpful. Surveys, peer reviews, and cross-curricular discussions have helped in knowing what happens for the students. As one school told me, "What a difference WASC has made for us! We now know who we are and where we want to go to increase our students' learning."

KATHLEEN GRUBB — WASC member since 1998 — Served on over 14 WASC teams



The WASC accreditation process is most effective in this situation as it fosters collective improvement. If the school has structured (WASC format) and collaborative focus groups that are ongoing, there is an opportunity for continuous sharing based on recent data collection. Schools that have a clear vision for what success for "all students" means and are able to show by various means that students are achieving are able to achieve their goals. One effective way that many schools have found to demonstrate success is through project-based learning.

JANE HAMMAKER — WASC member since 1996 — Served on over 22 WASC teams

**WASC Words of Wisdom — Excerpts *Continued***

While making WASC visits, I have heard teachers and administration comment on how the WASC accreditation process has helped foster school improvement by getting ALL staff to collaborate about what it takes for students to succeed. The schoolwide student goals fit well with the alternative schools. Most schools struggle with ways to effectively assess the degree to which schoolwide student goals are being achieved, but some have found success informally by incorporating Individual Learning Plans with growth areas centered around the ESLRs and providing a time for self-reflection.

SHIRLEY HARGIS — WASC member since 2000 — Served on over 16 WASC teams



WASC's *Focus on Learning* allows individual schools to continually focus and fine tune their "binoculars of student learning" through the lens of the self-study process as each school focuses on its mission for teaching 21st century skills and global competencies. One WASC accredited school identified realistic and meaningful 21st century worldwide course standards to measure Expected Schoolwide Learning Results in the areas of literacy and mathematics, interpersonal relationships, and spiritual growth.

GARY INGRAHAM — WASC member since 1999 — Served on over 30 WASC teams

As a recently retired high school principal I always stressed to my school community the importance of using the WASC/CDE accreditation process as a way to improve what we do to help all students succeed. The yearly review of our schoolwide goals and action plans allowed us to be more effective and successful.

PAT LICKISS — WASC member since 1989 — Served on over 34 WASC teams



Today's students live and will work in a constantly changing world. Gathering information and making informed decisions about next steps is the WASC process. Schools that successfully assess the degree to which student goals are achieved have the regular involvement and participation of all. They evaluate a wide variety of disaggregated student achievement data that is systematically shared, discussed and analyzed in both home and focus groups. Rubrics are used extensively.

SCOTT MANGRUM — WASC member since 1999 — Served on over 17 WASC teams

Foster school improvement: In our busy lives as educators, with declining resources and increased accountability, WASC fosters the one opportunity we have to talk about strategies on how to make good schools great.

Important future challenges: Bringing in experienced colleagues from other regions of California through WASC provides a much needed objectivity to challenges all schools share.

Schools Assess: All schools and districts have now become conversant in the language of assessment.

MICHAEL McCOY — WASC member since 1994 — Served on over 19 WASC teams



In order for schools to assess the degree to which the schoolwide student goals are being achieved, they must first take an in-depth look at what are their student goals. Once they have clearly identified what they want students to learn and achieve, they can better determine if they are reaching those goals. This has been observed in schools through an honest look at disaggregated data and best teaching practices.

SHELLY MOREIRA — WASC member since 1998 — Served on over 16 WASC teams

Many schools use hard data that they gather about their desired achievement of students. However, it is the school that provides opportunities for students to personally demonstrate their achievement through portfolios, exhibitions and/or some type of personal connection with the school's (ESLRs) student outcomes that can say "our students leave us with what we have determined is important for them to be prepared for whatever their future may bring." One example is a girl who correlated her personal growth during her school years with one of the school's ESLRs in her college application essay.

BARBARA NUNES — WASC member since 1986 — Served on over 50 WASC teams



As I watch schools accept the WASC challenge, work together and plan, I am always amazed that the challenges of 21st century skills and global competencies are being met and exceeded so that the graduates are able to meet those challenges and excel in the workforce. When students have been involved in the decision-making process, in setting the schoolwide student goals, the desire to achieve those goals is stronger. I have observed students working with other students to help them achieve higher test scores, complete projects, and practice for performances.

KAY PALUSH — WASC member since 1999 — Served on over 24 WASC teams



Focus on Learning provides an obvious and logical framework for ongoing, schoolwide improvement. Utilizing Focus Groups for regular curriculum development and improvement of instruction is, for most schools, a natural and wise choice. All Focus Groups are “permanent” — not just a 5- or 6-year cycle — and ongoing work groups. Each reports twice a year to full faculty meetings. The WASC Coordinator regularly updates the school’s report and publishes it for the staff and board. They could be ready for a full WASC visit at any time.

JAMES ROULSTEN — WASC member since 1971 — Served on over 50 WASC teams



We are working on a system of portfolios for all students where the ESLRs are the basis for students to procure and analyze evidence of having achieved schoolwide goals. Students internalize those goals, identify work samples that show themselves and external constituencies the extent to which they have individually achieved the goals, and present those portfolios to panels of community members and school staff.

MARK RYAN — WASC member since 1999 — Served on over 6 WASC teams

In my experience the WASC accreditation process fosters school improvement. Schools have to ask themselves, what are we doing and is it working? If it isn’t working what isn’t working, why isn’t it working, and how do we fix it? Without that self analysis schools are more likely to stay in a rut of status quo. A school should ask: Are we adequately preparing our students for their futures? What data can we find and analyze that will tell us if our students are ready? How can we evaluate our overall program and instructional strategies in terms of student readiness for their postsecondary goals?

DUSTIN SAXTON — WASC member since 2003 — Served on over 10 WASC teams



WASC Focus on Learning provides a framework for schools to establish and monitor holistic student goals that include 21st century skills as well as core academics. In Vietnam, international school students presented a senior project demonstrating mastery of student goals within the context of a mandatory community service requirement to a panel of UN officials. In California, students completing summer internships in architecture presented a formal project summary to a panel of architects. What grace under pressure while demonstrating achievement of 21st century skills!

VALENE STALEY — WASC member since 1987 — Served on over 44 WASC teams

The WASC process requires all stakeholders to work with each other to discuss many aspects of the school’s program that affects student achievement. When completed correctly all stakeholders HAVE really sat down together and discussed the issues that include but are not limited to the five focus group areas. Sites that have been the most successful in establishing effective ways to assess schoolwide student goals have empowered their staff to make connections with their students.

SUSAN WEINSHANKER — WASC member since 1992 — Served on over 18 WASC teams



The WASC process is incredibly powerful as it validates student learning. Schools that effectively approach this challenge translate each goal into tangible student outcomes that demonstrate the skills required for mastery, develop common rubrics for instruction and assessment, break learning into sequential parts amid increased rigor, and infuse the teaching commitment across grade levels and throughout the curriculum ensuring all students are involved each year; goal attainment relies on effective instruction, student practice, and real-world application.

SUZIE WIESE — WASC member since 1990 — Served on over 29 WASC teams

In my opinion, the WASC accreditation process makes the schools take a really honest assessment of their work and mission. Schools need to take time not only to address but examine in-depth preparedness of their students and teachers alike, to face challenges posed by changes in demographics and family structures, and superficiality being sufficient for competence, and the process makes the schools spend time to do so. Together, the self-study and the Visiting Committee Report outline a clear path to improvement and the process of monitoring the progress.

VENDULA VOGEL — WASC member since 1998 — Served on over 20 WASC teams



The self-study is an excellent vehicle for initiating school improvement. It encourages all school stakeholders to actively participate in school improvement. The *Focus on Learning* edition of the self-study is especially effective in addressing the future challenges of today’s students.

BRIAN YAICH — WASC member since 1980 — Served on over 57 WASC teams



ACS WASC COMMISSIONERS

(listed by the organizations they represent)

Officers

Harlan Lyso, Chairperson
Valene Staley, Assistant Chairperson

Association of California School Administrators

Grant Bennett
Richard Bray
Rebecca Buettner
Martin Griffin
Mary Luebben
Michael McCoy
Valene Staley

Association of Christian Schools International

William Walner

California Association of Independent Schools

Damon Kerby

California Association of Private School Organizations

Kathy Ralston

California Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc. (PTA)

Rosaline Turnbull

California Department of Education

William Ellerbee

California Federation of Teachers

George Martinez

California School Boards Association

Jesus Holguin

California Teachers Association

Lorraine Richards

Charter Schools

Chase Davenport

East Asia Regional Council of Schools

Harlan Lyso

Hawaii Association of Independent Schools

Rodney Chamberlain

Hawaii Government Employees' Association

Ann Mahi

Hawaii State Department of Education

Gerry Madrazo

Hawaii State Teachers Association

Doris Yamashiro-Tanaka

Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Berit von Pohle

Postsecondary Education

John Kerr

Public Members

Shabaka Heru
Steve Malvini
Carl Takamura
Vacancy

Western Catholic Educational Association

Chad Colden
John Collins
Patricia Livingston
Vacancy

Commission Update

The Commission is comprised of individuals representing the various constituencies of the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC). The Commission convenes three times a year.

2012 Commission Meetings

Winter

January 30–31, 2012
San Diego, CA

Spring

April 30–May 1, 2012
Burlingame, CA

Summer

June 25–26, 2012
Burlingame, CA

ACS WASC Commission Members

Members who left the Commission this June include: Kelly Bock, Susan Dillon, Federico Milton, Dale Mitchell, Robert Peters, Linda Reser, Richard Sexton, Nancy Soderberg, and William Wong. We are deeply appreciative of 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: Grant Bennett, Rodney Chamberlain, Chad Colden, Chase Davenport, John Kerr, Ann Mahi, Michael McCoy, Berit von Pohle, and Doris Yamashiro-Tanaka.



Awards given at the ACS WASC Summer 2011 Commission Meeting

L-R: Linda Reser, Nancy Soderberg, Gerry Madrazo, Robert Peters



International Update

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



While the Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC is best known for its work with schools in California and Hawaii, WASC has also supported the school improvement efforts of international schools through its accreditation since the 1960s. Whether they serve host country nationals or the international business community, WASC-accredited international schools offer an English-language curriculum that prepares students for admission into American and worldwide English-speaking universities. Some international schools are relatively large and located in such major cities as Seoul and Singapore, while others are small and isolated in remote locations. Regardless of their locale, through their involvement in the WASC accreditation process, these schools retain their focus on educating internationally minded and globally

competent students. Parents considering relocating internationally can be reassured by the fact that our schools are focused on improvement, student learning, and global citizenship. WASC is a reputable, respected accreditation agency, and we work closely with the Office of Overseas Schools, U.S. Department of State.

WASC now accredits more than two hundred international schools in East Asia, an area in which new international schools are being established at a record pace. Collaborative in nature, WASC has developed joint accreditation arrangements with the International Baccalaureate, the Council of International Schools, and the Association of Christian Schools International, and jointly accredits international schools in Thailand and China with those countries' respective ministries of education. The *WASC Focus on Learning* process is an exemplary accreditation process that continues to drive school improvement in a growing number of international schools.

ACS WASC Commission Officers

As of July 1, ACS WASC has a new chairperson and assistant chairperson. Chairperson Dr. Harlan Lyso served as the superintendent at the Shanghai American School. He served as head of the school at Seoul Foreign School for 16 years. He has also served as president of the East Asia Regional Council of Schools and the president of the Asia Pacific Activities Conference.

Our new Assistant Chairperson Dr. Valene Staley is the assistant superintendent of Instructional Services at the Porterville Unified School District (PUSD). Her job description includes the oversight and supervision of principals, curriculum, assessments, student services such as special education, and placement of nontraditional students. She has been with the PUSD since 1967.

ACS WASC Membership, 2010-2011

The school membership of the Accrediting Commission for Schools continued to grow during the 2010–11 school year. Currently, approximately 200 new applicant schools are preparing for their initial accreditation visit with WASC.

EVALUATION AREA	# OF SCHOOLS 2008–09	# OF SCHOOLS 2009–10	# OF SCHOOLS 2010–11
California	3,589	3,630	3,686
Hawaii	189	189	194
Out of State	9	9	14
Pacific Islands			
American Samoa	10	10	10
Federated States of Micronesia	2	2	2
Guam	34	34	34
Northern Marianas	23	23	22
Marshall Islands	3	3	3
Palau	1	1	1
Africa	1	1	1
Australia	1	1	1
East Asia	163	202	207
Mexico	1	1	1
TOTAL	4,026	4,106	4,176



Office Update

Burlingame Office



L-R: Cynthia Newton, Alice Hauser, Lino Gantan, Judy Abbott, Cris Lunny, Jess Whipple, Lisa Blaylock, Sheléne Peterson, Michelle Nunes, Susan Lange, Cristine Toti, Marilyn George, Frances Rivette

Temecula Office



L-R: Ginger Hovenic, Michelle Allen, Lee Duncan, Alicia Adatao, Emily Barton, Tiffany Thomas

Focus on Technology

WASC is embarking on the Portal Project to utilize technology and incorporate online delivery systems in the work of accrediting schools. We plan to initiate this project by piloting an online program facilitating the online submission of Visiting Committee materials to the WASC office. The documents will then be relayed electronically to the corresponding Commission Reading Groups for review. The Portal Project will begin in 2012, and will expand to include more of the WASC processes going forward.

WASC piloted an iPad Reading Group program this year for the WASC Commission and plans to fully implement it this coming year for all WASC Commission Reading Groups. The WASC Commission Reading Groups will use iPads to electronically read and review the hundreds of reports and Visiting Committee materials for schools that receive Commission actions each year. So far this program has proven to be very efficient and effective.

Online webinars are being used more and more by WASC for trainings and meetings. Webinars make it possible for anyone, anywhere in the world with an internet connection to log on and participate in a meeting or training session. Webinars can be recorded and made available for asynchronous training as well.

Microsoft Word templates are alive and well on the website and can easily be put into a tool like Google Docs for document collaboration. We continue to add school and Visiting Committee templates and materials to the WASC website: www.acswasc.org.

Ultimately, the goal is for accreditation activities to be as accessible and relevant as possible, and WASC welcomes the increasing use of technology in its pursuits.



Charter Schools: Opportunities to Participate in the WASC Accreditation Process

Ginger Hovenic, Ed.D. | Director of School and Member Relations, Southern California, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



Did you know that WASC accredits over 500 K–12 charter schools throughout the states of California and Hawaii?

Charter schools, being schools of choice, have continued to grow since the legislation passed in 1991. They operate in a variety of ways, such as alternative or continuation schools, online or blended environments, traditional learning settings, extended day or year calendars and career/vocational education opportunities, to name a few.

The basic concept of charter schools is increased autonomy in return for accountability. Charter schools are accountable for both academic results and fiscal practices to several groups: the sponsor that grants the charter, the parents who choose to have their children enrolled, and the public who funds them.

WASC and charter schools in California and Hawaii as well as service provider organizations have worked closely together to

focus on the specific needs of charter schools. Charter schools are held to the same high WASC standards used for all schools while addressing the unique issues faced by individual charter schools. To further the articulation between WASC and charter schools, it is with great pleasure we welcome Chase Davenport from the California Charter School Association to the WASC Commission, and we look forward to his unique charter school perspective.

Charter schools have found the WASC process is a powerful tool for school improvement as well as for professional development. Those who serve as members and chairs have echoed the benefits of learning about innovative strategies and best practices in education and observing research and exemplary programs in action while visiting other schools.

WASC is continually looking for volunteers from charter schools to participate on WASC visits because it is invaluable to have members and chairs with like experiences. For more information about how to volunteer, please visit the WASC website at www.acswasc.org.



WASC Accreditation-Plus

Online Tools to Support Your School's Ongoing Accreditation Process



WASC Accreditation-Plus is an optional, fee-based program consisting of a suite of online tools within a dedicated and hosted website environment. The Accreditation-Plus program was designed to offer schools a modern, technological approach to organizing and managing the WASC self-study and ongoing improvement processes.

Visit the "Accreditation-Plus" page on the WASC website at www.acswasc.org or contact Cynthia Newton, Accreditation-Plus School Liaison, at 650 548-4387 or cnewton@acswasc.org for additional information.



Accrediting Commission for Schools

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Volunteering: Serving on a WASC Visiting Committee



Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC

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WASC accreditation visits rely entirely on volunteers. Your support is greatly appreciated.

WASC Overview

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), one of six regional accrediting associations in the United States, is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and is known worldwide. WASC provides assistance to schools in California, Hawaii, the Pacific Islands, and East Asia, currently serving over 4,000 schools.

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.

In addition to its official title, WASC also stands for: *"We Are Student-Centered."*

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

Visiting Committees

WASC accreditation visits range from one-day initial visits to three- or four-and-a-half 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 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 WASC Commission.

Why Serve?

- Learn about a variety of educational strategies, approaches, and practices
- Observe programs in action
- Develop and cultivate new professional friends
- 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, WASC VC Member
Riverside, CA

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

The WASC Volunteer Data Sheet can be found on the WASC website at

www.acswasc.org/vc_volunteering.htm

WASC
Accrediting Commission for Schools



WASC Words 2011

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