

# **SAMPLE**

## **SELF-STUDY VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

#### **FOR**

## **SUCCESS HIGH SCHOOL**

**100 Any School Drive  
Any City, CA 95000**

**March 26–28, 2011**

#### **Visiting Committee Members**

Kay Williams, Chairperson  
Associate Superintendent, California USD

Fred Jones  
Teacher, North Valley High School

Amy Chang  
Teacher, California High School

Robert Hernandez  
Resource Specialist, Los Angeles High School

Alice Smith  
Teacher, Sutter High School

Bill Oniki  
Assistant Principal, Enterprise High School

John Ethringer  
Teacher, San Mateo High School

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## WASC FOCUS ON LEARNING VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

### Chapter I: Student/Community Profile

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’s analysis of student achievement data
- Other pertinent data

➔ **Note: The entire profile does not need to be included but insert or attach pertinent charts/graphs on student performance.**

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

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A major challenge of \_\_\_\_\_ High School has been the changing student population to include the many characteristics that compose the culturally diverse student population. Special population students include Emergency Immigrant, Limited English Proficient (LEP), Migrant, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and GATE. Other factors to consider are gang affiliations, single parent families, pregnant/teen parents, substance abuse, dysfunctional families, at-risk (academically and behaviorally), and foreign exchange populations.

The norm referenced SAT 9 tests administered to the students over the past three years indicate the continuing need to stress reading comprehension and mathematics across the curriculum. The school is transitioning from a norm-reference standardized test approach to a stronger multiple approach of student assessment and school accountability. The development of a schoolwide writing rubric is at the early stages. Senior projects are now a requirement for graduation. Developing some means of aggregating the information about student performance that is revealed in Senior Projects might be as useful to the school and the community as it would be for the “visitor.” It was unclear how some of the data elements such as the transiency rate, the graduation rate, and suspension information were determined.

Overall the Parent Survey revealed that more than half of the respondents consider the school to be doing an effective or very effective job in helping students meet the expected schoolwide learning results (ESLRs). Parents feel that the school maintains a safe and orderly place for students to learn and the staff expects students to produce quality work that reflects their best efforts. Areas of greatest need are better communication with parents and providing students with a better understanding of their civic responsibilities.

The Student Survey revealed that 58% of all students gave the school an “effective” or “very effective” rating. The highest rated areas were “writing” and “opportunities to work collaboratively with other students”; the lowest rated areas were “communication regarding your progress,” “developing knowledge or appreciation of our diverse culture,” “relating positively with our diverse population,” understanding of your civic responsibility," and “instruction regarding current health issues.”

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The teachers are properly credentialed for their current assignments. Professional development is determined by Board priorities, staff surveys, and committees; however, it is important to note the staff is proactive in attending conferences, workshops, and seminars. More teachers are working toward credentialing in language development to assist them with the increasingly ethnic diverse student population.

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

- **Briefly comment on the school's major changes and follow-up process since the last self-study.**
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The school's critical areas for follow-up have been integrated into the school's annual plan. The school reports activities that it sees as leading to accomplishing these; however no student success measures have been indicated or required.

Since the last accreditation, the school has made great strides in opening the lines of communication and decision making. Two years ago a new principal was assigned to the school. The current administration's open door policy greatly contributed to "creating a more trusting environment and open working relationship." The school is also in the process of designing an educational program in which all students can achieve at a high level.

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- **Discuss how the school through its action plan has accomplished each of the critical areas for follow-up, including the impact on student learning.**
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Previous critical areas for follow-up from the WASC Visiting Committee have, in large measure, been addressed. Five areas dealt with instructional delivery including professional development, budget, facilities/class size, and articulation with feeder and post-secondary schools. Below are summary comments regarding the issues addressed in these majors.

- Monies have been used to fund professional development activities with schoolwide emphasis, including integrating writing, reading, and technology across the curriculum. Some activities were short-term; others have been longer term (i.e., writing workshops for English, science, social studies, special education, foreign language, and home economics teachers). Other professional topics are selected based upon Board priorities and staff surveys and committees. While numerous, these activities seem to have been somewhat disconnected as staff now gauge that most learning is primarily textbook centered.
- Fourteen teachers now hold either the Language Development Specialist (LDS) or Cross-Cultural Language and Academic Development (CLAD) credential and four hold the Bilingual-Bicultural (BCC) certificate. Six other teachers are currently engaged in training programs leading to the CLAD certificate.
- Cooperative learning, computer technology, and group work is used in all departments at various levels of sophistication.

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- Six computer labs (social science, science, compensatory education, college prep, business, and bilingual) are available; additional computers are available in some classrooms. The library media center has been remodeled to accommodate technology. A multi-media presentation center, electronic public catalog and reference materials are incorporated in the program. Student produced multimedia presentations are becoming more frequent.
- The budgeting process was reviewed annually and was changed. Consensus among department chairpersons is that the new process should occur every year as departments needs change.
- No formal improvement process to address organizational, curricular, and personal development has been developed or implemented. However, a number of activities have been accomplished which lead in this direction.
- Physical facilities and class size issues have been addressed within the constraints of school budget.
- Articulation with feeder and post-secondary schools has been largely department based.

Similarly, key issues or recommendations to schoolwide and department committees have been addressed. Among the most celebrated changes:

- Instituting a ninth grade student success program two years ago that now includes all freshmen and is seen by parents, staff, and students as extremely successful; (Staff continues to seek ways to more objectively measure the program's success.)
- Conducting technology summer workshops;
- Requiring multicultural and traditional core literature in English classes;
- Integrating technology into math, English, and bilingual classes through compensatory education and bilingual computer labs;
- Initiating integrated curriculum within some departments;
- Eliminating all basic tracked courses;
- Providing sheltered instruction across the curriculum;
- Initiating more writing assignments and a pilot tutorial writing program which allows teachers to help students revise papers;
- Implementing new math curriculum into Algebra 1 and 2 and Geometry;
- Providing all students with activity-based instruction in science; and
- Expanding video library and computer accessibility in social studies.

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

Comment on the school's self-study process with respect to the parameters and accuracy.

- Did the school accomplish the five parameters of the self-study? (See Focus on Learning, page 3 or Reference Card #1)
- Does the self-study accurately reflect the school's program for students?
- Does the observable evidence reflect a sampling of what ALL students are doing and producing with respect to the WASC criteria and the school's expected schoolwide learning results?
- Does the observable evidence support the school's identified areas for growth?

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The school used the self-study process to foster schoolwide collaboration and to refocus energy and resources on a common purpose: What students are doing and what students are learning. As is typical in major change processes, there was a period of “confusion and frustration” which eventually led to the accomplishment of each key outcome in the *Focus on Learning* self-study report. There is no question that the school's self-study was conducted with the intention of presenting an accurate reflection of the school's program for students. The open and honest manner in which the self-study was pursued by the school is illustrated with the sharing of recently available information regarding first semester poor performance results with respect to grade distributions and dialogue centered upon teacher standards and the evaluation of student performance.

### *1. The involvement and collaboration of school community members in the self-study*

All persons involved with learning activities were included. The Leadership Team, composed of two administrators, the co-self-study coordinators, and the Focus Group leaders, provided direction and guidance to the self-study process. Much organizational work was done by school community groups, all of whom were represented in each Schoolwide Focus Group. The Parent and Student Groups met to draft and review the student, parent, and community survey and interview questions and representatives participated in the Focus Groups.

### *2. The clarification of the school's purpose and the expected schoolwide learning results*

In carrying out the self-study process, the school maintained a clear focus on trying to achieve a better understanding about the impact of the school's programs and services on students. Development of the school's statement of expected schoolwide learning results was specifically undertaken in conjunction with the *Focus on Learning* process. The process used by the school insured that staff, parents and members of the community had the opportunity to participate in developing these expectations. Nevertheless, because of the short time between their development and the school's involvement in the comparison to the criteria, the potential relationship between these guiding expected schoolwide learning results and the specific expectations of instruction in each discipline and the services provided by each of the school's programs has not been fully explored. However, because of the importance that the leadership has attached to this *Focus on Learning* process, the school's expected learning results will become integral to the school's improvement efforts.

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3. *The assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria and the ESLRs (Note: Include discussion about the use of a professionally acceptable assessment process to collect, disaggregate, and analyze student performance data.)*

While the extent of specific knowledge and the depth of understanding of reform documents such as curriculum references varies among stakeholders, the self-study process has been employed as one effective vehicle for broadening that knowledge and understanding so that specific practices at the school can be compared to the standards promoted by these guides. All Focus Group summaries represent all School Community Groups' analysis of the school's current status in relation to the curricular references, the learning results and the criteria. Each person was responsible for classroom observations, student interviews, and collecting and relating evidence to curricular frameworks, expected schoolwide learning results, and the 14 WASC criteria.

The assembled evidence attested to the broad array of strategies currently being employed to assess student learning; examples of evidence ran the gamut from traditional standardized test results, samples of teacher-developed tests, specific samples of student work collected from all departments to videotapes of student projects. However, the Visiting Committee found that it was unclear what standards the school used to judge the quality of student work and how representative of student performance were the assembled samples. Although these factors make it difficult to generalize about student performance or about the impact of the school's programs on student performance on the basis of much of the evidence examined by the school during the course of the self-study, the samples do provide an excellent starting place for developing a more systematic approach to assessment built around authentic evidence of student performance and including standards that might be constructed around such performances.

4. *The development of a schoolwide 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 schoolwide action plan*

The sections for the Schoolwide Action Plan were developed by the Leadership Team as they considered the growth areas of the Focus Groups and identified central themes. The school community groups identified specific actions that will be taken within departments to ensure accomplishment of the schoolwide action plan sections. A follow-up process to monitor the implementation and accomplishment of the schoolwide action plan has been established, with a reorganized School Site Council serving as the central facilitating body. Membership in this council will include a melding of the present WASC Leadership Team. (See Chapter V, Visiting Committee Report).

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## Chapter IV: Quality of the School's Program

Part A: For each category:

A. Organization for Student Learning

B. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

C. Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

D. Resource Management and Development

- Summarize an analysis of what currently exists and its impact on student learning.
  - Highlight areas of strength (if any)
  - Highlight the key issues (if any)
  - List important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues

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### CATEGORY A. ORGANIZATION FOR STUDENT LEARNING

*What currently exists*

A1. School Purpose Criterion

**Guide Questions:** To what extent:

- has the school established a clear statement of purpose that reflect the beliefs and philosophy of the institution?
- is the purpose defined further by adopted expected schoolwide learning results that form the basis of the educational program for every student?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Beliefs and Philosophy:** The written statement of purpose reflects the beliefs and philosophy of the school and its constituency.

**Purpose, Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (Schoolwide Learner Outcomes) and Profile Data:** The student/community profile data has impacted the development of the school purpose and schoolwide learning results.

**Involvement of All:** The school has a process for involving representatives of the entire school community in the development/refinement of the purpose and expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes).

**Consistency of Purpose, Expected Schoolwide Learning Results, and Program:** There is a strong degree of consistency between the school purpose, the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes), and the school program.

**Communication about Purpose and Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (Schoolwide Learner Outcomes):** The school has means to publicize the purpose and the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes) to the students, parents and other members of the school community.

**Regular Review/Revision:** The school has a process for regular review/revision of the school purpose and the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes) based on student needs, global and local needs, and other trends and community conditions.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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## A2. Governance Criterion

**Guide Questions:** To what extent:

- does the governing authority adopt policies which are consistent with the school purpose and support the achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results for the school?
- does the governing authority delegate implementation of these policies to the professional staff?
- does the governing authority monitor results?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Clear Policies and Procedures:** There are clear policies and procedures with regard to the selection, composition and specific duties of the governing authority.

**Pretraining of Potential Board Members:** Individuals who seek board membership or are being considered as appointees by the board will have some form of training in the principles and skills essential to the effectiveness of the school board.

**Relationship of Policies:** The governing authority's policies are directly connected to the school's purpose and vision and expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes).

**Involvement of Governing Authority:** The governing authority is involved in the regular review and refinement of the school's purpose and learning results. The governing authority uses a variety of strategies to remain current in research-based knowledge about effective schools.

**School Community Understanding:** The school community understands the governing authority's role.

**Relationship to Professional Staff:** There is clear understanding about the relationship between the governing authority and the responsibilities of the professional staff. The governing authority constrains its actions to policy making and strategic planning, while authorizing the administration to implement its decisions.

**Evaluation Procedures:** The governing authority carries out clearly defined evaluation procedures.

**Evaluation of Governing Authority:** There is a process for evaluating the governing authority.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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## A3. School Leadership Criterion

**Guide Questions:** To what extent:

- does the school leadership make decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energies of the school on student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results?
- does the school leadership empower the staff?
- does the school leadership encourage commitment, participation and shared accountability for student learning?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Defined Responsibilities, Practices, etc.:** The school has administrator and faculty written policies, charts, and handbooks that define responsibilities, operational practices, decision-making processes, and relationships of leadership and staff.

**Existing Structures:** The school has existing structures for internal communication, planning and resolving differences.

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**Involvement of Staff:** The school leadership has processes and procedures for involving staff in shared responsibility, collaborative structures and actions, and accountability to focus ongoing improvement on teaching and learning that supports student learning.

**Review of Existing Processes:** The school leadership regularly reviews the existing processes to determine the degree to which actions of the leadership and staff focus on successful student learning.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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## A4. Staff Criterion

**Guide Questions:** To what extent:

- are the school leadership and staff qualified for their assigned responsibilities?
- are the school leadership and staff committed to the school's purpose?
- does the school leadership and staff engage in ongoing professional development that promotes student learning?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Employment Policies/Practices:** The school has clear employment policies/practices related to qualification requirements of staff.

**Qualifications of Staff:** The school reviews all information regarding staff background, training and preparation.

**Maximum Use of Staff Expertise:** The school assigns staff members to maximize the use of their expertise in accomplishing quality student learning.

**Support of Professional Development:** The school leadership supports professional development with time, personnel and fiscal resources based upon a written professional development plan.

**Supervision and Evaluation:** The school has supervision and evaluation procedures that promote professional growth of staff.

**Measurable Effect of Professional Development:** The school leadership and staff develop processes to determine the measurable effect of professional development on student performance. The school leadership evaluates the effectiveness of professional development and uses the data to inform planning and future decision-making.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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## A5. School Environment Criterion

**Guide Questions:** To what extent:

- does the school 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?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Caring, Concern, High Expectations:** The school demonstrates caring, concern, and high expectations for students in an environment that honors individual and cultural differences.

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**Student Self-Esteem:** The school fosters student self-esteem through high expectations for each student and recognition of successes.

**Mutual Respect and Communication:** Mutual respect and effective communication among and between staff, students, and parents is evident.

**Teacher Support and Encouragement:** There is a level of support and encouragement for teachers to use innovative approaches to enhance student learning.

**Policies, Codes, Procedures, Resources:** The school has policies, codes, and procedures and resources (e.g., facilities) that ensure a safe, healthy, nurturing environment.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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## A6. Reporting Student Progress Criterion

**Guide Questions:** To what extent:

- does the school leadership and staff regularly assess student progress toward accomplishing the school's expected schoolwide learning results?
- does the school leadership and staff report student progress to the rest of the school community?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Student Progress:** The school has existing standards and procedures to assess student progress towards the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes) and the curricular objectives.

**Existing Standards and Procedures:** The school has procedures to communicate to the governing authority and members of the school community about student progress.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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## A7. School Improvement Process Criterion

**Guide Questions:** To what extent:

- does the school leadership facilitate school improvement which is driven by plans of action that will enhance quality learning for all students?
- does the school leadership have school community support and involvement?
- does the school leadership effectively guide the work of the school?
- does the school leadership provide for accountability through monitoring of the schoolwide action plan?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Broad-based and Collaborative:** The school can document that the school planning process is broad-based, collaborative and has commitment of the stakeholders.

**School Plan Correlated to Student Learning:** There is correlation between the school plans and analysis of student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes).

**Systems Alignment:** Within the school there is evidence of systems alignment in areas such as professional goals, teacher evaluation, and strategic planning for the purpose of ongoing school improvement.

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**Correlation between All Resources, Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (Schoolwide Learner Outcomes), and Plan:** There is correlation between allocation of time/fiscal/ personnel/material resources, expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes), and the improvement plans.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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**Areas of Strength for Organization for Student Learning Category** (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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**Key Issues for Organization for Student Learning** (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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**Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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## CATEGORY B. CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT

*What currently exists*

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### B1. What Students Learn Criterion

**Guide Question:** To what extent:

- does the school provide a challenging, coherent and relevant curriculum for each student that fulfills the school's purpose and results in student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results through successful completion of any course of study offered?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Current Educational Research and Thinking:** The school provides a comprehensive and sequential documented curriculum that is articulated within and across grade levels for the improvement of programs, learning, and teaching. The curriculum is modified as needed to address current educational research and thinking, other relevant international/national/community issues and the needs of all students.

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**Learning Results Complementing Standards:** The school provides evidence that the schoolwide student goals or expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes), such as critical and creative thinking, form the basis for curricular goals, teaching processes, instructional competencies, and evaluation of learning.

**Curricular Standards:** The school provides a comprehensive and sequential documented curriculum that is articulated within and across grade levels for the improvement of programs, learning, and teaching.

**Student Work — Engagement in Learning:** The examination of student work and snapshots of student engagement in learning demonstrates the implementation of a standards-based curriculum that also addresses the schoolwide student goals (ESLRs).

**Acceptable Student Achievement:** The school demonstrates acceptable student learning of the curricular goals and the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes) through defined performance indicators.

**Curricular Review, Revision, and Evaluation:** The school implements a regular cycle of curriculum review and evaluation that leads to further curricular development and revision for the purpose of improving learning and teaching.

**Collaborative Work:** The administrators and teachers use various collaborative strategies to examine curriculum design and student work in order to refine lessons, units and/or courses.

**Accessibility of all Students to Curriculum:** All students have accessibility to a challenging, relevant, and coherent curriculum.

**Policies — Rigorous, Relevant, Coherent Curriculum:** There are clear policies regarding course completion, certification, credits, grades, homework, etc. that guide student progression through the program.

**Articulation and Follow-up Studies:** The school conducts student follow-up studies that provide insight to the effectiveness of the instruction to prepare students for pursuing further education, entering the work force, or meeting their personal goals.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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## 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's purpose and expected schoolwide learning results?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Research-based Knowledge:** The administrators and teachers use a variety of strategies to remain current in research-based professional knowledge and apply the knowledge to improve teaching and learning. All students regardless of background and ability are actively involved in the learning based on the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes) and curricular objectives.

**Planning Processes:** The planning processes, including the use of formative assessment results, focus on the engagement of all student activity at a high level of learning consistent with the curricular standards and expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes).

**Professional Collaboration:** Administrators and teachers use various collaborative strategies to examine curricular design and student work to improve learning and teaching, including demonstrating critical thinking, problem solving, knowledge and application. This would include examples of the selection of the instructional approaches based on the learning purpose(s) desired.

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**Professional Development:** The school uses ongoing professional development to enhance the curriculum and improve learning and teaching.

**Challenging and Varied Instructional Strategies:** The teachers strengthen student understanding and achievement of the learning outcomes through the use of a variety of instructional strategies that are selected on the basis of the learning purpose(s) and effectively engage students at a high level of learning.

**Technological Integration:** Teachers systematically integrate technology within the school so that all students develop a wide range of technological skills.

**Evidence of Results based upon Challenging Learning Experiences:** Students working and their work demonstrate critical and creative thinking, problem solving, knowledge attainment, and application skills.

**Perception of Students:** Through interview and dialogue with students representative of the school population able to share their level of understanding of the expected level of performance based on the standards and the schoolwide learning results and their perceptions of their learning experiences.

**Student Needs:** Teachers address various learning styles and student needs through the instructional approaches used.

**Student Use of Resources:** Students use resources for learning beyond the limits of the textbook such as effective use of collaborative activities, technology, library/media resources and community resources.

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A strong effort is being made to meet the needs of the majority of the diverse student population. There is a sizeable population of mostly ESL students who feel disconnected from the school. The school recognizes the need to solicit more input from students, parents, and the community in order to design courses, curriculum, and instructional experiences with greater relevancy to the students.

Most teachers provide students with goals and objectives; however, few teachers actively involved students in the process of establishing these goals and standards. Some students are ambivalent about school, seeing only limited connections between the classes, the school's expectations for them, and life outside of school. Performance standards are defined by the teachers and the academic course levels.

Many teachers still see themselves as content area experts who encourage their students to learn as much as they can, and some still see themselves as experts who present their knowledge through lectures and presentations and expect the students to learn what has been covered. However, teachers have begun to review and revise their courses to make them more effective and more closely aligned with the schoolwide learning results. While many teachers still refer to textbooks and course outlines to prepare and sequence class sessions, reinforce students' learning, and serve as a basis for judging students' effort and achievement, an increasing number are frequently trying innovative methods encountered through research and professional development activities. Science, social studies, and English programs are examining redesigns to offer integrated courses that will provide students with more challenging approaches.

Although several teachers feel that there is considerable room to grow, the majority of departments indicate that teachers are beginning to see themselves as guides or facilitators who use teaching strategies requiring the active involvement of students. There is a growing awareness and utilization of student learning styles in planning and implementing instructional practices. Teachers change approaches, activities, and assignments when they are given ideas through staff development programs, workshop presentations, or textbook instructional guides.

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Many students are experiencing approaches that involve inquiry, creating new knowledge by formulating and solving problems, teamwork, reflecting on and communicating about their work, and revising work in progress. Students are involved in collaborative activities and in learning that reflects real, meaningful tasks and products. These students are encouraged and given opportunities to apply their knowledge in other classes and in situations outside of school. They participate in school and community activities, competitions and exhibitions that involve real-world applications of skills and knowledge. They also participate in course work or classes which integrate academic and vocational content. However, these approaches are concentrated in the more academically rigorous classes. In many other classes, students are just expected to do the work assigned. The structure of learning experiences comes primarily from the teachers, reinforcing recall and comprehension. Although some enrichment activities require higher order thinking and inquiry, the majority of student work relies on passive and rote learning with a focus on a teacher-or textbook-defined correct responses.

Teachers occasionally use primary source documents, community resources, and field experiences to enhance student learning. The library is an outstanding resource for teachers and students. Students have the opportunity to join a wide assortment of special interest activities and clubs or enroll in work/study, or other technical preparation programs that provide field experiences and connections to the world outside the school.

A few teachers creatively incorporate technology into student learning. The Visiting Committee found availability of technology at the school through the five computer labs, in the library and in some curricular areas. Computer labs are fully booked, the multimedia is over-subscribed, computers in the library are accessible and used throughout the school day. However, staff and students seem to agree that the integration of technology as a key instructional tool does not exist throughout the instructional program.

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### **B3. How Assessment Is Used Criterion**

*(Note: Include comments on the degree of acceptable progress by all students toward clearly defined expected schoolwide learning results, academic standards, and other institutional and/or governing authority expectations.)*

**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 schoolwide learning results?
- are the assessment results the basis for regular evaluation and improvement of curriculum and instruction?
- are the assessment results the basis for the allocation of resources?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Appropriate Assessment Strategies:** The teachers regularly use appropriate assessment strategies to measure student progress toward acquiring understanding of a specific body of knowledge or skills, such as critical thinking and communication skills; examples of assessment strategies include essays, portfolios, individual or group projects, tests, etc.

**Correlation:** The teachers correlate assessment to expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes), curricular objectives, course competencies and instructional approaches used.

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**Changes/Decisions based on Assessment Data:** Assessment data is collected and analyzed and used to make changes and decisions about curriculum, instruction, professional development activities and resource allocation. Teachers modify and revise the curriculum and instruction as a result of student assessment, both collectively and individually.

**Student Work and Other Assessments:** Student work and other assessments demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful learners of the curriculum.

**Student Feedback:** Student feedback is an important part of monitoring student progress over time based on the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes) and the curricular objectives.

**Teacher Monitoring:** Teachers monitor student progress over time and use student feedback as appropriate to determine whether course objectives have been met.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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## **Areas of Strength for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Category (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students**

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- A genuine commitment to address the learning needs of the diverse student population
  - An increased awareness by many staff of the variety of student learning styles
  - Increased schoolwide dialogue about instructional practices as a result of professional development activities
  - In-depth schoolwide discussion about critical issues of learning results and correlated program standards of rigor, differentiated expectations for various groups, and integration of higher level thinking
  - The risk takers who have piloted the use of innovative instructional strategies that address greater performance based assessments
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## **Key Issues for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students**

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- The development, implementation, and monitoring of a focused staff development program sustained over time that enhances active, challenging learning experiences for students
- The increased involvement of all students in challenging learning experiences that involve problem-solving, collaborative work, meaningful application of knowledge and skills
- The investigation of creative strategies for making technology more accessible to all students to enhance the curriculum
- The incorporation of student input into lesson designs and performance standards
- The development and use of more learning activities that are relevant to the students' needs and interests
- The establishment and development of greater community participation and use of community resources through such vehicles as business partnerships

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**Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

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- Student work that provided insight regarding the use of higher order thinking skills, active learning, collaborative learning, application of knowledge to real world problems, technology, and activities that use both individual and group assignments
  - Summary comments by staff that explain analysis of representative student work
  - Self-study and additional written comments from faculty that reflect changes they have made in course content, materials, and strategies to adapt to changing student needs
  - Student projects that demonstrate progress toward attaining the school's learning results
  - Observing instruction
  - Schoolwide Focus Group dialogue
  - Dialogue with students and staff, individual and stakeholder meetings
  - Extended dialogue with Leadership Team
- 

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

*What currently exists*

### **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 meet the challenges of the curricular/co-curricular program in order to achieve the expected schoolwide learning results?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Personalized Student Support:** The school provides personalized student support correlated to student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes) and the curricular goals for all students including those admitted with special needs and those learning English as an additional language.

**School Support Systems:** The school coordinates a system of support services that provides for maximum effectiveness, including the processes for intervention and referral.

**Strategies Used for Student Growth/Development:** The school uses strategies to develop students' self-esteem, a personalized approach to learning, and connections to the learning environment.

**Support Services and Learning:** The school ensures that the support services and related activities have a direct relationship to student involvement in learning.

**Co-Curricular Activities:** The school ensures that the co-curricular activities are linked to the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes).

**Adequate Available Services:** The school has available adequate services, including referral services, to support students in such areas as English language support, special needs, academic assistance, and, career and personal counseling.

**Student Involvement in Curricular/Co-Curricular Activities:** The school regularly evaluates the level of student involvement in curricular/co-curricular activities and student use of support services.

# SAMPLE

**Student Perceptions:** Interviewing and dialoguing with students assists the school in evaluating the effectiveness of the academic and personalized student support.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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## **C2. Parent/Community Involvement Criterion**

**Guide Question:** To what extent:

- does the school leadership employ a wide range of strategies to ensure that parental and community involvement is integral to the school's established support system for students?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Regular Parent Involvement:** The school has regular processes for the involvement of parents and community.

**Use of Community Resources:** The school uses community resources to support students such as professional services, business partnerships, speakers, etc.

**Parents/Community and Student Achievement:** The school ensures that the parents and school community understand student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes) through the school's program.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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**Areas of Strength for Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth Category** (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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**Key Issues for Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth Category** (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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**Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

# SAMPLE

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## D. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

### What currently exists

#### D1. Resources Criterion

**Guide Question:** To what extent:

- are the resources available to the school sufficient to sustain the school program and effectively used to carry out the school's purpose and student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results?
- are the resources available to the school are sufficient to sustain the school program and effectively used to carry out the school's purpose and student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Allocation Decisions:** There is a relationship between the decisions about resource allocations, the school's purpose and assessment of students accomplishing the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes) and the curricular objectives.

**Practices:** The school develops an annual budget, has an annual audit, and at all times conducts quality business and accounting practices, including protections against mishandling of institutional funds.

**Facilities:** The facilities are adequate to meet the school's purpose and are safe, functional, and well-maintained.

**Instructional Materials:** There are procedures for acquiring and maintaining adequate instructional materials, such as textbooks, other printed materials, audio-visual, support technology, manipulatives, laboratory materials and library/media resources.

**Well-Qualified Staff:** There are resources available for hiring and nurturing a well-qualified staff.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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#### D2. Resource Planning Criterion

**Guide Question:** To what extent:

- do the governing authority and the school execute responsible resource planning for the future?

**INDICATORS:** Use the following indicators as a guide to ensure all key aspects of the criterion are addressed. Add any additional reflections based on the criterion.

**Master Resource Plan:** The school has a master resource plan. The school has a process for regular examination of the master resource plan to ensure the continual availability of appropriate resources that support the school's purpose and expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes).

**Use of Research and Information:** The school uses research and information to form the master resource plan.

# SAMPLE

**Involvement of Stakeholders:** Stakeholders are involved in the future planning.

**Informing:** The governing authorities and school leaders are involved in informing the public and appropriate governmental authorities about the financial needs of the organization.

**Marketing Strategies:** The school has marketing strategies to support the implementation of the developmental program.

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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**Areas of Strength for Resource Management and Development Category** (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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**Key Issues for Resource Management and Development Category** (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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**Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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**Part B: Synthesize the strengths and key issues from all categories into schoolwide strengths and schoolwide critical areas for follow-up. Include the information given below (suggested length: 2 pages)**

- general comments about the emerging schoolwide strengths and critical areas for follow-up.
  - schoolwide areas of strength (list numerically) Be sure that these can be documented by other sections of the report.
  - schoolwide 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 by the school 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 school program and operation, and the action plan.
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# SAMPLE

## General Comments

The stakeholders are commended for the thoroughness in the preparation of the *Focus on Learning* document. All stakeholders assisted the Visiting Committee in the collection and clarification of data that was needed in order to analyze the existing status of the school. The district office administration provided direction, training and other resources to the school. The Visiting Committee found that students were extremely congenial and appreciative of the efforts made to improve the quality of educational opportunities available to them.

## Schoolwide Areas of Strength (list numerically)

1. The schoolwide sense of commitment to improve the school's instructional program and the achievement of students.
2. The collegiality of the staff, the enthusiastic student body, and the safe and orderly campus.
3. The staff's willingness to explore and try new instructional strategies to increase student achievement.
4. The staff's assessment of student work and the use of the senior portfolio/project.
5. The staff's curricular support that is available to individual students through programs such as English literacy, AVID, specialized algebra courses, after-school tutoring, and the reading/activity classes.
6. The large number of students' participating in academic, athletic, or social extracurricular activities.

The subsequent list of critical areas for follow-up is a synthesis of (1) growth areas addressed by the school in the action plan, (2) suggestions to strengthen these areas already identified in the action plan sections, and (3) additional areas identified by the Visiting Committee.

## Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-up (list numerically)

The Visiting Committee concurs with the school's identified areas that are outlined in the schoolwide action plan. These are summarized below:

1. The leadership and instructional staff establish and employ a systematic use of student performance assessment strategies that will measure the effects of the school's programs and services, guide staff development, modify instruction, and therefore result in improved student achievement of the academic standards and ESLRs.
2. The leadership and instructional staff expand interdisciplinary collaboration and integration of technology in school programs and departmental curriculum to enhance student learning.
3. The leadership in collaboration with staff and other stakeholders improve the capacity of the school to meet the needs of all students.

In addition, the Visiting Committee has identified areas that need to be strengthened:

1. The school leadership in collaboration with staff and other stakeholders refine the schoolwide action plan sections, especially in relation to the impact of the actions on student achievement.

## SAMPLE

2. The leadership, instructional staff, and other stakeholders increase the use of the results from analyzing student achievement data in the modifying of instruction, particularly in the areas of reading, writing, math and critical thinking skills.
  3. The instructional staff further develop clearly articulated benchmarks for student performance that are linked to the academic standards and expected schoolwide learning results.
  4. The instructional staff members increase their participation in staff development that is sustained over time. The focus should concentrate on the following areas:
    - a. Active, challenging learning experiences for students that involve them in critical thinking, problem-solving, collaborative work, and meaningful application of knowledge and skills.
    - b. Analysis of student achievement data and utilization of the results to modify instruction.
    - c. Effective use of technology in the classroom to support student achievement.
  5. The school leadership and staff develop and implement ways to have a stronger parent, student, and community role in the entire school improvement process.
  6. The school's leadership in collaboration with all stakeholders develops and implements plans to actively improve counseling services and outreach, thereby engaging parents and the community to meet the academic and personal needs of all students. This includes addressing the issue of student apathy.
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### Chapter V: Ongoing School Improvement

- Include a brief summary of the schoolwide action plan
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[Narrative not included in the sample.]

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#### Comment on the following school improvement issues:

- adequacy of the schoolwide 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” schoolwide action plan that has integrated all major school initiatives?
    - Is the action plan feasible within existing resources?
    - Is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and system wide?
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## SAMPLE

The Visiting Committee finds that the action plans proposed by \_\_\_\_\_ High School are appropriately directed toward improvement of the school's performance with respect to the concepts contained in the criteria categories. The general themes of the action plan correlate to the growth areas identified by the Schoolwide Focus Groups. These are greater linkage of the ESLRs to the actual instructional program; further delineation of measurable performance-based assessment strategies based upon developed benchmarks linked to the ESLRs and curricular standards; a more rigorous, sequential, coherent curriculum and cross-curricular paths that lead to a broad range of real-world options for every student; staff development to assist teachers in involving students in challenging, learning experiences, including technology; stronger involvement of parents and community with learning; strengthening; more specific support and program modifications for the "disconnected student."

To assist the school with these concerns the Leadership Team and the Visiting Committee had many discussions: How was the school planning to implement identified changes, know progress was being made, and coordinate actions across departments, work groups, programs, and funding sources? Consensus was reached that while the important ideas were contained within the self-study and initial action plan, the most important step for the school to take was to re-examine these action plans seeking unity, clarity, and purpose in their statement and organization. These discussions resulted in greater specificity and clarity on detailed steps for areas identified as top priority within the next year. More work needs to be done on the other areas and as time expands for all action plan sections.

The Visiting Committee concurs with the action plans developed by \_\_\_\_\_ High School. They represent a validation of the general direction of the change agenda being promoted at the school. The Visiting Committee is confident that pursuing this agenda is likely to lead to higher assessment of the school's performance, based on the defined quality accomplishments of the ESLRs, curricular standards and the criteria concepts described in the *Focus on Learning* accreditation process. There is a high degree of enthusiasm, support and professional commitment by the leadership, the majority of staff and other school community members to implement these action steps.

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### Existing factors that support school improvement

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The staff agrees that their task has just begun and is by no means completed. In fact, the staff has come to understand that they have created a far more encompassing challenge in ensuring that quality total school program is collaboratively built and undergoes improvement on an ongoing basis. The staff is committed to improving the quality of the school program. Of particular note is the integration of assessment activities in order to give direction to the curriculum improvement already underway and to strengthen teaching and learning. Both the leadership and many individual teachers are committed to focusing a more systematic schoolwide effort in the use of existing data that is pertinent to student learning and the addition of performance-based assessment methods directly linked to benchmarks for ESLRs and curricular standards.

The areas that have been identified as immediate priorities can be met given the money-pool currently being used and the school community's commitment to the plan's success. The staff has devoted resources of money and time to the overall reform they envision.

# SAMPLE

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## **Impediments to school improvement that the school will need to overcome in order to accomplish any of the action plan sections**

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The Schoolwide Action Plan incorporates important schoolwide issues and relates them to the concepts of the *Focus on Learning* criteria. There is enough commitment to begin implementation of the action plan sections. However, the degree of ownership of the school's action plans on the part of those closest to the technical core of teaching, the teachers themselves, does not appear to include all of them. For example, the only impediment in the Curriculum and Instruction, How Students Learn area, as viewed by the Visiting Committee, would be resistance and/or a lack of commitment of individual staff members to participate. Another part of this issue is the fact that all school community members are not aware of their role in the plan which may create difficulty. In addition, there are no consequences for school community members who do not carry out their responsibilities unless one person is assigned the task of overseeing the implementation of the plan. The key to successful implementation of the action plan will be to gain wide acceptance of the plan on an individual basis from **all** school community members. In addition, the school must be sensitive to the time commitment required for the various action plan sections.

The school must work at ensuring that there is a supportive environment for staff to integrate the ESLRs into the instructional program; equally important, a nurturing environment for students must be ensured if these high expectations for their performance are to be met. Finally, the school must build parental support for the school's goals that will facilitate the achievement of the ESLRs. These comments are not necessarily viewed as inhibitors to progress, just issues of which the school needs to be aware.

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## **Soundness of follow-up process to monitor accomplishment of schoolwide action plan**

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Overall the school community members are committed to a follow-up process. One positive outcome of the *Focus on Learning* process was the coinciding of the major action plan areas with topics already identified by school community members. This process formalized what needs to be done and strengthened those areas in which work has already been in progress.

The reorganized School Site Council will be the central facilitating body. Membership in this Council will include a melding of the present WASC Leadership Team. Specific issues, such as the roles of previously-existing committees and newer ones formed in response to Focus on Learning will need to be clarified. At each monthly School Site Council meeting, action plan committees will report progress; there will also be provisions for keeping parents, the community, and the district informed.

In summary, the school is looking forward to ongoing celebration of progress of increased student learning with respect to the schoolwide learning results through the improvement of the educational program and services to the school's highly diverse student population.

## SAMPLE

The school's action plan incorporates important schoolwide issues and relates them to the concepts of the *Focus on Learning* criteria. A possible impediment to the plan would be the lack of commitment on the part of all staff members to adjust their teaching strategies so as to effect successful achievement of higher order thinking skills for all students. The Leadership Team must develop innovative methods to increase parent and student participation and ownership of the plan.

The follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishment of the schoolwide action plan appears to be adequate. The Leadership Team will be the central facilitating body. The school has demonstrated that they are committed to and involved in ongoing inservice and professional growth, which is focused on the improvement of the learning environment and increased student achievement.

In summary, the school is looking forward to an ongoing celebration of progress. The increased student learning with respect to the expected schoolwide learning results will show the improvement of the educational program and services to the school's diverse student population.