

Focus on
Learning
THE ACCREDITATION MANUAL



**POSTSECONDARY — ADULT EDUCATION — ROCP
2005–2006 EDITION**

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Focus on **Learning**

THE ACCREDITATION MANUAL

Western Association of Schools and Colleges
Accrediting Commission for Schools
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**POSTSECONDARY—ADULT EDUCATION—ROCP
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Preface

If educational organizations are to concentrate all their energies and resources on successful student learning, a holistic, honest examination of the actual program for students is required. Through the use of empowering criteria, new communication patterns, evidence gathering techniques, and insight from fellow educators, the appropriate accreditation process can serve as a vehicle to move school community members into meaningful schoolwide improvement and accountability. The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), utilizes a protocol for accrediting schools entitled *Focus on Learning*.

The *Focus on Learning* process has been widely accepted throughout the WASC region as integral to the “heart” of education-successful student learning. This has been demonstrated through a variety of *Focus on Learning* adaptations as WASC works jointly with numerous educational associations. Public, independent and church-related private K-12 and adult schools value the “basic components” of *Focus on Learning* that can be “institutionalized” as the schools address growth areas that impact student learning. These include: (1) the defining of quality achievement of expected schoolwide learning results for every student by all stakeholders; (2) schoolwide interdisciplinary dialogue based on evidence gathering and analysis about what students are doing and producing; and (3) the development, implementation, and accomplishment of a schoolwide action plan. Therefore, all schools view the *Focus on Learning* process as a living document.

This edition of *Focus on Learning* has been developed to address the particular concerns of educators working with postsecondary, adult education, and Regional Occupational Centers and Programs (ROCPs) institutions. Through the valuable input of educators in these areas, the *Focus on Learning* process will be a powerful vehicle for ongoing school improvement.

WASC accreditation matters for the Postsecondary, Adult Education, ROCP institutions are handled by the Southern WASC office in Temecula.

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Introduction

School Accreditation: An Ongoing Improvement Process

Accreditation fosters excellence and ongoing improvement in public and private schools. In a time of restructuring and the need for basic changes in the American school, the accreditation process is a dynamic, viable, catalytic process that provides an overarching structure for meaningful change. The process assures a school community that the school's philosophy and expected learning results are appropriate and being accomplished through a viable educational program.

Accreditation empowers the school in its endeavor to provide a quality educational experience for all students. The accreditation process is integral and synonymous to school (and district) assessment, planning, implementation, and reassessment based upon a vision of successful student learning.

The WASC accreditation program is based upon several beliefs:

- Fundamental to accreditation is the quality of the educational program experienced by the students.
- A school assesses the appropriateness and the accomplishments of the student program with respect to its established philosophy and objectives.
- A school must give evidence of adequately meeting the WASC high quality criteria that are general guidelines of an effective educational program and services. A school may also give evidence of meeting more specific standards consistent with its own philosophy.
- The most effective and meaningful evaluation of a total school program can be conducted by the staff and students of an individual school.

Because accreditation's central tenet is that a school operates with a clear understanding of its purposes and mission, the process enables a school to reflect upon and respond to essential questions:

What do we want our students to know and be able to do? What are the learning experiences needed to produce these outcomes? As a result of this process, schools develop and refine long-range and short-range goals and their accompanying action steps. These goals are then implemented and assessed in a perpetual cycle of instructional improvements for

How Do We Know Students Are Learning?



students. Essential elements of school improvement are incorporated into the accreditation process. These elements include:

- The involvement of total staff and school community in self-directed problem-solving;
- The opportunity for meaningful dialogue of ideas, collaboration and shared decision-making;
- The use of high quality criteria/standards/practices for an effective educational program;
- The advantage of an additional dimension/perspective from the visiting committee as the school redefines and establishes its goals and accompanying action steps;
- The supportive encouragement of the ongoing assessment and follow-up through accreditation progress reports and reviews.

Thus, accreditation provides the means for a school to attain curricular improvement, strategic planning, staff development and restructuring.

WASC Organization

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is one of six regional accrediting associations in the United States. The Commission 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, Australia, the Republic of Palau, Fiji, and East Asia. This association is composed of three commissions:

- (1) Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities;
- (2) Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges;
- (3) Accrediting Commission for Schools.

The Accrediting Commission for Schools extends its services to public, independent, church-related, and proprietary schools of the following levels and types: elementary schools; junior high/middle/intermediate schools, comprehensive/college preparatory high schools, continuation high schools, alternative high schools, occupational/vocational high schools, regional occupational programs/centers, adult schools, and vocational skill centers. Many of the schools accredited also include postsecondary courses, e.g., courses which require a high school diploma or G.E.D.

The search for “Good” schools is elusive and disappointing if by goodness we mean something close to perfection... Good schools reveal imperfections, uncertainties, and vulnerabilities...In fact, one could argue that a consciousness about imperfections, and the willingness to admit them and search for their origins and solutions is one of the important ingredients of goodness in schools.

**Sara Lawrence Lightfoot
From the Good High School**

The Accrediting Commission for Schools is composed of twenty-six representatives from educational organizations appointed as follows:

California

- Association of California School Administrators
- California School Boards Association
- California Teachers Association
- California Federation of Teachers
- California State Department of Education
- Western Catholic Educational Association
- Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists
- California Association of Independent Schools
- California Congress of Parents and Teachers
- California Association of Private School Organizations

Hawaii

- Hawaii State Department of Education
- Hawaii Government Employees' Association
- Hawaii Association of Independent Schools
- Hawaii State Teachers Association

East Asia

- East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools

Public Members

- Four public members

Candidacy or Interim Accreditation Process

Candidate for accreditation is a status of affiliation, which indicates that an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward, but does not assume, accreditation. The candidate for accreditation classification is designed for institutions, which are not yet ready for full evaluation based on the WASC criteria for accreditation. The institution must demonstrate evidence of sound planning and show evidence of the resources to implement its plan. The school must also be willing to meet WASC criteria for accreditation in a reasonable time.

Private schools must meet the legal requirements of the jurisdiction in which they are located. For example, California private schools must list with the California State Department of Education and submit an affidavit indicating compliance with Education Code section 33190. Likewise, Hawaii private schools must be licensed by the Hawaii Council of Private Schools, or certified by the Western Catholic Educational Association and accredited in association with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, under the authority of Act 188, Session Laws of Hawaii,

1995. Schools in other jurisdictions may have other specific requirements with which they must comply.

On receipt of the application for accreditation by WASC, the Executive Director will arrange with the institution for a two-member team to conduct a one-day visit to the school. At this time the team will evaluate if the school is eligible for accreditation. Following the visit, the committee will prepare a report to be presented to the Accrediting Commission for Schools at its next meeting, at which time the Commission will act upon the application. The school will then be notified of the action of the Commission.

If the decision is favorable, the school will be granted candidacy status not to exceed three years. Normally, the school will be expected to undergo their full self-study (full accreditation process) in their third year of candidacy. Candidacy status shall expire at the end of three years, but may be extended up to a maximum of three additional years by Commission action, following a revisit.

Schools in an established district or diocese where at least one school is already accredited, or well established schools with a record of high performance credibility, may be granted a three-year interim term of accreditation by the Executive Director, after a satisfactory one-day initial visit to the school conducted by a two-member team. The written report is reviewed by the Commission along with the Executive Director's decision regarding interim accreditation status.

Independent study high schools must go through candidate status, even though they may be part of an established public school district. The Commission has approved ten minimum criteria for candidacy of independent study high schools. (Bylaws, 1991)

Full Accreditation Process

The accreditation process has three stages: the self-study, the visit, and the follow-up. A school's philosophy and the WASC high quality criteria of an effective educational program serve as the underlying bases for these stages.

Self-Study

WASC publishes its own evaluation instruments. An institution which applies for full accreditation will be provided with a choice of documents that have been designed in cooperation with educators from the various schools/organizations to meet their unique needs. WASC cooperates with several educational associations in joint accreditation self-studies in which schools use mutually acceptable criteria and self-study documents that address the concerns of the involved groups. Joint processes are conducted with the following organizations:

- Association of Christian Schools International
- Association of Waldorf Schools of North America

- Bureau of Jewish Education
- California Association of Independent Schools
- California Department of Education
- East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools
- Golden State Association of Christian School
- European Council of International Schools
- Hawaii Department of Education
- National Lutheran School Accreditation
- Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
- Western Catholic Educational Association

The entire staff and representatives of the student body and community are involved in the preparation of the self-study which is accomplished over a period of several months. WASC provides special self-study coordinator workshops to assist schools in conducting the self-study. During this phase, all staff members candidly assess the school's strengths and areas needing improvement with respect to the criteria.

In the self-study process collecting information is critical to learning about the actual instruction experienced by students. It is a valuable confirmation on opinions and is essential if the committee's conclusions are to be more than speculation. Methods of collecting information include:

- observing the lessons teachers are delivering and the nature of student participation in classroom activities
- interviewing students about their courses of study
- accompanying students during all or part of a typical school day
- examining regularly used instructional materials and teachers' lesson plans
- reviewing samples of student work
- reviewing school documents; e.g., student records, course offerings, statement of goals and objectives,

Value Added Test

Schools add value by:

- Increasing what students know
- Increasing what students can do
- Improving how students feel
 - About themselves
 - About others
 - About learning

The assessment / accreditation process should give a reading on the learning value added by the school.

— Donald G. Haught
Executive Director

procedures, minutes of meetings of faculty, departments, student government, etc.

- discussing issues with staff, students, and parents
- reviewing the General Data
- reviewing results of the Student and Parent/Community Questionnaires
- reviewing the availability of resources and use of strategies and materials for special needs students
- personal reflection

Working through numerous committees, staff members meet and discuss all the collected verifying information and perceptions. The results of these discussions are the foundation for the written part of the self-study, the starting point for dialogue with the Visiting Committee, and the beginning of the improvement process. Efforts are made to identify root causes of problems, especially those within the school/subject area's control to improve within existing resources; this is key to a meaningful self-study.

The committees summarize their findings of this in-depth assessment based upon the school's philosophy, expected schoolwide learning results and the WASC criteria. They identify major strengths and areas for improvement. The subject area committees develop and write a step-by-step action plan for identified priority areas for improvement. All action plans include:

- a statement of the areas of improvement
- specific steps that will be taken
- who will be involved with each step
- a timeline for accomplishment of each step
- ways to assess progress

As the report sections are completed, all committee members critique the Self-Study Report sections with respect to the following critical questions:

- Does the report address all the important ideas of the designated criteria?
- Was appropriate information collected to verify findings?
- Was the comparison done with respect to evidence of student learning and success?
- Are the major areas for improvement reflecting needs that can be addressed within existing resources?

After reviewing the Self-Study Report sections for schoolwide trends and areas for improvement, the Leadership Team/Steering Committee identifies and summarizes the schoolwide major strengths and areas for improvement and potential action steps. At least four weeks prior to the visit, this completed Self-

Study Report is shared with members of a Visiting Committee, all staff and stakeholders, and the Accrediting Commission.

Full Self-Study Visit

The Visiting Committee is usually composed of three to eight people, one of whom is the chairperson. A typical Visiting Committee is composed of a school chief administrator, a district office administrator, a classroom teacher, a school administrator other than a chief administrator, a representative of a college or university, plus additional members who may be representatives of a state department of education, a county office, or a school board. A student may be added to the committee at the request of the school chief administrator. Members of the Visiting Committee will have attended special accreditation workshops conducted by WASC.

Subsequent to analyzing the self-study report the Visiting Committee spends three and one-half days at the school to provide an outside perspective on the quality of the curricular and instructional program provided for students. The visiting team members confer separately with each school committee, observe the school in operation, visit classes, and dialogue with individual administrators, teachers, students and others. Then the Visiting Committee prepares a report for the school which commends the school for its strengths and recommends areas which should receive attention prior to the next visit.

After this Visiting Committee Report is discussed with the school Leadership Team/Steering Committee and shared with the entire staff, it is formally submitted to the school and the Commission. The Visiting Committee also recommends a term of accreditation based upon the school's philosophy, the WASC criteria, the self-study, and findings during the visit. It is essential that the Visiting Committee report, and the recommended term be aligned. Throughout the visit the members support/encourage the ongoing school site follow-up.

Follow-up

The Accrediting Commission for Schools will meet at regularly scheduled times to consider accreditation for the schools. Prior to each meeting, the Commission members will review the Visiting Committee reports and the recommended terms for the schools. At these sessions the schools' self-studies are available for reference. The Commission will allow as much time as necessary to discuss the findings of a Visiting Committee and the supporting evidence found in the school report. The resulting decision of the Commission on a term of accreditation for each school is the composite judgment of the individual Commission members.

The term of accreditation is based in part upon the appropriateness of the school's stated purpose for an institution of its type and the degree to which it is being met.

The other determinant for accreditation is the degree to which the school meets the WASC criteria that are guidelines for an effective educational program.

The Commission also takes into consideration the following: the degree to which the school addressed recommendations of the last Visiting Committee, the degree of involvement of all stakeholders in the self-study process, and the validity of the schoolwide action plan.

Sample School Plan/Guide	
Goal 1:	The faculty will utilize a greater variety of instructional strategies appropriate to students' learning styles that will keep them actively engaged in their learning.
Specific Action Steps	
1.	_____

2.	_____

3.	etc.
Goal 2:	...

The cycle of self-study, visit and follow-up is normally repeated every six years, a full term. Specifically the Visiting Committee's confidential recommendation to the School's Commission is one of the terms listed below:

- A term of **six** years with a written Progress Report to the school's governing board on critical areas listed in the Visiting Committee Report. Upon review and formal acceptance by the board, the report will be filed with the WASC office.
- A term of **six** years with a complete Progress Report on critical areas and a one day on-site Review by a two member committee to be completed not later than the third year of the six year term.
- A term of **three** years with a Progress Report on critical areas of improvement and action plans, and a two-day visit as a requisite to continued accreditation.
- A term of **one** or **two** years with a complete Progress Report and Revisit to serve as a "warning" that, unless prompt attention is given to the major recommendations, accreditation may be denied.
- Denial of accreditation based on conditions detailed in the Visiting Committee Report.

Only Commission decisions regarding terms of accreditation of three years or less may be appealed. Any such appeal must be made by the chief administrator(s) of the school and/or district by letter specifying the basis for the appeal within sixty days after notification of the Commission action.

After the Visiting Committee leaves, the school Follow-up Committee facilitates the development and refinement of *one unified school plan. This is composed of long-range and short-range goals and correlated action steps. These correspond*

to the Visiting Committee's recommendations that reflect identified priority areas for improvement.

The Follow-up Committee coordinates the implementation of the action steps for each goal and involves the total staff in yearly review of the progress towards meeting the established goals, including the updating of the Student/Community Profile. As part of this follow-up, it is expected that schools prepare an annual report for discussion by the school, the district and the board of trustees. If the annual reports are recorded via the computer, compilation of the progress in addressing each Visiting Committee recommendation for the third year WASC report and the subsequent self-study will be facilitated.

Through the steps described above, accreditation is a powerful school site change process. When school/district leadership and staff view the accreditation process as essential to school/district planning and improvement efforts, the benefits of utilizing this invaluable tool can be maximized.

Why is Accreditation Important?

- The accreditation process validates the integrity of a school's program and student transcripts.
- Accreditation fosters excellence and ongoing improvement in public and private schools.
- The accreditation process assures a school community that the school's purposes are appropriate and being accomplished through a viable educational program.
- Accreditation is integral to school/district improvement, strategic planning, restructuring, and staff development.
- Accreditation is a way to manage change through regular assessment, planning, implementation and reassessment.
- Accreditation helps a school/district to establish its priority areas for improvement.
- Through the self-study, the school site visit and the ongoing follow-up, the school staff determines areas of strength and areas for improvement based upon its vision of expected schoolwide results.
- Accreditation enables a school to establish and implement a three to five year improvement plan as a result of the perpetual accreditation cycle that includes:
 - school self-assessment of the current educational program for students.
 - insight and perspective from the visiting committee.
 - regular school staff assessment of progress through the intervening years between full self-studies.

Overview

Focus on Learning: Overview

Background

The accreditation process for WASC resulted from intensive work of an advisory group composed of representatives from the WASC region. They synthesized the issues and concerns from the WASC constituency with current thinking and research-based knowledge about teaching and learning. The basic concepts addressed in this process focus upon student success in meeting the school's or program's student goals, standards, or expected learning results [i.e., what each student should know, understand and be able to do upon exit (graduation) from the school/program, or by the time the student completes the planned program]. The purpose of the self-study process is to address these fundamental questions:

1. How are the students doing with respect to the schools or program's expected learning results and curricular standards?
2. Is the school doing everything possible to support high achievement of these results for all students?

Simply put, the WASC self-study process is a strategic planning process.

Focus on Learning and School Change

To ensure that the self-study process becomes the instrument of change for the school/program, the following specific components are included:

- The clarification of the school's purpose and expected learning results for all students
- The involvement of the school community in self-directed problem-solving
- The opportunity for the following:
 - analysis of the actual program for students
 - meaningful dialogue
 - collaboration and shared decision-making
- The use of high quality criteria to analyze the program for students
- The development of an action plan for the school/program to support desired learning results
- The opportunity for an outside perspective regarding the proposed changes through the Visiting Committee's dialogue and findings
- The monitoring of progress in meeting or redefining goals and actions through accreditation reviews and reports

Criteria

The criteria are research-based guidelines of systemic school improvement that address accreditation's central tenet: a school operates with a clear understanding of its purpose.

The criteria were developed with the assistance of numerous practicing educational leaders and theorists. The objective was to develop criteria that brought attention to concepts and factors that differentiate between effective and ineffective schools. Since most formal education occurs in an institutional setting, factors that impact institutional effectiveness were considered along with curriculum, instructional strategies and assessment.

Specifically, in *Focus on Learning* school/program will be assessed against four categories of criteria, which follow.

The criteria are research-based guidelines of systemic school improvement that address accreditation's central tenet: a school operates with a clear understanding of its purpose.

A. ORGANIZATION FOR STUDENT LEARNING

SCHOOL/PROGRAM PURPOSE

1. The school/program has established a clear statement of purpose that reflects the beliefs and philosophy of the institution. The purpose is defined further by adopted expected learning results for students that form the basis of the educational program for every student.

GOVERNANCE

2. The governing authority (a) adopts policies which are consistent with the school/program purpose and support the achievement of the expected learning results for students, (b) delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff and (c) monitors results.

LEADERSHIP

3. The leadership (1) makes decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energies of the school/program on student achievement of the expected learning results (2) empowers the staff and (3) encourages commitment, participation and shared accountability for student learning.

STAFF

4. The leadership and staff are qualified for their assigned responsibilities, are committed to the school/program's purpose and engage in ongoing professional development that promotes student learning.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

5. The school/program has a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school/program's purpose and is characterized by respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student.

REPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS

6. The leadership and staff regularly assess student progress toward accomplishing the expected learning results for students and report student progress to appropriate stakeholders.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

7. The leadership facilitates improvement that (a) is driven by plans of action that will enhance quality learning for all students, (b) has staff and community support and involvement, (c) effectively guides the work of the school/program, and (d) provides for accountability through monitoring of the action plan.

B. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION*WHAT STUDENTS LEARN*

1. The school/program provides a challenging, coherent and relevant curriculum for each student that fulfills the school/program's purpose and results in student achievement of the expected learning results through successful completion of any course of study offered.

HOW STUDENTS LEARN

2. The professional staff a) uses research based knowledge about teaching and learning; and b) designs and implements a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students at a high level of learning consistent with the school's purpose and expected learning results.

HOW ASSESSMENT IS USED

3. *Teacher and student uses of assessment are frequent and integrated into the teaching/learning process.* The assessment results are the basis for (a) measurement of each student's progress toward the expected learning results, (b) regular evaluation and improvement of curriculum and instruction, and (c) allocation of resources.

C. SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC GROWTH*STUDENT CONNECTEDNESS*

1. Students are connected to a system of support services, activities and opportunities at the school/program and within the community that meet the challenges of the curricular and co-curricular program in order to achieve the expected learning results.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (BUSINESS/INDUSTRY, COMMUNITY AGENCIES AND/OR PARENTS)

2. The leadership employs a wide range of strategies to ensure that community involvement is integral to the established support system for students.

D. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

RESOURCES

1. The available resources are sufficient to sustain the instructional program and are effectively used to support out the school/program's purpose and student achievement of the expected learning results.

RESOURCE PLANNING

2. The governing authority and the leadership execute responsible resource planning for the future.

Importance of School's/Program's Purpose and Expected Learning Results

An essential element of systemic school improvement is the collective vision or statement of purpose on the part of the members of the school community: What should students know and be able to do upon exit from the school or program? In other words, what essential skills do all successful students have in common? What does the successful student look like? What does it mean to be an educated person? What skills are required for a person be effective in the workplace, in the community, and at home? What is the most effective preparation of students for the future?

The purpose provides the school's foundation for establishing student goals or expected learning results. These state the global knowledge, skills, and understanding students should possess upon exit from the school, or by the time the student completes the planned program. The attainment of these expected learning results drives the instructional program and the support operations of the school and therefore is integral to the school's accreditation process. These learning results complement the more specific curricular standards.

Importance of Evidence

Translating the school's purpose into expected schoolwide learning results for all students is a beginning. The self-study phase of the accreditation process revolves around an in-depth gathering of evidence that will enable a school to take an honest look at what is and isn't working based upon the criteria and the expected schoolwide learning results. This verification is key to learning about the actual instruction experienced by students.

Observable evidence includes analyzing the following:

- what students are doing and producing (student work)
- student interviews and observations
- hard data and information, e.g., student indicators for attendance, special needs, and overall school/program performance
- other interviews, observations, etc.

Accreditation Cycle

The accreditation process is a perpetual cycle of assessment, planning, implementing, monitoring, and reassessment (self-study, visit, and follow-up). Eighteen to twenty-four months prior to the visit, a school/program clarifies or redefines its expected learning results for students and begins the formal self-study process that assesses the actual student program with respect to the to the

criteria. The self-study process culminates in the development of a 3–5 year action plan for the school/program. The completed school report is sent to the visiting committee members for careful study at least four-five weeks prior to their spring visit. Using the results of the visit, the school modifies and implements its action plan in this ongoing cycle of improvement.

Parameters for Analysis

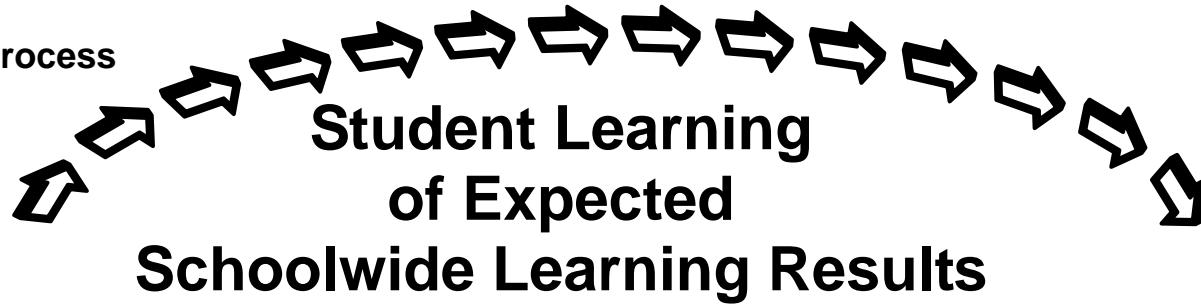
Each school/program may design its own self-study process as long as the five parameters for analysis are addressed. Put simply, these parameters identify the standards against which the self-study process is evaluated by the visiting team; and the school/program must provide evidence that they have been addressed. For example, the first parameter—*the involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study*—is concerned with the self-study process itself and could be documented through a description of the means through which communication among stakeholders and/or groups was facilitated. Through the completion of the accreditation process the school/program will have accomplished:

1. the involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study.
2. the clarification of the school's/program's purpose and the expected learning results for students.
3. the assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria and the expected learning results for students.
4. the development of an action plan that integrates subject area/program and support plans to address identified growth needs.
5. the development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the action plan.

Flexibility

The self-study process outlined in this booklet is a model based on a structure of committees with different functions and interrelationships. It is one of many possible self-study designs and may be modified or changed to accommodate the unique characteristics and needs of ROCPs, adult schools, and other post-secondary institutions. The *Focus on Learning* protocol, in other words, is flexible as long as the school/program meets the five parameters of the self-study. Each school/program is encouraged to contact other accredited institutions with similar characteristics to share possible solutions to procedural issues encountered in their self-study. Challenges facing different schools/ programs may include multiple educational sites covering large geographical regions; availability of staff (some of whom may be only part time) and other stakeholders due to variable work schedules; and access to student information and data.

Focus on Learning Process



Student Learning of Expected Schoolwide Learning Results

Follow-up



- ▶ Refinement, implementation, and monitoring of schoolwide action plan
- ▶ Analysis of evidence on student achievement of established expected schoolwide learning results
- ▶ Refinement of next steps

Visit



- ▶ Insight and perspective of visiting committee regarding student program and learning based on WASC criteria and expected schoolwide learning results

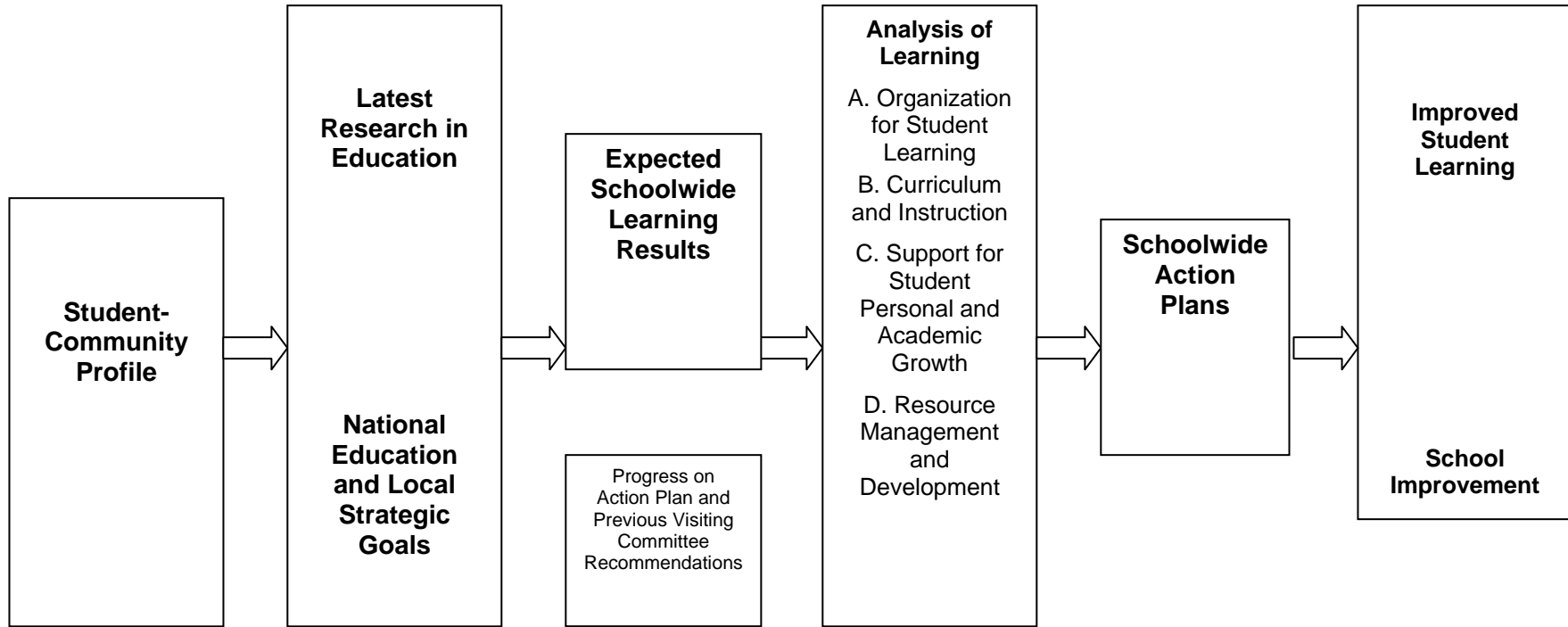
Self-Study

- ▶ Development and analysis of student/community profile
- ▶ Development refinement or clarification of expected schoolwide learning results
- ▶ Review of progress on school improvement
- ▶ Analysis of observable evidence about the quality of school program for every student based on criteria and expected schoolwide learning results
- ▶ Development of a schoolwide action plan and follow-up process

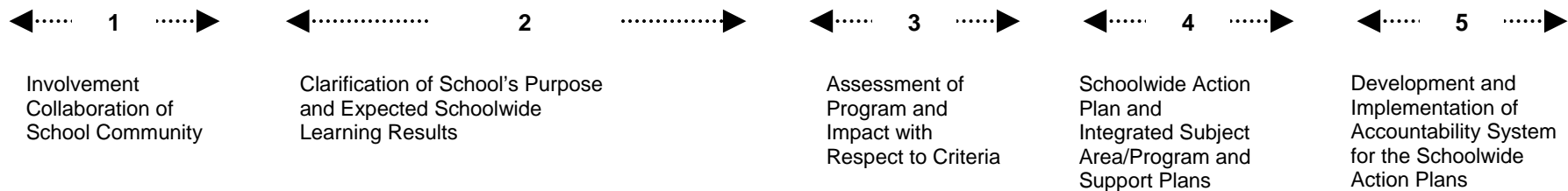
* Observable evidence includes analyzing results of what students are doing and producing; student interviews and observations; hard data and information; other interviews, observations, etc.

The Self-Study Process

WASC FOCUS ON LEARNING SELF-STUDY PROCESS



Parameters for the Improvement Process



The Self Study Process

The self-study committees, which may be structured differently for different programs, should provide a vehicle for the staff and community members to collaboratively evaluate the program against the self-study criteria. After gathering of evidence, including the examination of student work, the various self-study committees contribute much of the information for these interdisciplinary group discussions. The resulting action plan reflects the analyses by all school /program and community stakeholders.

Overview of Tasks: A Model

The tasks of the self-study focus on evaluating the instructional program against the criteria and assessing the degree to which all students are achieving the expected learning results. These steps are listed below:

- Task 1:** Develop student and community profile.
Responsible Committees: Student/Community Profile Committee
Student and Community Groups
- Task 2:** Clarify the school/program's purpose and the expected learning results for students.
Responsible Committee: Leadership Team
- Task 3:** Summarize progress since previous full self-study.
Responsible Committee: Leadership Team
- Task 4:** Review the criteria and identify what information is needed to evaluate the instructional program against the criteria and to evaluate student achievement of the expected learning results.
Responsible Committees: Focus Groups
- Tasks 5 & 6:** Gather, analyze, and synthesize information to validate the quality of the instructional program with respect to the criteria; document the achievement of the expected learning results and curriculum for students; summarize findings; and determine strengths and growth needs within criteria categories.
Responsible Committees: Home Groups
Responsible Committee: Home and Focus Groups
- Tasks 7, 8, & 9:** Based on the analysis in Tasks 5 and 6, develop, and ensure consensus on, a comprehensive action plan with

specific tasks that will drive school/program improvement and support the achievement of the expected learning results for students. Establish an ongoing follow-up process to monitor implementation and effectiveness of the action plan. This process could include modifications in the action plan to address new needs and/or challenges that arise.

Responsible Committee: Leadership Team

Visit

After careful review of the self-study report, a visiting committee composed of fellow educators spends three and one-half days at the school/program site. The purpose of the visit is to bring an outside perspective to validate of the self-study findings.

The visiting committee synthesizes its own findings, obtained through observation, dialogue, and analysis of evidence, and shares its insights with the focus groups, leadership team, and other stakeholders. Working collaboratively, the visiting committee and the leadership team compare findings and refine the action plan as needed.

Follow-up

Subsequent to the visit, the leadership team coordinates implementation and monitoring of the plan, with an annual review of progress and refinement as needed to address issues and/or challenges that emerge. The annual review of progress must include evidence of support for student accomplishment of the expected learning results. The governing authority and leadership are involved in the ongoing improvement process to ensure that the follow-up process is integral to the organization's planning and goal setting.

Timeline: Flow of Activities

18–24 months Prior to Self-Study Activities	Players	Product
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in training/orientation 	Principal/SC/Staff & other stakeholders	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Student/Community Profile 	Student Profile Committee	Summary Support Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of expected learning results for students 	Leadership Team	List & process description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of progress from last full self-study & subsequent reports and revisits/reviews 	Staff & other Stakeholders	Summary of progress on action plan, areas of follow-up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding use of WASC criteria 	Focus Groups	None
14–20 months prior to Self-Study Activities	Players	Product
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student programs: What should be, what exists 	Home Groups	Notes/evidence for self-study use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data gathering based on WASC criteria 	Home Groups	Notes/evidence for Focus Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis of all information/evidence. Determination of growth needs 	Focus Groups	Summary, evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a action plan using Focus Group findings 	Leadership Team	Written plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assurance of stakeholder consensus & development of action steps to support the plan 	Committees	Support steps
The Visit and Ongoing Activities	Players	Product
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The visit 	School/Program/Visiting Committee	VC Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation & monitoring of action plan and its impact on student learning 	Leadership Team, Focus Groups, and other stakeholders	

Self-Study Teams/Committees

- ❖ Addresses Self-Study Parameter #1: The involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study.

The self-study model explained earlier involves three types of committees: home groups, interdisciplinary focus groups, and the leadership team. Each committee serves a different function, though their tasks overlap. The Home Groups are homogeneous stakeholder groups who meet throughout the self-study process. They can be organized by subject, by site, by program, by job functions, or by other criteria. However they are constructed, home groups are responsible for collecting evidence and for evaluating the program and student achievement against the WASC criteria and the program/school's expected learning results.

Focus groups are interdisciplinary teams made of representatives from the various home groups. They meet first to clarify the various WASC criteria, develop guide questions for facilitating home group meetings, and determine the evidence needed to validate student achievement in relation to expected learning results, program standards, and WASC criteria. Following home group meetings, focus groups meet again to synthesize and validate findings based on observable evidence, as well as identify potential growth areas for the program/school's action plan. They also provide feedback to the Leadership Team and assist with the development of the self-study report and the program/school's action plan.

Ideally, every Focus Group member serves on and represents a home group. In some situations, however, with multiple sites in wide geographic region or large numbers of part time employees, the membership of focus groups may not be as inclusive.

Some programs/schools form one or more focus groups for each of the four categories (Organization for Student Learning, Curriculum and Instruction, Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth, and Resource Management and Development). In smaller programs, focus groups may examine more than one of the categories.

The **Leadership Team** consists of the Self-study Coordinator, the chair of each Focus Group, appropriate program/school administrators, and other members of the educational community. The Leadership Team oversees the self-study process and synthesizes focus group findings into a workable action plan.

The **Student/Community Profile Committee** is a representative group that could include one or more administrators, certificated and support staff members, students, community/industry representatives, or parents. Their task is to develop the Student/Community Profile, which provides the context for the rest of the self study. Members of this committee will also serve on other committees as the self-study proceeds.

Tasks of each committee are detailed in the following section.

Leadership Team

Leadership Team Tasks:

- Facilitate self-study process
- Facilitate completion of Progress Report on action plan since last full self study
- Guide school/program through development and refinement of expected learning results for students
- Create an action plan for identified growth areas using findings of Home and Focus Groups
- Obtain feedback from Focus Groups and Home Groups and gain consensus regarding the action plan
- Coordinate the follow-up process to monitor the implementation and the accomplishment of the action plan

Student/Community Profile Committee

Student/Community Profile Committee Tasks:

- Select, gather, and analyze data that gives a picture of the instructional program, the students and community it serves, identified needs of the students/community, an overview of student outcomes/achievement data, and other information relevant to clarification of the school/program's purpose.
- Draft the Student/Community Profile, using a format/presentation style determined by the committee. Helpful hint: The profile should be easy to read and engaging. Visuals, such as tables, graphs, and charts, communicate information more powerfully than words. Disseminate the profile to all staff and solicit input. Revise as needed.
- Title IV subcommittee: Review current Title IV regulations; include required information in profile.

Home Group Tasks

Subject Area or Program Home Group Tasks:

- Study and understand student/community profiles
- Participate in the development of expected learning results for students
- Review criteria guide questions to clarify the meaning of the WASC criteria
- Gather and examine evidence to validate the quality of the instructional program with respect to the criteria, document the achievement of the expected learning results for students, and determine strengths and growth needs
- Provide results of this analysis to Focus Groups

- Provide feedback to Leadership Team on the action plan based on Home and Focus Group findings and growth areas

Support Staff Home Group Tasks:

- Study and understand student/community profiles
- Participate in the development of expected learning results
- Review criteria guide questions to clarify the meaning of the WASC criteria
- Gather and analyze evidence to demonstrate how support services (1) contribute to student performance in relation to expected learning results, (2) meet program or service standards for various support areas, and (3) meet the WASC criteria
- Provide results of analysis to Focus Groups
- Provide feedback to Leadership Team on action plan based on Focus Group findings and growth areas

Community Home Group Tasks:

Some school/programs may prefer to have community representatives serve on Focus Groups and other teams. Some of the tasks that this group may undertake are the following:

- Contribute to development of the Student/Community Profile
- Participate in the clarification of expected learning results
- Review criteria guide questions to clarify the meaning of the WASC criteria
- Gather/ examine evidence that illustrates from a community perspective how well instructional programs and services contribute to student performance in relation to expected learning results, and current and emerging community needs
- Provide results of discussion to Focus Groups
- Provide feedback on the action plan

Student Home Group Tasks:

Some school/programs may prefer to have student representatives serve on Focus Groups and other teams. Some of the tasks that this group may undertake are the following:

- Contribute to development of the Student Profile
- Study and understand student/community profiles
- Participate in the clarification of expected learning results
- Review criteria guide questions to clarify the meaning of the WASC criteria
- Gather/examine evidence that illustrates from a student perspective how well instructional programs and services contribute to student performance in

relation to expected learning results, and current and emerging community needs

- Provide results of discussion to Focus Groups
- Provide feedback to Leadership Team on action plan based on Home and Focus Group findings and growth areas

Focus Groups

Focus Group Tasks:

- Obtain ongoing feedback from Home Groups throughout the self-study process
- Examine, discuss, and synthesize the findings from the Home Groups to validate the quality of the instructional program with respect to the criteria, document the achievement of the expected learning results for students, and determine strengths and growth needs. This synthesis should be organized by WASC criteria.
- Obtain feedback from Home Groups on the growth areas with respect to the expected learning results.

Identify the school's growth needs based on these findings.

- If more than one Focus Group is examining the same criterion, integrate their findings, supporting evidence, and growth areas into the final self-study report.
- Synthesize findings, select representative supporting evidence, and identify growth areas for each of the WASC criteria.
- Have available for the Visiting Team evidence for review that has been examined by the Home and Focus Groups.

Task 1: Develop student and community profiles

- ⊛ Addresses Self-Study Parameter #1: The involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study.

The purpose of the Student/Community Profile is to create a picture of the community served by the educational program in order to clarify the school/program's purpose and identify current and emerging community needs. The profile is used to evaluate the responsiveness of the program to these needs and identify areas in which the program can improve its services to clients. The profile also serves as a good overview for the visiting committee, who may not be familiar with the area and/or the particular educational program. Finally, the profile can be used to provide an introduction to the program as part of ongoing new employee orientation. The profile is to be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

An effective student/community profile answers the following questions:

- What are the demographics of the community(ies) and schools served by the program?
- What are their needs in relation to education and employment preparation?
- What are the demographics of enrolled students? completing students?
- Do the demographics of enrolled high school students closely match the demographics of the school district/high school, or are there disproportionate numbers of some subgroups of students?
- Do the demographics of adult students closely match the demographics of the community, or are there disproportionate numbers of some subgroups of students?
- What is the performance level of students at the high school(s) served?
- How many special needs students does the program serve?
- What resources are available to meet client needs through the school/program and from other sources?
- What does follow-up reveal about placement and continuing education rates? Are there any trends?

The student/community profile is a summary of community demographics which will answer the questions, Who are the people of this community? What are their needs in relation to education and employment? What resources are available to them, through our school and from other sources? Through this profile the school clarifies its identity and purpose, identifies its client base, and documents the clients' needs and resources. This information is the basis for the analytical work which will follow, determining not only whether the programs offered are of high

quality but also whether they match current and emerging needs of the community they serve.

Players (Subtask 1)

Student/Community Profile Committee

Procedures

1. Select all pertinent data that is relevant to the success of students in your school. (Suggested categories of information are listed on the following page.)
2. Gather and analyze the data.
3. Review any applicable regulations. Assess current status with respect to them.
4. Draft succinct profile of the students and community served by the school. This should include important socio-economic and demographic data about the students and community, data about student performance and outcomes, description of the school/program, and any identified trends that have impacted the educational program and/or community. Data such as funding sources, demographics, and staffing are most succinctly presented through charts, graphs, and tables.
5. Disseminate the draft to all staff, make modifications.
6. Prepare final summary profile.
 - Include in Self-Study Report along with supporting charts, graphs and data.
 - Disseminate to all staff.

Product

- Self-Study Report, Chapter I:

Student/Community Profile and Supporting Data

Data that may be useful to the development of the student/community profile includes the following:

- Enrollment and follow-up data collected for course reviews, Perkins reporting, PBA requirements, TOPS Pro
 - Census data
 - Chamber of Commerce data
- A. Provide Student/Community Profile summary of conclusions from data analysis
 - B. Supporting, interpreted data (charts, tables, graphs)

Appendix: Include additional pertinent information such as community needs, available resources other than school programs and services, etc. Other information can be on exhibit during the visit.

Players (Subtask 2)

Student and Community Committees

Procedures

1. As part of the pre-assessment develop and administer student/community surveys or conduct random interviews.
2. Synthesize the results and integrate this information into the Student/Community Profile.

Product

- Self-Study Report, Appendix
 - Results integrated into the Student/Community Profile Summary
 - Results of student questionnaire/interviews
 - Results of parent/community questionnaire/interviews

Categories of Information for Profile Development

Develop the Community Portion of the Profile

Types of information to include in the profile are trends related to:

COMMUNITY DATA

- General population of service area, including ethnicity, socio-economic status, educational level, number of special needs students
 - Housing
 - Employment trends, unemployment data, workforce needs, and labor market projections
- Any other issues impacting the community served by the school
- School/business partnerships, including training sites, internships, advisory committees, boards, awards/ scholarships, etc.

SCHOOL DATA

- Infrastructure (e.g., how many sites, number of classrooms, types of buildings, and/or community sites, etc.)
- School staffing:
 - Composition/ethnicity/attrition of all staff
 - Qualifications/certification/credentialing for assignments
 - Full time/ part-time
 - Permanent /tenured vs. temporary/special contract, etc.
- Governance (joint powers, county/state-operated, school district, regional, community college, non-profit, etc.)
- Ongoing professional development
 - types of activities in which staff are engaged, such as degree programs, additional training, workshops, professional membership, service clubs, community organizations
 - training provided to all staff
- Brief summary of instructional and support programs provided by school (types of programs, number of classes, hours of operation, support services)
- Number of administrative, support, and instructional staff (may be presented via tables, organizational charts, etc.)
- Finances
 - Major funding sources (federal, state, fee-based classes, etc.)
 - Revenue limit/CAP
 - Other (foundations, grants, partnerships)
 - Average annual budget

Develop the Student Portion of the Profile

Types of student information that may be included in the profile:

- Enrollment numbers by program
- Mobility of students
- Data on continuing students, completers, and leavers
- Ethnicity of enrolled students and of students in partner high schools or districts
- Concurrent/nonconcurrent enrollment status
- English proficiency/primary language groups
- Gender/age mix
- Special populations
 - Income levels
 - Attendance trends

Data on student achievement

- certificates
- achievement of personal goals
- completers
 - job placement
 - industry certifications
 - continuing ed and advanced training, military
 - number of GED and/or diploma graduates
 - ESL promotion
 - CASAS benchmarks

Achievement of expected learning results for students-

- Student participation in extra curricular activities (student/site council, career-technical student organizations, community service/service learning, etc.)
 - API, CAHSEE, STAR, and other achievement data from the high school(s) served
- Graduation rates for the high school(s) served
- Snapshot profiles of a few individual students reflective of the larger student population

Task 2: Review the school/program’s purpose and clarify/articulate expected learning results for students

- ☛ Addresses Self-Study Parameter #2: The clarification of the school’s purpose and expected school/program-wide learning results.

Players

Leadership Team and all stakeholders

Procedures

1. Review student/community profile data and relevant national and state standards.
2. Involve stakeholders in discussion related to the school/program’s purpose and what students should know and be able to do upon completion of the planned program.

Things to consider:

- What are the challenges that students will be facing in the future?
- What competencies should students possess in preparation for postsecondary education/training and/or the world of work?

Expected learning results for students (ELRS)

Definition: What each student should know, understand, and be able to do upon exit from and/or completion of the planned program.

Schools/programs may use discretion in determining their goals for student learning; however, they must be global, inclusive of all students, and measurable.

Articulating expected learning results sets standards that can be used in planning, delivering, restructuring, and evaluating instruction.

3. Develop, clarify or refine expected learning results for students.
4. Disseminate a draft of the expected learning results for students and obtain consensus from stakeholders.

Make revisions as needed and disseminate to all stakeholders.

5. Instruct each committee to consider these expected learning results as they meet to evaluate the instructional program against the self-study criteria
6. Include the expected learning results in the Self-Study Report along with a description of how they were determined.

➔ **Note:** SUGGESTED PROCEDURES for schools/programs that have established expected learning results for students (ELRS) in a previous self-study:

1. Disseminate updated student/community profile to stakeholders.
2. Involve stakeholders in a review of the ELRS and progress toward achieving them. This may be done in meetings or electronically.
3. Assess progress toward ELRS through student follow-up data, interviews, and/or student self-evaluation, individual course curriculum maps/grids that cross-reference ELRS to specific classroom lesson plans to demonstrate how and where the ELRS are being taught;
4. Reach consensus through meetings or teleconferences about the need to modify ELRS and/or the performance indicators for each. The Leadership Team then drafts a document and circulates for final input.
5. Throughout the new self-study, identify progress and perceived obstacles to progress toward achievement of ELRS and brainstorm suggestions in focus groups for inclusion in the action plan as needed.

Product

- Self-Study Report

Chapter II: Expected learning results for students, including the following:

- A. State the expected learning results for students.
- B. Discuss the process for identifying the learning results.

Expected Schoolwide Learning Results

Definition

What each student should know, understand and be able to do upon exit from the school, or by the time the student completes the planned program.

An expected schoolwide learning result of significance is one that as a result of *meaningful* and *authentic* learning experiences over time, learners will be able to exhibit a *culmination* of their *learning* in a *real world context* that has significant *purpose* and *meaning* for them and others over time. (Adapted from Fontana USD)

Descriptors

- global
- include all students
- must be able to assess
- cornerstone of school improvement
- cornerstone of *Focus on Learning*

Rationale

Working From Learning Results:

- Equips ALL students with the knowledge, competencies, and orientations needed for success in a thinking, meaning-centered curriculum.
- Enables teachers to implement programs and conditions that maximize learning success for ALL students in a standards-based curriculum.
- Provides schools with a means to restructure pedagogy in ways that facilitate student success in a thinking, standards-based curriculum. (Adapted from Fontana USD)

Establishing Expected Learning Results for Students: A Sample Procedure

- Facilitate discussion with identified stakeholders. This can take place in face-to-face meetings, on-line, or via teleconference.
 - Review procedures from previous page.
- Review the literature (e.g., academic and/or career-technical standards, student/community profile, SCANS skills, etc.) to build an understanding of desired learning results.
- Groups discuss “What should **every** student who leaves our school/program be able to do, know, or understand to be successful in the real world?”

Sample Synthesis Process

- Individuals brainstorm a list (4–5) of possible expected learning
- Individuals work within a group to narrow the list of expected learning results to a designated number (such as 10 per group).
- Groups work together through discussion and consensus building to synthesize the various lists to come up with a final list of learning results up to a designated maximum number (such as 12).
- The Leadership Team and/or representative stakeholders draft a document from this final list of expected learning results, make it available to all stakeholders for review and input, and make additional revisions as needed.

Important consideration: The development of performance indicators/rubrics that describe a specific desired behavior or ability is suggested to ensure that learning results can be assessed.

Expected Schoolwide Learning Results: Samples

Sample #1

Golden Oak Students Will Be Prepared To Be:

Effective communicators who:

- Utilize spoken and written communication.
- Incorporate technology as a communication device.
- Reflect self-expression and artistic appeal.
- Demonstrate literacy.

Literate individuals who:

- Integrate learning and apply it in real life situations.
- Follow directions.

Critical thinkers and problem solvers who:

- Analyze and apply new information.
- Use technology effectively.

Productive individuals who:

- Set personal and collective goals and work with others towards their achievements.
- Apply professional and technical skills.
- Demonstrate responsibility for self and to others.
- Work collaboratively.
- Are self-directed.

Involved citizens who:

- Demonstrate a sense of community.
- Show respect for the rights of others.
- Participate as productive members of society.

Sample #2

Learner Results for Student Success

Effective communicators who:

- Convey significant messages to others both verbally and in writing.
- Receive and interpret the messages of others in an effective manner.

Complex thinkers who:

- Apply complex problem-solving processes and critical thinking to real life scenarios.
- Analyze, interpret, and evaluate significant concepts within various contexts.
- Create images to represent significant concepts.

Quality producers who:

- Create intellectual, artistic, practical and physical products.
- Reflect original, high standards and the use of advanced technology.
- Set, pursue, and accomplish realistic and challenging goals for themselves and their peers.

Collaborative workers who:

- Use effective leadership skills to foster, develop, and maintain relations within diverse settings.
- Establish and accomplish effective goals with others.

Self-directed learners who:

- Assess their needs and apply appropriate strategies to learn the identified concepts and skills.
- Use effective goal setting strategies to create a positive vision for themselves and their future in order to set priorities and achievable goals.

Community contributors who:

- Contribute their time, energies and talents to improve the quality of life in our schools, communities, nation and world.
- Demonstrate positive and productive citizenship.

Sample #3

The School's Purpose Statement:

A strong core curriculum in the traditional disciplines forms the foundation which challenges and supports students to work hard on assignments to meet high standards. It engages students in the learning process so that they are active participants who can seek accuracy, apply their knowledge across areas of learning, and persist when answers are not apparent. In order for students to become independent learners, the following interdisciplinary expectations for lifelong learning have been developed:

1. Articulate ideas clearly, creatively, and effectively.
2. Develop meaningful questions.
3. Design and implement appropriate strategies to solve various problems.
4. Use the evaluation process by establishing and applying criteria to support judgment.
5. Work effectively as a member of a self-directed team.
6. Exhibit social responsibility.
7. Design, establish and pursue goals, both personal and professional.

Sample #4

Every student will demonstrate:

- ✓ Higher level thinking skills
- ✓ Active problem solving
- ✓ Effective communication
- ✓ Appropriate social skills
- ✓ Cooperative learning
- ✓ The ability to access resources
- ✓ The curiosity/desire to learn more

Task 3: Summarize progress since previous full self-study

- ☛ Addresses Self-Study Parameter #1: The involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study.

Players

Leadership Team

Procedures

1. In this chapter, describe any significant developments that have had a major impact on the school/program or on specific curricular programs since the last full visit. Schools/programs preparing for subsequent *Focus on Learning* self-studies may include this information in the Student/Community Profile.
2. Describe the school's procedures for the implementation and the monitoring of the action plan. Include how annual progress reports, including the third year report, have been prepared. This can also be addressed in the discussion of criterion A7 in the self-study findings.
3. Show how the action plan addressed the critical areas of follow-up identified in the last full self-study and visit.
4. Comment on the accomplishment of each action plan section; cite evidence, including how each area has met identified growth targets and contributed to the accomplishment of one or more expected learning results for all students.

Product

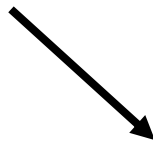
- Self-Study Report, Chapter III: Progress Report

Summary of progress on the entire action plan that incorporated all critical areas of follow-up from the last full self-study. If the information has been incorporated into other sections, a directory may be included to guide the reader.

Intertwining Tasks of the Schoolwide Focus Groups and Home Groups

Task 4

Schoolwide Focus
Group (4 categories)
analysis and
discussions *around*
schoolwide criteria using
suggested evidence



Tasks 5 and 6

Home/Support Groups
analysis and
discussions *around*
subject area/support
curricular/program
references and the WASC
criteria

Task 4: Review the criteria and identify what information is needed to evaluate the school/program against the criteria, as well as to assess student achievement of the expected learning results

- ✪ Addresses Self-Study Parameter #3: The assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria and the expected learning results

Players

Focus Groups

Procedures

1. Review the student/community profile and expected learning results. (See products from Tasks 1 and 2.)
2. Review the WASC criteria and guide questions from Chapter 4 as the basis for evaluating the program. Use the guide questions. (See Tools section, pp. 75-90.)
3. Use the suggested areas to analyze (tools section) to identify what data or information could be used to answer the criteria guide questions. Discuss how the data or information should be obtained.
4. **Leadership Team monitors the coordination of** Home Group and Focus Group meetings to accomplish Tasks 5 and 6.

➔ **Note:** To facilitate data gathering, begin with all stakeholders focusing on the curriculum and instruction criteria category. Then focus on student support, organization, and resources.

Tasks 5 & 6: Gather, analyze, and synthesize information to validate the quality of the instructional program with respect to the criteria; document achievement of the expected learning results for students; summarize findings; and determine strengths and growth needs within criteria areas

- ☛ Addresses Self-Study Parameter #3: The assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria and the expected learning results

Players

Home and Focus Groups

Procedures

1. The Home Groups respond to the criteria guide questions through the collection, examination, and discussion of evidence, with guidance from the Focus Groups as to selection of evidence.
 - a. Begin with all stakeholders focusing on the curriculum and instruction criteria category. Then focus on student support, organization, and resources.
 - b. For every area of the school program determine what all students are doing and producing currently. Gather observable evidence through a variety of methods.
 - c. To ensure reliability, it is suggested that evidence be obtained through at least three sources, including but not limited to the following:
 - observing what all students are doing and producing
 - examining samples of work representative of all students
 - interviewing students through questions related to the criteria about their studies and school life
 - examining student performance-based assessment data
 - reporting by teachers
 - examining teacher/student records
 - examining the student/community profile data
 - examining student/parent survey/interview results
 - interviewing other members of the staff/school community about program
 - d. Discuss, analyze and evaluate this gathered evidence (see a) with respect to criteria guide questions and expected learning results.
 - e. Compile responses to criteria guide questions, evidence, and student work, where appropriate.

2. Share Home Group results and representative evidence in the appropriate Focus Groups.
3. Focus Groups determine what additional information and data are needed in the analysis of the program. Synthesize the information and data from all the Home Groups Write a summary of findings for each criterion that includes supporting evidence and identified strength and growth needs. It is suggested that responses be 3–7 pages per criterion (i.e., 3–7 pages for A1; 3–7 pages for A2, etc.).

Products

- Home Group products: Meeting minutes/notes/evidence for use in Focus Group discussions of WASC criteria and achievement of expected learning results
- Analyzed representative samples of student work for review by the Focus Groups and the Visiting Committee.
- A 3–7 page synthesis of the evidence examined and analyzed in support of *each criterion* in the four categories (Organization for Student Learning, Curriculum and Instruction, Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth, Resource Management and Development) for a total of 42–98 pages. Responses include the following: (1) the findings as related to each criterion in the category; (2) the evidence that supports these findings, (3) the identification of strengths and growth needs.
- Representative samples of evidence for review by Visiting Committee.

Gathering Evidence

Evidence gathering has the overall purpose of giving a picture of the instructional program and validating that students are successful learners. Ways to collect information include observations, interviews, and examination of pertinent information/data, including student work.

The following are some of the questions that the examination of evidence should address in order to validate student achievement and program effectiveness.

- How do the teachers, the administration, and the learning community work together to have a shared vision of desirable educational outcomes for all students?
- How do the educational policies and practices, as well as other activities, facilitate equal access and successful educational and social outcomes for students who are learning English, economically disadvantaged, underachieving, gifted and talented, average ability, and students receiving special educational services?
- Are students actively engaged in learning the subject area?
- What evidence is there that the students are able to do the following:
 - think, reason, solve problems
 - construct meaning, make connections
 - be creative, be productive
 - communicate effectively through reading, writing, speaking, listening and drawing
- How often and in what ways do students apply their knowledge and conceptual understanding?
- How do teachers know whether their students have acquired a particular body of knowledge and can perform at a particular level?
- Is assessment integral to instruction (e.g., helping students to analyze, evaluate and communicate)?
- Do the teachers use assessment to reflect on student achievement, effective teaching practices, program strengths and weaknesses, and progress on curriculum and instructional implementation?
- Do staff members use a variety of student performance-based assessment techniques to adjust strategies and programs to best serve students (e.g., more challenging learning activities)?
- Do staff members allow for diversity in assessment (e.g., students that have a developed primary language other than English)?
- Are opportunities provided for parents, teachers, guidance staff and students to discuss student progress, choices, and decisions?

Observations

Observation is a critical step in the multi-method approach of collecting information. This is an active process that includes observing classroom activities; talking to students; looking at their work and records of their work, as available; and talking to the staff working with the students — teachers, instructional aides, specialist teachers — in addition to observing. Observations also assist you in identifying questions to ask in interviews. What to observe in instructional settings (classrooms, labs, resource centers, libraries, etc.) is determined by what information is needed. There are, however, some initial observations that focus on the important instructional issues common to all curricular areas. These are the following:

- What are the students doing? receiving information? applying skills? practicing newly acquired skills? synthesizing and evaluating information? working in teams? working individually? making presentations? waiting? causing a disturbance?
- Are the students on task and engaged?
- Is there a range of activities that include both lower and higher level thinking skills, such as application, synthesis, and evaluation?
- What sort of assignments do the students receive? How much time are the students actually spending on the assigned activity? Do they know what to do?
- Do the lessons and classroom activities incorporate appropriate academic skills, including reading, writing, listening/speaking, and computational skills?
- Are the students asked questions that challenge them to think critically?

Do classroom activities require that students communicate orally and/or in writing?

- Are students with special needs participating in the classroom activities in a meaningful way?
- How are differing student needs addressed? Are there modifications to accommodate student learning needs?

As with observation in instructional settings, observation in other places (administrative offices, student services/counseling office, media center, career center, skills labs, community training sites, etc.) establishes a sense of the culture of the school/program. Conducting student case studies also can be an effective means of gathering observable data about the entire instructional program. Some of the additional aspects to observe are the following:

- The interactions among staff and other stakeholders
- The interactions between staff and students
- Celebration of student achievement through posting of student work, etc.

- How community training site supervisors/mentors contribute to student learning
- What the classroom rules/procedures are and how they are enforced
- Ways students and staff are recognized and rewarded
- The interaction among the various age levels and groups of students

Interviews

Interviews are used as part of the accreditation process to find out information that is not directly observable. They are used to find out people's beliefs, ideas, and intentions, and to validate and expand prior information gained through observation and the review of documents such as curricular materials, the school/program's strategic plans, policies, and so forth.

The following "Keep in Mind" summarizes some important points about interviews.

KEEP IN MIND

- Introduce yourself and explain the purpose of the interview.
- There is no one "right way" to interview; there is no one correct format.
- There is no one "right way" to ask a question.
- LISTEN to responses; be an active listener.
- Explain purposes of questions.
- Keep initial questions simple and non-threatening.
- Use open-ended questions. Yes/no response questions set a feeling of interrogation and provide little information.
- Ask questions that will verify what you think you know and will add missing pieces of information.
- Ask questions that do not imply the answer, and that do not reflect the committee members' biases.
- Use clear and concise language that is appropriate to the interviewee.
- Note-taking should record what is said — not committee members' reactions.
- Allow adequate time for responses.
- Give appropriate feedback to responses.
- Do not assume that people understand what you are asking about — make sure they do.
- Do not push for answers at the expense of the interviewee.
- Be mindful of nonverbal feedback, i.e., facial expressions, turning away, and so on.
- Be alert to "clues" of interviewees and follow-up what is not being said.

Sample Student Interview Questions

- What kinds of projects do you do?
- How often do you work alone? as part of a team?
- What kinds of problems do you solve in class?
- What life skills are you learning?
- What things are you learning in class that helps you on the job, in your family, in your life in general?
- Why did you take this class? What do you want to learn? What are your goals?
- What is the thing you like best about this class?
- What skills/competencies have you learned in this class?
- What has this class taught you about yourself?
- What career-technical skills have you upgraded?
- What certifications are you working on or have you earned?
- Have you received any certificates?
- What job does this training prepare you for?
- How often do you solve difficult but interesting problems for which there are often many possible answers?
- How often do you do research for this class?
- Are the resources, such as books and other materials, adequate for your projects and other activities?
- How often do you talk about what you have just read or done with a group of students in your class?
- How often are you assessed through a demonstration of your skills? through written assignments?
- What kinds of oral reports do you do? Why?
- Have you created a career portfolio or a portfolio of work samples?
- What kinds of outside assignments do you have?
- Would you refer a friend or relative to this class or school/program? Why or why not?

Examination of Student Work

The examination of student work/products is integral to ongoing determination of successful student learning. Instructional staff members will be involved in this process individually and through discussions within and among disciplines; for example, those who teach the same courses or are at the same grade level may engage in dialogue. There are many ways to gather and analyze student work. Some specific examples of strategies that can be used by instructional staff members include the following:

- A good time to examine student work/products is following an initial observation and/or interviews with individual or groups of students.
- Examine student work to determine the nature, frequency and quality of work that the students are doing. *This includes observation of students working.*

Suggestions for collecting work:

- “high quality,” “medium quality,” and “low quality” samples from each course
- representative students selected based upon the student/community profile information
- student work collection days for a program
- anonymous work from anonymous teachers
- student work collection based on two or three students randomly selected from the teacher role sheet during a designated day and time

Following the collection of work, teachers meet in subject-alike groups to examine the work, reach agreement on standards for evaluating work, identify strengths and potential growth areas, and share strategies to maximize student growth.

- Examine student work representative of the school population two to three times during the year to monitor growth over time.
- Summarize key information resulting from the analysis of the representative student work.

Initially the quality of student work may be examined with respect to course or discipline/program goals and objectives. However, ultimately, the student work analysis should also provide information about the degree to which the students are accomplishing the expected learning results.

Tasks 7, 8 & 9: Create a comprehensive action plan that will drive achievement of the expected learning results; ensure consensus on the action plan and the specific steps to support the plan; establish an ongoing follow-up process to monitor implementation and accomplishment of the action plan

- ✦ Addresses Self-Study Parameters #4 and #5: The development of an action plan that addresses growth needs as identified in the self-study. The development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the school/program-wide action plan.

Players

Leadership Team and Focus and/or Home Groups

Procedures

Leadership Team and Focus and/or Home Groups

1. Review and discuss the growth needs identified in the self-study report that support achievement of expected learning results. (See Chapter IV of the Self-Study Report.)
2. Create an action plan addressing the major areas for change. It is recommended that areas for change be limited to 4–5. Not all expected learning results need to be addressed by the action plan.

Each section of the action plan should include the following:

- statement of area for improvement (goal)
- rationale for inclusion of that item in the action plan based on self-study findings
- identification of one or more expected learning results addressed
- ways of assessing progress toward that action item, including student achievement
- specific steps, including professional development activities
- timeline (month, year)
- person(s) responsible and involved
- resources
- means to monitor and report progress to appropriate stakeholders

Home Groups

3. Review the action plan.
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the specific strategies listed in support the **sections** of the action plan, and identify any additional strategies that would enhance the success of the plan.
5. Present the findings to the Leadership Team, who modify it as needed for the Self-Study Report.

Leadership Team

6. Identify strategies that ensure ongoing involvement of stakeholders.
Helpful hint: Delegate responsibility for each section or task to Focus Groups or other standing committees.
7. Discuss/develop strategies to ensure that the action plan is being implemented and monitored.
8. Develop ways to keep appropriate stakeholders informed about the progress being made. Helpful hints: Develop a process and format for periodic communication of progress.

Product

- Self-Study Report
Chapter V: Action Plan
 - A. Describe the action plan.
 - B. State specific strategies to be used by the staff within each subject area/support program in order to accomplish the sections of the action plan.
 - C. Describe the follow-up process.

The Self-Study Coordinator Toolkit

Self-Study Coordinator Task List

Timeline: 18–24 months prior to Self-Study/Visit

- ___1. Chief Administrator/Self-Study Coordinator (SC) participate in training
- ___2. Chief Administrator and SC establish (1) a general calendar for the major self-study events and (2) a more detailed timeline of specific committee meetings and tasks to be accomplished

The self-study coordinator works backwards from the date of the visit, allowing at least 4–5 weeks for the Visiting Committee to study the self-study report.

- ___3. Chief Administrator and SC establish support mechanisms

Working with the SC, the chief administrator ensures there are support mechanisms, such as governing authority and district understanding and assistance, professional time for staff members, financial resources, and clerical/technical help.

Helpful hints: Establish staff incentives for attendance at committee meetings, such as pay and/or staff development credit; develop monthly calendars of committee meetings and other related events and disseminate or post the calendar electronically; establish an accreditation budget; and designate specific clerical staff for the self-study.

- ___4. SC inservice staff and other stakeholder groups

This inservice should include the following:

- a. An explanation of the WASC accreditation process, its purpose, and its benefits
- b. An overview of the *Focus on Learning* self-study process leading to the self-study report and action plan
- c. The purpose of the visit and visiting
- d. committee activities and responsibilities
- e. Accreditation term determination
- f. The importance of the ongoing improvement process for successful student learning

Helpful hints: The inservice should include materials that give an overview of the self-study process; the timeline for activities; and an explanation of the function of focus and home groups.

___5. SC and chief administrator appoint chairs for all committees

The committees for the model self-study process include the following: Focus Groups, Student/Community Profile Committee, Student/Community Groups, Subject Area/Program Committees, Support Staff Groups. The Leadership Team is comprised of the Focus Group chairs, the SC, the chief administrator and other selected members.

___6. SC prepares self-study training packets

Suggested information for the self-study training packets include the overview, general and specific timelines, committee structure and membership, summary of products (self-study report format), self-study steps, and all criteria/guide questions/suggested areas to analyze. *Add to the packets after their development or refinement, the student/community profile and the expected learning results for students.*

___7. SC trains Leadership Team and chairs of all committees

Training should emphasize the following:

- a. A review of the basic purpose of the self-study, visit, and follow-up: an ongoing school improvement process
- b. The parameters of the self-study
- c. The importance of documentation: in-depth gathering of evidence
- d. The steps of the self-study
- e. The understanding of all committee members of the criteria, suggested areas to analyze, and expected learning results for students and their importance in the accreditation process
- f. The interaction between home and focus groups: how the conversations and evidence gathered by the Home Groups are used to respond to the criteria guide questions and how this information, in turn, is synthesized by the Focus Groups for the self-study report
- g. The role and the responsibilities of the chairs as:
 - (1) Trainers of committee members in the use of the criteria guide questions and suggested areas to analyze
 - (2) Coordinators for gathering of information/data that needs to be examined and discussed in relation to the criteria and expected learning results for students
 - (3) Group facilitators of committee discussions and syntheses based on criteria and expected learning results for students and subsequent selection of representative evidence for visiting team review

- h. The importance of consistent participation in meetings to review progress of the self-study

___8. SC coordinates the formation of committees

SC Self-Check Questions

Parameter 1: The involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study

- Is the leadership team representative of the school/program community?
- Is the suggested FOL committee structure being adapted to build upon and strengthen the organization’s existing communication structure?
- Are all instructional staff members of home groups or focus groups?
- Has the school reflected upon the type of committee organization that will be most effective in the implementation of the action plan? For example, should the focus groups be maintained after the visit to oversee action plan sections?

___9. SC facilitates completion of student/community profile and progress report.

SC Self-Check Questions

Parameter 1: The involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study

Student/Community Profile (FOL Task 1)

- Has the school/program community gathered and synthesized all pertinent data in order to create a picture of the student population and the community served?
- Has the leadership team or profile committee produced a user-friendly profile for all stakeholders?
- Have the certificated staff members and other stakeholders discussed the profile?
- Will the stakeholders use the profile to guide the inquiry into the instructional programs?
- Will the questions raised from the profile analysis be integral to the work of the home and focus groups?
- Will the profile be regularly updated and used by the stakeholders as the school/group focuses on student achievement?

Progress Report (FOL, Task 3)

- Did the school/program address each section of the action plan?
- Did the school show how all critical areas of follow-up from the last full self-study were integrated into the action plan?
- Does the report show how each section impacted student accomplishment of one or more of the expected learning results?

___10. Facilitate clarification of expected learning results for students.

SC Self-Check Questions

Parameter 2: The clarification of the school 's expected learning results for students.

(FOL, Task 2)

- Has the Leadership Team obtained input from all appropriate stakeholders?
- Is there commitment to accomplishing the school/program's purpose and the expected learning results from all certificated staff, students, and other stakeholder groups?
- To what extent has the school/program developed measurable indicators of the expected learning results?
- Is the school/program beginning to discuss accomplishment of the expected learning results as well as the curricular content and performance standards?

Coordinator Guidelines

Timeline: 14-20 months prior to the self-study visit

___ 11. SC establishes a schedule for review of criteria by home and focus groups

___ 12. SC facilitates access of appropriate committees to pertinent information for self-study

Examples include budgets, state standards, curriculum guides, student follow-up data, board agendas, CASAS and other testing results, etc.

___ 13. SC establishes expectations and deadlines for work products, including minutes and drafts

___ 14. SC monitors committee work and provides guidance and support to ensure committees are on task

SC Self-Check Questions

Parameter 3: The assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria and the expected learning results for students.

Assessment of Program for Students (FOL, Tasks 4 through 6)

- Are all subject areas comparing themselves to appropriate curricular references and current educational thinking?
- Are the expected learning results for students and high quality curricular standards driving the instructional program?
- Are learning opportunities being provided in order for all students to meet the expected learning results through the implementation of the curricular standards and other aspects of the instructional program?
- Through the analysis of representative student work and observation of students' working, is there evidence of the accomplishment of the expected learning results for students?
- Have the groups discussed student achievement in relation to the WASC criteria?
- Was the accuracy of the findings discussed?
- Did the findings reflect an evaluation of support for the learning needs of all students?

___15. SC compiles self-study findings for final revision

___16. SC disseminates self-study findings to stakeholders for final input and comment

___17. SC facilitates development by the Leadership Team of an action plan that addresses areas for growth identified in the self-study.

SC Self-Check Questions

Parameter 4: The development of an action plan that integrates subject area/program and support plans to address identified growth needs.

Parameter 5: The development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the action plan.

Development of Action Plan and Follow-up Process (FOL Tasks 7 through 9)

- Do the action plan sections address the major identified areas for improvement and the visiting committee’s critical areas for follow-up?
- Will the action plan sections enhance the learning of all students as identified in the student/community profile?
- Are the expected learning results for students addressed through the action plan?
- Has the school/program integrated other initiatives to create one umbrella action plan?
- Is the action plan feasible and realistic? Are resources considered for each action plan section?
- Do the ways of assessing progress include the analysis of student learning?
- Is there sufficient school/program-wide commitment to the action plan?
- Is there a sound follow-up process that will be used to monitor the accomplishment of the action plan?

___18. SC disseminates action plan to stakeholders for input and comment and revises as needed.

___19. SC compiles final self-study report with Leadership Team

___20. SC submits self-study report after final Leadership Team review

SC arranges for the printing of an adequate number of copies and distributes them to the following people/organizations 4–5 weeks before the site visit

a) The Visiting Committee members

b) One IBM compatible disk or CD (reference and support materials not required) to:

Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC
Southern WASC Office
43517 Ridge Park Drive, Suite 100
Temecula, CA 92590-3615

c) Copies for staff members and members of the school community

___21. SC facilitates preparation for the visit.

a. Draft schedule of classroom visits and meetings.

b. Have on exhibit for the Visiting Committee representative student work and other documentation (results of observations, interviews, etc.).

Summary of key tasks in first 4–5 months:

- Inservice and training of staff
- Formation of committees
- Development of Progress Report
- Development of a draft of the Student/Community Profile, using information gathered through interviews, surveys, and/or existing data
- Identification of expected learning results for students

Summary of key tasks in next 9–12 months:

- Home and focus group meetings to gather and consider evidence and synthesize findings in relation to criteria questions and expected learning results for students

Summary of key tasks in the last 4 months prior to the visit:

- Development of self-study report that synthesizes findings
- Identification of key areas for growth
- Development of an action plan
- Field review and input
- Final revision and dissemination of self-study report to staff
- Preparation for the visit

Summary of key tasks following the visit:

- Implementation and monitoring of action plan items
- Annual review and progress report on action plan
- Annual review of student/community profile, with updating as needed

Summary of Products: Focus on Learning Report Format

Title Page/Table of Contents

Preface

Explain the self-study process used to accomplish the parameters of the self-study

Chapter I: Student/Community Profile and Supporting Data

- A. Provide a Student/Community Profile Summary
- B. Provide supporting, interpreted data (charts, tables, graphs)

Appendix: Include additional pertinent information such as the schedule, summary of performance data, etc. Other information can be on exhibit during the visit.

Chapter II: Expected Learning Results for Students

- A. State the expected learning results for students.
- B. Explain the process used to determine the expected learning results for students.

Chapter III: Progress Report

Write a summary of progress on the action plan that also addresses the critical areas for follow-up from the previous full self-study.

Chapter IV: Self-Study Findings

For the four categories, prepare a 3–7 page summary of the findings for each criterion in the four categories. Include the following: (1) the findings related to each criterion in the category; (2) the evidence that supports these findings, and (3) the identification of strengths and growth needs. If this is not the first self-study using the *Focus on Learning* protocol, the findings need to include progress on related action plan items and their impact on student learning and achievement of the expected learning results for students.

- A. Organization for Student Learning
 - 1. School Purpose
 - 2. Governance
 - 3. School Leadership
 - 4. Staff
 - 5. School Environment
 - 6. Reporting Student Progress
 - 7. School Improvement Process
- Strengths
- Growth Areas

Summary of Products: Self-Study Report Format

- B. Curriculum and Instruction
 - 1. What Students Learn
 - 2. How Students Learn
 - 3. How Assessment is UsedStrengths
Growth Areas
- C. Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth
 - 1. Student Connectedness
 - 2. Parent/Community InvolvementStrengths
Growth Areas
- D. Resource Management and Development
 - 1. Resources
 - 2. Resource PlanningStrengths
Growth Areas

Chapter V: The Action Plan

- A. Describe the action plan.
For each action plan section include the following:
 - statement of area for improvement (goal)
 - rationale for area based on self-study findings
 - one or more expected learning results addressed
 - ways of assessing progress, including student achievement of the learning results (and curricular standards)
 - specific steps, including professional development
 - timeline (month, year)
 - person(s) responsible (designate by asterisk) and involved
 - resources
 - means to monitor and report progress to all members
- B. State specific strategies to be used by the staff within each subject area/support program in order to accomplish the sections of the action plan.
- C. Describe the follow-up process.

Appendix:

- Results of questionnaires
- Interviews
- Support materials

Coordinator Guidelines: School/Program's Follow-up Checklist

- After the visit the SC and chief administrator meet immediately with the Leadership Team to review the Visiting Committee Report and begin the follow-up process.

The Leadership Team coordinates the refining and implementation of the action steps for each section of the action plan. The narrative suggestions and critical areas for follow-up left by the Visiting Committee should be integrated into the action plan. A copy of the modified action plan must be sent to the following office:

Accrediting Commission for Schools
Southern WASC Office
43517 Ridge Park Drive, Suite 100
Temecula, CA 92590-3615

Some schools/programs may continue to use the focus groups as “change agent” committees in the follow up process. The leadership team involves the total staff in annual assessment of progress, including data analysis about student learning in relation to expected learning results and curricular objectives; this may result in modifications of the action plan. If the school/program annually reviews its plan and progress, the reports generated will comprise the major portion of the next self-study.

- At the midpoint of the term of accreditation the Leadership Team prepares a third year progress report summarizing the school/program's major accomplishments of the action plan and other changes since the visit.

The Governing Authority reads, reviews and formally accepts the report, which is forwarded to the Accrediting Commission for Schools.

Depending upon the term of accreditation, a school/program may be required to have a one or two day review by two or more members of the original Visiting Committee.

The report will include the following: (1) basic school/program information, including any major changes during the year, (2) comments on the progress in addressing each action plan section through which the critical areas for follow-up have been accomplished; (3) supporting evidence, and (4) any refinements to the action plan.

Below are brief comments about the *ongoing nature* of *Focus on Learning* and the self-study process after the first *Focus on Learning* self-study is completed:

1. Annually update the student/community profile and discuss with all stakeholders.

2. Annually summarize progress on the action plan sections, noting key evidence, and make any necessary modifications or refinements in the plan.
3. Periodically, review the student goals (expected learning results for students) and school/program purpose.
4. Synthesize all progress and complete a three-year progress report for submission to WASC; obtain Board approval of the report.
5. Host a mid-term review if this is a condition of the accreditation term granted. (**Note:** If a school/program received a term of one, two, or three years, progress reports and one or two-day revisits are conducted. The Commission then grants additional years of accreditation or denial.)
6. In preparation for the next self-study (usually 1 ½ years prior to full visit), ensure that all stakeholders are knowledgeable about student achievement data and other current data, including progress on all aspects of the action plan. Utilize the following information with stakeholders:
 - a. current, updated student/community profile, emphasizing student achievement, and other pertinent evidence noted during the annual progress reports on the action plan
 - b. the implemented action plan
 - c. progress on the action plan and critical areas, via reports (usually an ongoing summary of action plan progress on computer)
7. Using the WASC criteria, involve stakeholders through focus and home groups in the examination of the program using the information from the past years about student achievement and program changes (see #6). Gather and analyze any additional data/information needed.
8. Summarize key findings organized by the categories of criteria.
9. Revise the action plan to show what will be accomplished during the forthcoming five-six years.
10. Finalize the self-study report that will include:
 - a. the current profile
 - b. overall progress report
 - c. student learner outcomes (expected learning results for students)
 - d. findings and supporting evidence
 - e. revised action plan

Criteria Guide Questions for Facilitating Home and Focus Groups

WASC Criteria Guide Questions and Suggested Areas to Examine

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

Category A: Organization for Student Learning

Helpful hint: Throughout Category A, there are references to documents or processes within the suggested areas to examine. In addressing the guide questions for this category, it is important to ensure both that the document or process is in place *and* that there is reflection on how that document or process contributes to the criteria.

A1. School Purpose Criterion

- ❖ Guide Questions: To what extent:
 - has the school established and communicated—via a mission or vision statement—a clear statement of purpose that reflects the beliefs and philosophy of the institution?
 - is the purpose defined further by adopted expected learning results for students that form the basis of the educational program for every student?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss to determine the degree to which the criterion is being met may include the following:
 - evidence of a written statement of purpose reflecting the beliefs and philosophy of the school/program and its constituency (e.g., mission or vision statement)
 - the degree to which the school/program’s purpose and expected learning results are aligned
 - staff commitment to the school/program’s stated purpose
 - publication of student/community profile data that supports the school/program’s purpose
 - consideration of national and state educational issues in developing student outcomes
 - evidence of a process for developing and reaching consensus among stakeholders regarding the purpose and the expected learning results for students
 - a process for periodic review or revision of the school/program’s purpose and expected learning results for students
 - dissemination via multiple channels of expected learning results for students to all appropriate stakeholders
 - use of multiple means to provide information about the program to students, parents, and community members

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

A2. Governance Criterion

- ❖ Guide Questions: To what extent:
 - does the governing authority/board adopt policies that are consistent with the school/program’s purpose and support the achievement of the expected learning results for students?
 - does the governing authority/board delegate implementation of these policies to the professional staff?
 - does the governing authority/board monitor results?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss to determine the degree to which the criterion is being met may include the following:
 - the organization of the school/program as reflected in the organizational chart
 - evidence that the governing authority/board delegates policy implementation and decision-making to the professional staff
 - the selection, composition and specific duties of the governing authority/board
 - the extent to which the governing authority/board's policies support student learning
 - The means by which the governing authority/board monitors results and evaluates the effectiveness of the instructional program (e.g., student follow-up reports, job placement and certificate data)
 - the degree of participation of board and district personnel in the development of the vision and expected learning results for students
 - additional evidence

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

A3. School/Program Leadership Criterion

- ❖ Guide Questions: To what extent:
 - does the leadership make decisions that facilitate student achievement of the expected learning results?
 - does the leadership empower the staff?
 - does the leadership encourage commitment, participation and shared accountability for student learning?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss to determine the degree to which the criterion is being met may include the following:
 - administrator and faculty-written policies, charts, and handbooks that define responsibilities and relationships
 - the existing structures for internal communications, planning and resolving differences
 - opportunities for participation, teambuilding, and collaboration
 - the level of involvement of staff in shared responsibility, actions, and accountability to support student learning
 - the degree to which the actions and decisions of the leadership are linked to student achievement of the expected learning results
 - additional evidence

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

A4. Staff Criterion

- ❖ Guide Questions: To what extent:
 - are the leadership and staff qualified for their assigned responsibilities?
 - are the leadership and staff committed to the school’s purpose?
 - does the leadership and staff engage in ongoing professional development that promotes student learning?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss to determine the degree to which the criterion is being met may include the following:
 - employment policies/practices related to qualification requirements
 - information on staff background, training, preparation, and certification
 - staff assignments to maximize use of their expertise that will result in student achievement
 - teachers’s sense of efficacy in implementing expected learning results for students
 - the degree to which leadership supports professional development with time, personnel and fiscal resources
 - the school/program’s written professional/staff development plan
 - the description of how the plan was developed and how priorities were set
 - the description of follow-up to professional development activities
 - individual professional development plans for staff
 - the perceptions of the staff members about the purpose and effectiveness of professional development
 - the role of the performance evaluation process in promoting the professional growth of staff utilized and their effectiveness in promoting professional growth
 - the degree of participation in professional opportunities that will promote student learning
 - opportunities for collaborative learning, such as shadowing, coaching, observation, mentoring, group presentations
 - the processes used to determine the effect of professional development student learning
 - additional evidence

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

A5. School Environment Criterion

- ❖ Guide Questions: To what extent:
 - does the school/program have a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school’s purpose?
 - is the school environment characterized by a respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss to determine the degree to which the criterion is being met may include the following:
 - the policies, codes and use of resources to ensure a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that is conducive to learning
 - the level of understanding of the codes of student conduct by students, teachers, and parents (if applicable)
 - the degree to which caring, concern, and high expectations for students is demonstrated on a daily basis
 - the degree to which the school/program’s environment fosters and reflects trust, respect, and professionalism
 - staff development training in cultural, racial, individual differences
 - the level of mutual respect, positive communication, and support among staff, students, and other stakeholders
 - the level of support for and encouragement of innovative approaches to enhance student learning
 - evidence of high expectations for each student and recognition of their successes
 - safety exams
 - observation of students working together in a supportive manner academically or personally as appropriate
 - opportunities for students to work in teams to practice respectful communication and collaboration
 - student and staff comments
 - teachers working with students in co-curricular activities, such as field trips, career-technical student organizations, and special events
 - documentation of written and/or oral communication about students
 - additional evidence

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

A6. Reporting Student Progress Criterion

- ❖ Guide Questions: To what extent:
 - does the leadership and staff regularly assess student progress toward accomplishing the school’s expected learning results for students?
 - does the leadership and staff report student progress to the rest of the school community?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss to determine the degree to which the criterion is being met may include the following:
 - how student progress is determined and monitored
 - standards used in the determination of achievement
 - the degree to which staff and students understand expected learning results
 - means by which teachers assess student achievement of expected learning results, including student reflection
 - student follow-up studies
 - procedures to communicate to the governing authority and members of the school community about student progress
 - degree to which school/program improvement and professional development activities/topic are evaluated through monitoring student progress toward the expected learning results
 - published lists of
 - graduates
 - completers
 - students progressing from one level to another
 - job placements
 - job referrals
 - certificates awarded
 - states/national licensing and certification exams
 - additional evidence

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

A7. School Improvement Criterion

- ❖ Guide Questions: To what extent:
 - does the leadership facilitate school/program improvement by implementing action plans that ensure quality learning for all students?
 - does the leadership have school community support and involvement?
 - does the leadership effectively guide the work of the school/program?
 - does the leadership provide for accountability through monitoring of the school/program’s action plan?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss to determine the degree to which the criterion is being met may include the following:
 - rosters, minutes of meetings, interview/survey data or other indicators of inclusion showing that the planning process is broad-based and collaborative
 - the degree to which the effectiveness of the action plan is monitored through analysis of student achievement of the expected learning results
 - evidence that allocation of time/fiscal/personnel resources supports the action plan and learning results
 - specific benchmarks and accountability tools used in the monitoring of the action plan
 - involvement of staff and stakeholders in the action plan
 - data or information gathered from student follow-up
 - additional evidence

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

Category B: Curriculum and Instruction

Helpful hint: It may be easier to examine all curriculum and instruction criteria—B1–3—at the same time because of their interdependency.

B1. What Students Learn Criterion

- ❖ Guide Question: To what extent:
 - does the school/program provide a challenging, coherent and relevant curriculum for each student that fulfills the school’s/program’s purpose and results in student achievement of the expected learning results through successful completion of any course of study offered?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine in determining the degree to which the criterion is being met: include the following:
 - use of instructional methodologies that reflect current educational research and thinking
 - the degree of consideration by the school to citations and indications of current educational research and thinking related to the various subject areas and curricular programs in order to maintain a viable, meaningful instructional program for students (e.g., state and national standards, curriculum associations, affiliated educational associations)
 - evidence that curriculum meets appropriate state, national, and/or industry standards
 - responsiveness of the program to student/community needs
 - written competencies for each course that clearly define desired student outcomes
 - evidence of ongoing curriculum review, including input of appropriate stakeholders
 - evidence that expected learning results for students are used to develop and/or guide curricular goals and competencies, instructional methodologies, and assessment
 - evidence that expected learning results for students inform decision-making about curricular goals and competencies, instructional methodologies, and assessment]
 - evidence that courses are articulated internally and, where appropriate, externally

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

B1. Suggested Areas, continued:

- evidence of instructional methodologies that promote effective communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and application of concepts and skills in realistic situations
- evidence of a process for curriculum development, evaluation and revisions
- policies regarding course completion, certification, credits, grades, homework, etc. that guide student progression through the program
- evidence that ALL students have access to the curricular program, with modifications as needed, as documented through class schedules, enrollment lists, etc.
- the assessment used by the instructional staff to measure the expected student learning results
- student follow-up studies that indicate the effectiveness of the instructional program in preparing students for transition to further education or the work force, and for achievement of personal goals
- additional evidence

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

B2. How Students Learn Criterion

- ❖ Guide Questions: To what extent:
 - does the professional staff use research-based knowledge about teaching and learning?
 - does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students at a high level of learning consistent with the school/program’s purpose and expected learning results for students?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss in determining the degree to which the criterion is being met:
 - lesson plans that reflect a variety of instructional strategies that result in a high level of learning
 - classroom observations that show that students are actively engaged in the teaching/learning process, of the means by which learning is extended beyond the classroom, such as technology, collaborative activities, and use of community resources, including internships and work-based learning
 - evidence of student understanding of the expected level of performance
 - samples of student portfolios, projects/performances/work products
 - evidence of instructional techniques used to address various learning differences and engage all students
 - student feedback about their learning experiences their achievement of the expected learning results for students
 - additional evidence

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

B3. How Assessment is Used Criterion

- ❖ Guide Questions: To what extent:
 - is teacher and student use of assessment frequent and integrated into the teaching/learning process?
 - are the assessment results the basis for measurement of each student's progress toward the expected learning results?
 - are the assessment results the basis for regular evaluation and improvement of curriculum and instruction?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss in determining the degree to which the criterion is being met:
 - of the variety of assessments used to regularly measure student progress
 - the correlation of assessment to instructional objectives and expected learning results for students
 - student work that demonstrates understanding and application of knowledge and skills
 - alternative assessments, including student portfolios, projects, performance-based assessment, and other work products
 - use of student reflection, self-evaluation, and/or peer- assessment
 - student and employer feedback to determine areas of strength and growth needs
 - examples of student assessment that involve community and/or industry representatives, such as interview panels, student competitions, and site supervisor performance evaluations
 - use of assessment data regarding the achievement of the expected learning results for students in planning professional development activities
 - additional evidence

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

Category C: Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

C1. Student Connectedness Criterion

- ❖ Guide Question: To what extent:
 - are students connected to a system of support services, activities and opportunities at the school and within the community that provide support for the achievement of program standards, including expected learning results for students?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss in determining the degree to which the criterion is being met:
 - student use of support services
 - the correlation of personalized student support with student achievement of the expected learning results for students
 - student interview and survey data on the effectiveness of all support services
 - adequacy of support and referral services that enable students to overcome barrier to success
 - the availability and effectiveness of the support services system
 - processes for intervention or referral
 - the relationship of the support service activities to classroom instruction
 - the degree to which the co-curricular activities, such as career and technical student organizations, are linked to the expected schoolwide learning results
 - the level of involvement of students in curricular/co-curricular activities, such as student leadership organizations and service projects
 - the relationship of support service activities to continuing education, career planning and preparation
 - additional evidence

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

C2. Community/Business Involvement Criterion

- ❖ Guide Question: To what extent:
 - does the leadership employ a wide range of strategies to ensure that business and community involvement is integral to the support system for students?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss in determining the degree to which the criterion is being met:
 - the level of business and community involvement in the school/program
 - the methods used to communicate with and garner involvement of business
 - the degree to which community resources are utilized to support students such as career days, business partnerships, speakers, and professional services
 - the level of understanding regarding achievement of the expected learning results for students
 - additional evidence

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

Category D: Resource Management and Development

D1. Resources Criterion

- ❖ Guide Question: To what extent:
 - are the resources available sufficient to sustain the instructional program and effectively used to carry out the school/program’s purpose and achievement of the expected learning results for students?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss in determining the degree to which the criterion is being met:
 - the relationship between decisions about resource allocations and support for the achievement of the expected learning results for students
 - the degree of involvement of leadership and staff in resource allocation
 - the annual budget
 - the most recent audit
 - protections against mishandling of funds
 - the business and accounting practices
 - the adequacy of the facilities to meet the purpose of the school/program, i.e., safe, functional, and well-maintained
 - the procedures for acquiring and maintaining adequate resources, supplies, and equipment including textbooks, audio-visuals, and technology
 - the resources available for hiring, training, and retaining a well-qualified staff
 - advisory committee minutes if appropriate
 - additional evidence

Explanation: The criteria guide questions and suggested areas to examine should be used by the Home and the Focus Groups to accomplish Tasks 4–6 (beginning p. 49). **Note:** The guide questions address the concepts of the criteria.

D2. Resource Planning Criterion

- ❖ Guide Question: To what extent:
 - do the governing authority and the leadership implement responsible resource planning for the future?
- ❖ Suggested areas to examine and discuss in determining the degree to which the criterion is being met:
 - a master resource plan
 - the procedures for regular periodic review of resources
 - the strategies used to leverage alternative funding
 - the process used to develop the master resource plan
 - in the process for informing the public and appropriate governmental authorities about the financial needs of the organization
 - additional evidence

The Visiting Team Toolkit

Coordinator Guidelines

1. Visiting Committee Chairperson and Self-Study Coordinator (SC) communicate prior to visit.

Prior to the visit, the Visiting Committee chairperson will be in communication with the SC and chief administrator to answer questions or give assistance. The chief administrator and the chairperson should establish an initial fall date for the chairperson to visit a school. Through this contact, the chair will become familiar with the school, determine the self-study progress, offer guidance in conducting the self-study, and begin to develop a detailed schedule for the visit. Chairs may spend more than one full day at the school in preparation for the visit.

Questions the chairperson will discuss during the preliminary visit and through continual contact with the school include:

- a. How are the parameters of the self-study addressed in the self-study process? In what ways have the school/program leaders modified the model self-study process to accommodate the educational community?
- b. How is the school developing or clarifying expected learning results for students?
- c. What is the plan for involving all staff members and representatives of the other stakeholders in reviewing the instructional program with respect to the criteria and the expected learning results for students?
- d. How are the staff members and other stakeholders taking an in-depth look at the program for *all* students: access to and participation in the core curriculum, support, and attainment of the expected learning results? What methods are they using? (e.g., observing and examining what students are doing; interviewing students and others; examining pertinent student and other data)
- e. Is the action plan based on findings of the Focus Groups and is it realistic, specific and meaningful with respect to the expected learning results? How has the school/program provided a “feedback loop” to all stakeholders regarding the action plan? Can the action steps be implemented immediately within existing resources?
- f. How will the schedule for the visit permit adequate dialogue with the Leadership Team and Focus Groups regarding self-study findings, thereby building the trust and rapport necessary for communication and collaboration?
- g. How will the Leadership Team ensure that there is a workable follow-up process to implement and monitor the action plan?

2. SC makes housing and other physical arrangements for the Visiting Committee

The SC arranges housing, transportation, and adequate work space for the Visiting Committee. For visits to schools in Hawaii, the chief administrator and SC work with the designated travel agent. In the work space there is an area for exhibit materials that support the self-study. Word processing and copy services are available to the Visiting Committee.

3. After the Self-Study Report is completed, the SC and Visiting Committee Chairperson finalize the schedule for the visit

4. During the month prior to the visit, the SC and the Leadership Team continue discussion of the implementation of the action plan

Staff members and other stakeholders review the Action Plan, their respective subject area/support strategies, and the reports by the Focus Groups; they provide feedback to their committee chairpersons. Using this information, the Leadership Team continues to refine the action plan. The Leadership Team will share these ideas with the Visiting Committee.

5. SC completes preparation for the Visiting Committee visit

SC verifies all preliminary VC arrangements: housing, transportation, typing, word processing/copy services, school map, classroom schedule, parking facilities, name tags, etc. SC ensures the work room and exhibits, including portfolios, are available.

6. During the three and one half day visit, the stakeholders discuss specific issues of the self-study with the Visiting Committee.

In this process, the Visiting Committee will have extensive dialogue with the Focus Groups and the Leadership Team. Important to these sessions and the subject area/support group meetings will be the Visiting Committee's examination and understanding of the information and evidence that supported the self-study findings. Throughout the visit the Visiting Committee chairperson will regularly communicate with the chief administrator, the self-study coordinator and the Leadership Team regarding the visiting team's findings.

7. The Visiting Committee prepares a report and presents findings.

8. The SC sends 10 copies of the Visiting Committee Report to WASC and distributes copies to all stakeholder groups.

9. After the visit, the SC facilitates the integration of the narrative suggestions and critical areas for follow-up left by the visiting committee in the report into the action plan. The school sends one copy of the modified plan to the WASC office and distributes copies to all stakeholder groups.

Accreditation Term Determination*

The visiting committee will recommend a term of accreditation which will be acted upon by the Accrediting Commission. A term of accreditation is the period of time that best reflects the degree to which (1) the school/program is a trustworthy institution of learning and (2) the school/program is implementing an improvement process that will improve student learning. Current terms are six years; six years with a one day review; three years, two years, one year; or denial. The Commission reserves the right to grant additional conditions of accreditation other than those listed above. Such action will follow a Commission review of the visiting committee report.

An accreditation term will be based upon demonstration of the following:

1. Involvement and collaboration of stakeholders throughout the self-study process.
2. The clarification of the school/program's purpose through expected learning results for students and instructional standards.
3. The use of appropriate assessments to evaluate student achievement.
4. Progress by all students toward clearly defined expected learning results, instructional standards, and other institutional and/or governing authority expectations.
5. An organization for student learning that supports high achievement for all students.
6. Curriculum and instruction that supports high achievement for all students.
7. Support for student personal and academic growth that supports high achievement for all students.
8. Resource management and development that supports high achievement for all students.
9. The alignment of a long-range school/program-wide action plan with the areas of greatest need to support high achievement of all students.
10. The capacity to monitor and implement the action plan.
11. The use of prior accreditation findings and other pertinent data to ensure high achievement of all students and school/program improvement.

* Revised 8/00.

Visiting Committee Report Format

Chapter I: Student/Community Profile (suggested length: 1–2 pages)

- Briefly summarize the most critical information from the student/community profile that impacts the school. Include the following:
 - Brief description of the students and community served by the school
 - School analysis of student achievement data
 - Other pertinent data

Note: The entire profile does not need to be included.

- Comment on significant findings revealed by the profile and/or pertinent items that were not included in the profile.

Chapter II: Progress Report (suggested length: 2 pages)

- Briefly comment on the school/program’s major changes and follow-up process since the last self-study.
- Discuss how the school through its action plan has accomplished each of the critical areas for follow-up, including the impact on student learning.

Chapter III: Self-Study Process (suggested length: 1 ½ pages)

- Comment on the self-study process with respect to the parameters and accuracy.
 - Did the school/program accomplish the five parameters of the self-study? (*See Focus on Learning, page 18 or Reference Card #1*)
 - Does the self-study accurately reflect the program for students?
 - Does the observable evidence reflect a sampling of what students are doing and producing with respect to the WASC criteria and the expected learning results for students?
 - Do the findings support the identified areas for growth?

Chapter IV: Quality of the Educational Program

Part A: For each category:

- A. *Organization for Student Learning*
- B. *Curriculum and Instruction*
- C. *Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth*
- D. *Resource Management and Development*

- Summarize the findings of the visiting committee with regard to the educational program and its impact on student learning. (suggested length: 10–20 pages)
 - highlight areas of strength (if any)
 - highlight the key issues (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students
 - list important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues
- Part B: Synthesize the strengths and key issues from all categories into *school/program-wide strengths and critical areas for follow-up*. Include the information given below (suggested length: 2 pages).
- general comments about the *school/program-wide strengths and critical areas for follow-up*
 - *areas of strength* (list numerically): *Be sure that these can be documented by other sections of the report.*
 - *critical areas for follow-up* that will do the following: (list numerically) *Be sure that these can be documented by other sections of the report.*
 - *support* those areas already identified in the action plan sections
 - *strengthen* those identified areas in the action plan sections
 - address *additional* areas identified by the visiting committee. *This includes areas related to student achievement and other profile data, the educational program and operation, and the action plan.*

Chapter V: Ongoing School/Program Improvement (suggested length: 2 pages)

- Include a brief summary of the action plan.
- Comment on the following improvement issues:
 - adequacy of the action plan in addressing the *critical areas for follow-up* Consider these questions:
 - Do the action plan sections address the *critical areas for follow-up*?
 - Will the action plan steps enhance student learning?
 - Is the action plan a “user-friendly” plan that has integrated all major school/program initiatives?
 - Is the action plan feasible within existing resources?
 - Is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, system-wide?
 - existing factors that will support school/program improvement
 - impediments to improvement that the school/program will need to overcome in order to accomplish any of the action plan sections
 - soundness of the follow-up process that the school/program intends to use for monitoring the accomplishment of the schoolwide action plan

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Accrediting Commission for Schools

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RECOMMENDATION FOR A TERM OF ACCREDITATION

Visiting Committee’s CONFIDENTIAL recommendation to the Accrediting Commission is:

	A Term Of Accreditation For Six Years: A term of six years with a written Progress Report to the School’s governing board on the major recommendations or critical areas listed in the Visiting Committee Report. Upon review and formal acceptance by the board, the report will be filed with the WASC office.
	A Term Of Accreditation For Six Years With A Review: A term of six years with a complete Progress Report on major recommendations or critical areas and one day on-site review visit by a two member committee to be completed no later than the third year of the six year term.
	A Term Of Accreditation For Three Years: A term of three years with a Progress Report on critical areas of improvement and action plans, and a two-day visit as a requisite to continued accreditation.
	A Term Of Accreditation For One or Two Years: A term of one or two years (circle one or two) with a complete Progress Report and revisit to serve as a “warning” that unless prompt attention is given to major recommendations or critical areas, accreditation may be denied.
	Denial Of Accreditation: Denial of accreditation based on conditions detailed in the Visiting Committee Report.

NOTE: The Commission reserves the right to grant terms of accreditation other than those above, including a recommendation for a full self-study at any time. Such action will follow a Commission review of the Visiting Committee Report. In the event of a formal appeal, this document will be provided to the school chief administrator.

VISITING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Type or print name

Signature

Committee CHAIRPERSON

Date _____

DOCUMENTATION AND JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT

For proper processing, please complete the following information

Chair Name	Name and City of School Visited
Chair's Work Phone	Chair's Home Phone
Alt. Number during end of June (if applicable)	
E-mail address (if applicable)	

Complete the narrative rationale for each factor. Check the rating that best fits the results of the self-study and the visit.

- **Highly Effective:** The results of the self-study and the visit provide evidence that this factor has had a high degree of impact on student learning, the school's program, and the school's operation.
- **Effective:** The results of the self-study and the visit provide evidence that this factor has had a satisfactory level of impact on student learning, the school's program, and the school's operation.
- **Somewhat Effective:** The results of the self-study and the visit provide evidence that this factor has had a limited impact on student learning, the school's program, and the school's operation.
- **Ineffective:** The results of the self-study and the visit provide evidence that this factor has had little or no impact on student learning, the school's program, and the school's operation.

An accreditation term will be based upon a school demonstrating the following:

1. Involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in doing the self-study that accomplishes the five parameters of the self-study.

Visiting Committee Rating:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highly Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Effective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective |

Narrative Rationale:

2. The defining of the school/program's purpose through expected learning results for students and curricular standards.

Visiting Committee Rating:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highly Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Effective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective |

Narrative Rationale:

3. The use of a professionally acceptable assessment process to collect, disaggregate, and analyze student performance data.

Visiting Committee Rating:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highly Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Effective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective |

Narrative Rationale:

4. The acceptable progress by all students toward clearly defined expected learning results for students, academic and/or career-technical standards, and other institutional and/or governing authority expectations.

Visiting Committee Rating:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highly Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Effective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective |

Narrative Rationale:

5. **An Organization for Student Learning** that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highly Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Effective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective |

Narrative Rationale:

6. **Curriculum and Instruction** that support high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highly Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Effective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective |

Narrative Rationale:

7. **Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth** that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highly Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Effective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective |

Narrative Rationale:

8. **Resource Management and Development** that supports high achievement for all student.

Visiting Committee Rating:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Effective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective |

Narrative Rationale:

9. The alignment of a long-range action plan to the school/program's areas of greatest need to support high achievement of all students.

Visiting Committee Rating:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highly Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Effective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective |

Narrative Rationale:

10. The capacity to implement and monitor the action plan.

Visiting Committee Rating:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Exemplary | <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat Effective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ineffective |

Narrative Rationale:

11. The use of prior accreditation findings and other pertinent data to ensure high achievement of all students and drive school improvement.

Visiting Committee Rating:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Exemplary | <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat Effective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ineffective |

Narrative Rationale:

Provide a brief narrative, which summarizes the Visiting Committee's rationale for the recommended term. (If there is an unresolved minority opinion please indicate and explain.)

- term options seriously considered
- reasons for the *term recommended*

In the comments reflect upon the following:

- the visiting committee's discussions and process (summarize as needed in the narrative)
- the degree to which students are learning
- the strength of the school in all areas of the program and the operation
- the capacity of the school to implement and monitor the action plan

Sample Schedule for Visit

This sample schedule will have to be adjusted by the school and Visiting Committee (VC) chair to fit the local situation. In this process, it is very important to allow enough time for extensive dialogue with the Focus Groups and the Leadership Team; this discussion will include the examination of evidence used to determine growth needs by the stakeholders. The focus of the subject area and support staff meetings will be to understand their information and evidence that led support to the self-study findings. The VC chairperson should be regularly communicating with the chief administrator and self-study coordinator to discuss the progress of the visit.

Day before Visit (Usually Sunday)

(12:00 NOON)	(Visiting Committee may meet for Sunday brunch)
1:00 PM	Meeting of VC members to begin group discussion on perceptions of self-study
3:00 PM	Meeting with the chief administrator, Self-Study Coordinator, and Leadership Team to clarify issues in the self-study and explain the visit; the VC and school leaders participate in a reflective discussion of the self-study; school leaders conduct a brief school tour for VC
4:30 PM	Brief meeting with the governing board, district, school and/or community representatives
5:00–6.00 PM	Meeting with Parent/Community Committee
7:00 PM–	Meeting of VC to receive instructions from the chair, organize the work of the committee, and examine supplementary materials

First Day

7:30–8:00 AM	Meeting with Leadership Team (total VC team)
8:00–9:30 AM	Meeting with Organization for Student Learning Focus Group(s) or support group(s) (total VC, if possible)
8:00 AM–12:00 PM	Gathering of evidence: class/program observations, interviews, examination of student work
11:00 AM–12:00 PM	Meeting with student committee (VC reps.)

12:00–1:00 PM	Lunch on-site; informally talk with students and staff
1:00–2:30 PM	Gathering of evidence: class visits, etc.
3:00–5:00 PM	Meeting with Curriculum and Instruction Focus Group(s) (total VC, if possible)
6:00–7:00 PM	Dinner (VC alone)
7:30 PM–	Discussion of findings and work on written summary

Second Day

7:30–8:30 AM	Meeting with Leadership Team (VC reps.)
7:30–8:30 AM	Home Group Staff meetings as needed (VC reps.) Note: The school and the VC Chair should agree upon what Home Group meetings are needed in addition to the Schoolwide Focus Groups
8:30–11:00 AM	Gathering of evidence: class/program observations, interviews, examination of student work
11:00 AM–12:00 PM	Committee work
12:00–1:00 PM	Lunch on-site; informal contact with student and staff
1:00–3:00 PM	Meeting with the Support for Personal and Academic Growth Focus Group(s) (VC reps.) Gathering of evidence: class/program observations, interviews, examination of student work
2:00–3:00 PM	District meeting at the school/program site (VC chair and reps.) (if applicable)
3:00–5:00 PM	Meeting with Subject Area/Support Staff Committee Meeting with Resource Management and Development Focus Group (VC reps.)
6:00 PM–	Dinner (VC alone) VC works on draft of its report

Third Day

7:30–8:30 AM	Meeting with Leadership Team (total VC)
8:30–11:00 AM	Completion of draft report, contacting school/program staff as needed
11:00 AM–1:00 PM	Meeting with the Leadership Team and others invited by the school/program to discuss/clarify findings of visit and the VC report
1:00–3:00 PM	Closure on issues raised in the earlier session discussing the draft VC report; the VC may revise the report as a result of this meeting; VC members complete the final draft of the VC report
3:00–3:30 PM	Report to staff/stakeholders; the chief administrator is encouraged to invite representatives of students, classified staff, and community to attend

Visiting Committee Member Checklist

Previsit Preparation

- ___1. Receive first letter from Visiting Committee chairperson that addresses several items:
 - a. Asking for preferred areas of coverage during the visit
 - b. Reminding members about training sessions
 - c. Asking members to review accreditation materials
- ___2. Participate in training
- ___3. Study the school/program description, the *Focus on Learning* manual, and the reference cards (Sections of *Focus on Learning* to emphasize: The Big Picture; The Self-Study: Background Information; The Self-Study; The Visit; The Follow-up; The Tools: Criteria/Suggested Evidence; Expected Schoolwide Learning Results; Gathering Evidence)
- ___4. Become aware of the expected outcomes of the self-study followed by the school:
 - the involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study
 - the clarification of the school's purpose and expected learning results for students
 - the assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria
 - the development of a school/program-wide action plan and integrated subject area/support program action steps to address identified growth needs
 - the development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the school/programwide action plan
- ___5. Review the WASC criteria and suggested evidence and appropriate educational references
- ___6. Receive additional communication from chairperson
 - a. Assigning writing assignments
 - b. Asking for preferred areas of coverage during the visit
 - c. Requesting the review of the criteria as the entire self-study report is analyzed
 - d. Requesting prior to the visit, the writing of questions to pursue during the visit and tentative narrative statements for assigned sections of the self-study report
 - e. Providing a schedule for visit

- ___7. After receiving the self-study report, complete previsit preparation:
 - a. Review the criteria with respect to the analysis of the self-study report; study other pertinent materials
 - b. Compare the school/program's findings to the concepts of the criteria and the expected learning results for all students; critique action plan
 - c. Write questions regarding issues, concerns, clarifications and evidence that should be pursued during the visit and develop tentative narrative statements for assigned sections of Visiting Committee report; send these to Visiting Committee chair prior to visit
- ___8. Receive final communication from chairperson:
 - a. Confirming receipt of self-study
 - b. Offering assistance/clarification of tasks
 - c. Confirming initial meeting time
 - d. Reviewing how expenses are to be handled
- ___9. Take following materials to visit:
 - a. *Focus on Learning* manual
 - b. Reference cards
 - c. Self-Study Report
 - d. All notes
 - e. Credit card or cash to cover reimbursable expenses
- ___10. Arrive on time for initial meeting and have no other commitments during the visit

**The Visit: How Do We Know Students Are Learning?
 What Is The Actual Program for Students?**

- ___1. Demonstrate a genuine interest in the school/program's welfare and a desire to be helpful; establish rapport with staff
- ___2. Use the concepts of the WASC/CDE pilot criteria as a comparison base throughout entire visit
- ___3. Look at the quality of program experienced by students and evidence of successful student learning—the degree to which the expected learning results for students and academic standards are being accomplished
- ___4. Look for evidence of an ongoing process for school/program improvement
- ___5. Let the program unfold, don't prejudge; validate, verify, and document; be aware of personal biases that can influence observation

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- ___6. Structure the gathering of evidence (class/program observations, interviews, examination of student work and other information, and dialogue with Home Groups) so needed information is gained
 - ___7. Assure teachers that classroom visits are not evaluative but are planned to observe the general instructional atmosphere and climate of the school
 - ___8. Frame open-ended questions to all committee members and individuals to elicit information without reflecting a value judgment
 - ___9. Allow adequate time for responses and give appropriate feedback to responses to questions
 - ___10. Concentrate on being a good listener; be aware of nonverbal feedback
 - ___11. Meet and lead discussion with school self-study committees that are assigned areas of writing responsibility; allow adequate time for the other Visiting Committee members to explore their concerns and for school staff members to highlight issues important to them; Visiting Committee members help all concerned to recognize the needs of the school and develop a desire to improve the instructional program.
 ➔ **Note:** Time is limited, so don't overemphasize particular concerns; the goal is to clarify information already in the self-study report and secure information not yet provided
 - ___12. Don't allow pressure groups or individuals to distract you from the main task and schedule
 - ___13. Make every effort to avoid involvement in issues that are negotiable
 - ___14. Work cooperatively with all other Visiting Committee members as findings are discussed and decisions made
 - ___15. Write quality responses according to the suggested guidelines; Make sure they reflect the important concepts of the criteria in order to serve as guidelines for an effective educational curricular program
 - ___16. Provide regular feedback to the Leadership Team and other staff members regarding findings as a result of the visit, not the self-study alone
 - ___17. Meet with the Leadership Team to present and thoroughly discuss the synthesis of the concepts of the criteria, the self-study report, and the findings during the visit, as reflected in the draft Visiting Committee Report
 - ___18. Meet with other Visiting Committee members to investigate any issues or questions raised during the Leadership Team meeting
 - ___19. Make necessary Visiting Committee Report modifications and come to closure on them

- ___20. Individually review each WASC criterion within the four categories and overall findings; individually make decisions regarding the quality of the educational program with respect to the four categories of criteria and the other factors impacting the term
- ___21. Participate in the Visiting Committee discussion of the Recommendation for a Term of Accreditation with respect to the WASC criteria categories and all findings
- ___22. Assist the chair in preparing the confidential Visiting Committee Summary for the Commission ensuring that the correlation is evident between the recommended term and the Visiting Committee report
- ___23. Complete expense voucher and chair evaluation form (optional)
- ___24. Participate in the presentation of the findings to the entire staff; don't imply the recommended term of accreditation
- ___25. Support and encourage the school/program in its ongoing follow-up

Visiting Committee Chairperson Checklist

WASC Accreditation

Previsit Preparation

- ___1. Receive training
- ___2. Study the school/program description, the *Focus on Learning* manual, and the reference cards (Sections of *Focus on Learning* to emphasize: The Big Picture; The Self-Study: Background Information; The Self-Study; The Visit; The Follow-up; The Tools: Criteria/Suggested Evidence; Expected Learning Results for students; Gathering Evidence)
- ___3. Review the parameters to be accomplished through the self-study:
 - the involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study
 - the clarification of the school's purpose and expected learning results for students
 - the assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria
 - the development of an action plan and integrated subject area/support program action steps to address identified growth needs
 - the development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the action plan
- ___4. Review the WASC criteria and suggested evidence and appropriate curricular/educational references
- ___5. Begin regular communication with the chief administrator and self-study coordinator (SC) to answer questions or give assistance
- ___6. Arrange initial one day visit; during that visit plan to meet with chief administrator or head, self-study coordinator, leadership team, and other staff members; possibly speak briefly to entire staff
- ___7. Communicate with school/program about the following issues: (Many of these can be discussed at the initial visit.)
 - ___a. The calendar/timeline for the self-study process
 - ___b. Orientation of staff/training of committee chairpersons
 - ___c. Committee organization/membership/designated criteria

➔ **Note:** As long as the school adheres to the *parameters*, there is flexibility in the self-study process; if the school/program modifies the suggested self-study process, it should explain how the parameters have been met

- Is there active involvement of all certificated staff members, including administration, and strong representation of other school/program and community groups? (i.e., members of Home Groups and Focus Groups)
 - How is the Leadership Team taking an active role in facilitating the entire self-study process?
- ___d. Development of student/community profile
- How is the Leadership Team ensuring that the school/program is considering ALL student characteristics/subpopulations in the self-study process?
- ___e. Clarification of expected learning results for students
- How is the school/program using the student profile information in the process of developing/refining its expected learning results for students? How is the school/program beginning to define quality accomplishments of the expected learning results for all students through all its programs?
 - Are they driving the work of the school/program? To what degree are they measurable? **Note:** It is expected that there will be a range/continuum in the development of these expected schoolwide learning results.
 - Is the school/program examining student success in meeting the expected learning results as an integral part of its comparison to the criteria?
- ___f. Progress since previous full self-study
- Is the school/program responding to each recommendation from the previous full self-study, recognizing that some recommendations may have been more helpful than others?
- ___g. Analysis of student program, both discipline-specific and support areas
- How has evidence been gathered and analyzed with respect to curricular references, the expected learning results for students, and the criteria?
- ___h. Use of WASC criteria and expected learning results for students , collection and analysis of evidence, synthesis of findings, and the writing of the focus group summaries
- Are all certificated staff members/other representative stakeholders using the criteria and expected learning results for students as the basis for determining “what exists,” “how effective is it,” and “where” do we want to be?

- Is the information from the student/community profile being used to ensure that the comparison to the criteria is being conducted with respect to all students?
 - How are the certificated staff members and other school/program community members taking an in-depth look at the program for all students?
 - How is this evidence being organized and used in the focus group discussions?
 - How is additional evidence needed by the respective focus groups being gathered and analyzed?
- ___i. Review of self-study report’s table of contents, a sample focus group summary, and an action plan section
- Does each focus group summary provide the critical findings and reference to the evidence that supports the identified growth needs and suggested “next steps”?
 - Are the action plan sections supported by the Subject Area/Support Committees and are they realistic, specific and meaningful? Will the action plan sections effectively guide the work of the school in ensuring quality learning for students? Can the action plan sections be implemented immediately within existing resources? Action Plan sections include:
 - a statement of the areas of improvement
 - brief statement of the rationale for identifying this area
 - expected schoolwide learning results addressed
 - ways of assessing progress
 - specific steps, including professional development
 - timeline (month, year)
 - person(s) responsible (indicate with asterisk) and involved
 - resources
 - means to report progress to all appropriate stakeholders
- ___j. School/program’s follow-up process (including board/district understanding and support of accreditation process)
- Have the administrators, SC, Leadership Team and district representatives begun discussion of a sound follow-up process that includes:
 - ways of monitoring progress
 - accountability of all stakeholders
 - individual commitment
 - benchmarks/celebration of progress
- ___k. Exhibit of representative evidence for the Visiting Committee

- How will exhibit materials that reflect the evidence analyzed in the self-study be organized for the visiting committee?
 - Will the evidence reflect
 - a linkage to expected schoolwide learning results and criteria?
 - a linkage to identified “growth needs” and action plan sections?
 - All students?
 - Will the visiting committee be provided a general list of available evidence?
- ___l. The schedule for the visit
- How can the schedule maximize time for dialogue with the focus groups, the gathering of evidence (class/program observations, interviews, examination of student work, and possible meetings with Home Groups)?
 - Does the schedule for the visit permit regular (i.e., daily) dialogue with the Leadership Team regarding preliminary findings, thereby building the trust, rapport for ongoing communication and collaboration?
- ___m. Visiting Committee work room and exhibit area at the site
- ___n. Meeting room at school for committee meetings
- ___o. Computer access and compatibility with system chair will be using for draft report
- ___p. Clerical support throughout process
- ___q. Housing arrangements (single rooms, educational or government rate, *no* funding for separate hotel/motel meeting room. If first night’s deposit is required, school/program should contact Commission office.)
- ___r. Copies of previous self-study, mid-term report, and/or revisit committee report as well as other pertinent background materials
- ___8. Receive roster of Visiting Committee members by January; begin communication, i.e., letters, calls, fax
- ___a. Send initial letter, including school/program description; WASC will send *Focus on Learning* and reference cards directly to Visiting Committee members
 - ___b. Ask for preferred areas of coverage during the visit
 - ___c. Remind members that they are required to participate in Visiting Committee training

- ___9. Maintain contact with school/program to determine:
- ___a. If school/program needs further direct assistance
 - ___b. Progress on report, including actual critique of a sample focus group summary and action plan section
 - Do the summaries address all the important concepts of the criteria found within the category?
 - Is there an indication that appropriate evidence was collected to verify findings?
 - Was the comparison done with respect to evidence of student learning and success, the achievement of the expected learning results for students?
 - Will the action plan section impact quality learning for students and is it realistic?
 - ___c. Progress on housing and other physical arrangements
 - ___d. Appropriate clerical support
- ___10. Send second letter to Visiting Committee members:
- ___a. Provide writing assignments of areas to be covered
 - ___b. Ask for the review of the criteria as the **entire self-study report is analyzed**
 - ___c. Compare the self-study to the concepts of the criteria and the expected learning results for students
 - ___d. **Prior to visit require** written questions about issues, concerns, clarifications and evidence that should be pursued during the visit
 - ___e. **Prior to visit require** written tentative narrative statements for assigned sections of Visiting Committee report. **Note:** The questions and tentative narrative statements should be sent to the Visiting Committee chair prior to the visit. The chair will create a tentative report that will be used at the initial team meeting. The members will receive a sample Visiting Committee report and worksheet at the training.
 - ___f. Provide schedule for visit
- ___11. Maintain regular contact with school to double-check the following:
- ___a. Progress of report by actual critique of sample report sections and/or action plan sections
 - ___b. Date school/program mailed report
 - ___c. Preparation of reference/evidence materials for visit
 - ___d. Receipt of list of reference/evidence
 - ___e. Availability and knowledge of clerical support

- ___12. If two or more schools are being evaluated, work with WASC appointed “coordinator” (one of the chairpersons) to schedule meeting(s) with district office representatives
- ___13. Make final contact with Visiting Committee members:
 - ___a. Confirm receipt of self-study
 - ___b. Offer assistance with understanding of assigned tasks and pre-writing
 - ___c. Remind members to send questions and tentative writing
 - ___d. Offer additional assistance to special Visiting Committee members
 - ___e. Confirm initial meeting time
 - ___f. Remind members to take cash/credit card for expenses that will be reimbursed after visit
- ___14. Develop basic Visiting Committee Report format correlated to Self-Study Report chapters. Ahead of time begin writing the following: additional comments about pertinent items not included in the profile summary (Chapter I); response to school’s Progress Report (Chapter III); comments on the self-study process with respect to accuracy and the degree to which the parameters have been met (Chapter III). Include all writing from the visiting committee members. **Have the tentative report ready for the initial orientation Visiting Committee meeting (i.e., Sunday or Monday afternoon).**
- ___15. Plan orientation meeting for Visiting Committee members prior to initial meeting at school (e.g., Sunday afternoon). The meeting covers:
 - ___a. Purpose of visit
 - ___b. Conducting the visit in an atmosphere of collaborative and open communication
 - ___c. Emphasis upon criteria and expected learning results for students as the basis for the self-study and the visit
 - ___d. Discussion of school/program’s direction(s) and where it is with respect to development/refinement of expected learning results for students
 - ___e. Discussion of Self-Study Report: trends/perceptions, (questions, concerns and tentative written comments); relationship to concepts of criteria and expected schoolwide learning results; alignment of schoolwide action plan to findings
 - ___f. Discussion of ways to gather evidence
 - ___g. Review of initial meeting and overall schedule
 - ___h. Review of accreditation term determination and summary for the Commission
 - ___i. Reminder to “control” expenses

The Visit: How Do We Know Students Are Learning?

What is the Actual Program for Students?

- ___1. Conduct orientation meeting for Visiting Committee members. Note: See #15 above.
- ___2. Conduct initial meeting with school that includes a reflective discussion on the general perceptions gleaned from study of the Self-Study Report (planned jointly with chief administrator/self-study coordinator prior to visit) on first day of visit (i.e., Sunday).
- ___3. Facilitate the visit:
 - ___a. Maintain a positive atmosphere
 - ___b. Keep to the task
 - ___c. Maintain open communication and collaboration at all times
 - ___d. Regularly communicate with chief administrator (head), administrators, self-study coordinator, and Leadership Team
 - ___e. Ensure that all Visiting Committee members are active participants in the school committee meetings
 - ___f. Ensure that the gathering of evidence (class/program observations, interviews, examination of student work and other data, subject area/support group meetings) is occurring throughout the school
 - ___g. Ensure that no area is overlooked
 - ___h. Assist committee members
 - ___i. Avoid issues related to school policies or negotiations
 - ___j. Stress with Visiting Committee to avoid prescription and “how we do it at our school” discussion
 - ___k. Lead all visiting committee discussions on the findings, relating them to the WASC criteria in the four categories
 - ___l. Coordinate the preparation of the Visiting Committee report
- ___4. Facilitate the thorough discussion and synthesis of the key concepts of the criteria in the four categories, the self-study report, and the visiting committee findings at all visiting committee meetings during the 3 ½ days.
- ___5. Regularly communicate with the school/program leaders, including the Leadership Team, about Visiting Committee findings.
- ___6. At the final meeting with the Leadership Team, facilitate the thorough discussion of the synthesis of 1) the key concepts of the criteria, 2) the self-study report, 3) student learning based on the expected learning results, 4) the action plan, and 5) the visiting committee findings, as reflected in the draft Visiting Committee Report

- ___ a. Ensure the Leadership Team has an opportunity to ask questions and clarify areas of the report
 - ___ b. Work with Visiting Committee members to discuss and investigate any issues or questions raised in the dialogue with the Leadership Team
 - ___ 7. Facilitate necessary Visiting Committee Report modifications and come to closure on Visiting Committee Report
 - ___ 8. Have Visiting Committee members individually review each WASC criterion within the four categories; Have them individually make decisions regarding the quality of the school's educational program with respect to the four categories of criteria and the other factors impacting the term
 - ___ 9. Facilitate the Visiting Committee discussion of the term of accreditation that will be recommended to the WASC Commission
 - ___ 10. Coordinate the completion of the Recommended Term of Accreditation page and the confidential Visiting Committee Summary for the Commission
- Ensure:
- ___ Alignment between the Visiting Committee report and the recommended term
 - ___ Member signatures on the term sheet
 - ___ Brief description of the discussion and term option considered by the Visiting Committee
 - ___ A clearly stated rationale based upon factors impacting term of accreditation
- ___ 11. Have Visiting Committee members complete expense vouchers and evaluation of chairperson form (optional); Review expense forms
 - ___ 12. Edit final Visiting Committee Report with the assistance of the Visiting Committee members; ensure all key topics of chapters are addressed
 - ___ 13. Facilitate the presentation of the Visiting Committee findings to the entire staff at the close of the visit; do not imply the recommended term of accreditation
 - ___ 14. Continually stress the importance of immediate follow-up to integrate the Visiting Committee narrative suggestions and recommendations into the school's action plan for yearly implementation and assessment
 - ___ 15. Work with self-study coordinator to decide who will send 10 copies to the WASC office

After The Visit

- ___1. Send the member expense vouchers and member evaluations to the WASC office immediately
- ___2. Finalize the WASC forms: The Recommended Term of Accreditation and the Visiting Committee Summary for the Commission. In addition, complete final editing on the Visiting Committee Report. Ensure school/program has final copy of the Visiting Committee Report and **10** copies are received by WASC office **as soon as possible after visit** and send to:
Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC
533 Airport Blvd., Suite 200
Burlingame, CA 94010-2009
- ___3. Keep copies of **ALL** WASC forms and Visiting Committee Report
- ___4. Send appropriate letters of appreciation
- ___5. Communicate to Visiting Committee members the decision of the Commission on the final accreditation term awarded to the school (This decision is reached either at the April or June Commission meeting)

Appendix

Key Terminology

To ensure common understanding of the terms which are used in the criteria and the *Focus on Learning* process, the following definitions are provided and will be operational for *Focus on Learning*.

Accreditation: A voluntary process whereby a school conducts a self-study that serves as the basis for a review by a team of educators not employed by the district. The team members assist the school in appraising their instructional program. The school is evaluated on (1) the degree to which there is clarity of purpose that is reflected through the school's leadership, instructional program, policies, and use of time and resources; and (2) how adequately the WASC criteria are being met. The maximum term of accreditation is six years.

Action Plan: A school's step by step process that details specific activities using existing resources that can address a school's identified growth needs.

All Students: A reference to the belief that all students can learn at high levels and should have sufficient support to enable them to achieve the expected schoolwide learning results. Every student enrolled in the school, regardless of sub-population or unique characteristics, is included.

Challenging Relevant Curriculum: A demanding curriculum based on themes and concepts that encourages the student to achieve at high levels, to use "higher order thinking skills," and to apply and synthesize knowledge.

Coherent Curriculum: A curriculum that is viewed as a broadly conceived concept and makes sense as a whole with subparts unified, connected and integrated.

Competency: A performance objective

Course Competencies/Subject Area Results: Established goals, objectives and expectations for what students are to know and be able to do upon the completion of a class, course or sequence of courses within a subject area or program. These results are aligned with the expected schoolwide learning results and "enable" students to progress toward accomplishing these results.

Current Educational Research and Thinking: Research and related discourse and publications on education and learning. Examples include: the work of such authors as Grant Wiggins, Jay McTighe, TheodoreSizer, William Slavin, Phil Schlechty, Ann Lieberman, Lynne Miller, Michael Fullan, Lauren Resnick and Richard Sagor; work and publications on state, national, and subject area standards; and government, business, and industry research.

Diverse Population: The variety of sub-populations in the school, populations defined by ethnicity, gender, religious affiliations/beliefs, ability levels, socio-economic status, etc.

Expected Schoolwide Learning Result: What each student should know, understand and be able to do upon exit (e.g., graduation) from the school, or by the time the student completes the planned program. These learning results are collaboratively developed and represent the focus of the entire school community.

Portfolio: A collection of representative student work.

Purpose: A clarification of the beliefs held by members of the school community about what the school can do for students with respect to knowledge, skills, and understandings through the school program.

School Community: The school community includes 1) local business and industry, educational institutions, agencies, and service organizations; 2) parents, students, school board; and 3) all employees.

Schoolwide Action Plan: The overall improvement strategies as a result of the self-study process.

Special Needs: Students who need additional physical and/or mental support services to accomplish the expected schoolwide learning results at their maximum potential.

Subject Area: A specific body of information or knowledge; a discipline.

Self-Study Coordinator (SC): The facilitator/leader of the school's accreditation process in collaboration with the school leadership.

Expected Outcomes of Self-Study

Through the completion of the accreditation process the school/program will have accomplished:

1. The involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study.
2. The clarification of the school's/program's purpose and the expected learning results for students.
3. The assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria and the expected learning results for students.
4. The development of an action plan that integrates subject area/program and support plans to address identified growth needs.
5. The development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the action plan.