

Visiting Committee Chairperson Checklist

Previsit Preparation

- ___ 1. Participate in training.
- ___ 2. Study the school description, the *Focus on Learning* manual, and the reference cards.
- ___ 3. Review the five expected outcomes to be accomplished through the self-study:
 - The involvement and collaboration of all staff and other shareholders to support student achievement
 - The clarification and measurement of what all students should know, understand, and be able to do through expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards
 - The gathering and analyzing of data about students and student achievement
 - The assessment of the entire school program and its impact on student learning in relation to expected schoolwide learning results, academic standards, and WASC/CDE criteria
 - The alignment of a long-range action plan to the school's areas of need; the development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the plan; the involvement and collaboration of each shareholder group in the self-study
- ___ 4. Review the WASC/CDE criteria, the criteria guide questions, suggested evidence to examine, rubrics, appropriate academic standards, and educational references.
- ___ 5. Begin regular communication with the principal and self-study coordinator (SC) to answer questions or give assistance.
- ___ 6. Arrange initial one day visit. During that visit plan to meet with principal, self-study coordinator, leadership team, and other staff members. Possibly speak briefly to entire staff or observe the process, if home or focus groups are meeting.
- ___ 7. Communicate with school about the following issues:

➔ **Note:** Begin critiquing draft sections of the self-study, e.g., profile, expected schoolwide learning results, progress report.

 - a. The calendar/timeline for the self-study process
 - Has the timeline been developed so that the self-study will be ready to mail to the visiting committee 5–6 weeks prior to the visit?
 - How has maximum time for home and focus group meetings been allotted? Are the meetings well-spaced out throughout the self-study process?

- b. Orientation of staff; training of school leaders and chairs of all groups
- c. Committee organization and membership
 - ➔ **Note:** As long as the school adheres to the *expected outcomes*, there is flexibility in the self-study process. If the school modifies the suggested self-study process, it should explain how the *expected outcomes* have been met.
 - How is the leadership team taking an active role in facilitating the entire self-study process?
 - How is there active involvement of all certificated staff members, including administration, and strong representation of other shareholder groups?
 - Are all certificated staff serving on two groups—a home group and a focus group?
 - Has the school reflected upon the type of committee organization that will be most effective in the implementation of the schoolwide action plan? For example, has the school considered maintaining the focus groups after the visit to oversee action plan sections?
- d. Progress since previous full self-study
 - If the last full self-study was *Focus on Learning Joint Process WASC/CDE* has the school addressed each section of the action plan?
 - Does the progress report show how each section impacted student accomplishment of one or more expected schoolwide learning results?
 - Did the school show how all critical areas of follow-up were integrated into the action plan?
- e. Development of student/community profile
 - How has the school community gathered and analyzed all pertinent data in order to clarify the characteristics and achievements of ALL students?
 - How has the leadership team facilitated the discussion of the profile by all certificated staff members and other shareholders?
 - How will the shareholders use the profile to guide the inquiry into the school programs?
 - How will the leadership team ensure that the questions raised from the profile analysis will be integral to the work of the home and schoolwide focus groups?
- f. Clarification of expected schoolwide learning results
 - What are the focal issues of the school? Where is the school in the process of developing and refining its expected schoolwide learning results?
 - How has the school obtained input from all members of the school community?
 - To what extent is there commitment to accomplishing the expected schoolwide learning results from all certificated staff, all students, and other shareholder groups?
 - How is the school beginning to discuss quality accomplishment of the expected schoolwide learning results?
 - To what extent has the school developed measurable indicators of the expected schoolwide learning results and defined their quality accomplishment?

- g. Analysis of curricular program in relation to academic content standards and current educational thinking
 - How are all subject areas beginning the work of aligning their program with academic content standards and expected schoolwide learning results?
 - How are all subject areas beginning to define and measure student performance of these standards?
- h. Evaluation of the accomplishment of the expected schoolwide learning results
 - How are the expected schoolwide learning results driving the school program?
 - How are the certificated staff members and other shareholders taking an in-depth look at how the expected schoolwide learning results are being accomplished by *all* students?
 - How are the shareholders examining the link between expected schoolwide learning results, academic standards, and other aspects of the school program?
 - How are the shareholders examining the link between expected schoolwide learning results, academic standards, and other aspects of the school program?
 - How are the certificated staff members and other shareholders examining representative student work and observing students working for evidence of quality accomplishment of the expected schoolwide learning results for all students?
- i. Analysis and synthesis of the quality of the school program in relation to the expected schoolwide learning results, academic standards, and the WASC/CDE criteria
 - How are the home and schoolwide focus groups analyzing the school program in relation to the concepts of the criteria and the accomplishment of the expected schoolwide learning results?
 - What strategies are being used by the groups to ensure accuracy of the findings discussed?
 - To what extent is discussion occurring about how the findings relate to supporting the learning needs of all students?
- j. Development of the schoolwide action plan and monitoring process. Action Plan sections include:
 - statement of the area for improvement
 - rationale for area based on self-study findings
 - impact on student learning of academic standards and expected schoolwide learning results
 - who’s responsible and involved
 - specific steps
 - timeline
 - resources
 - ways of assessing progress, including student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards
 - means to report progress to all shareholders

- Is the school addressing the major areas of improvement in the plan, including the defining of growth targets?
- How is the school ensuring that the action plan sections enhance the learning of all students as identified in the student/community profile?
- How is the school addressing and measuring the accomplishment of the expected schoolwide learning results through the action plan?
- How is the school implementing a standards-based system through the action plan?
- How has the school integrated other initiatives to create one “umbrella” schoolwide action plan?
- Is the school examining the feasibility of each action plan section?
- How has the school included the analysis of student learning assessment of progress on each action plan section?
- How has the school ensured sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and system wide?
- How has the school developed a sound follow-up process that will be used to monitor the accomplishment of the action plan?
- 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 (i.e., in classrooms and the visiting committee work room)?
 - Will the evidence reflect:
 - a linkage to expected schoolwide learning results, academic standards and WASC/CDE criteria?
 - a linkage to identified “growth areas” 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 schoolwide focus groups, the gathering and review of evidence (class and program observations, interviews, examination of student work), and meetings with subject area/support groups?
 - Does the schedule for the visit permit regular dialogue with the leadership team regarding preliminary findings, thereby building trust, rapport for ongoing communication and collaboration?
 - What would be effective strategies to use during the leadership team, focus group, and other meetings?

- m. Visiting committee work room and exhibit area at the school site
 - n. Meeting room at school for committee meetings
 - o. Computer access and compatibility with system that the chair will be using for draft report
 - p. Clerical support throughout the 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 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; begin communication, i.e., letters, calls, fax, e-mail.
- a. Send initial letter, including school 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 to determine:
- a. If school needs further direct assistance
 - d. Progress on report
 - e. Progress on housing and other physical arrangements
- ➔ **Note:** Continue the critique of each section, i.e., table of contents, student/community profile, expected schoolwide learning results, progress report, draft focus group summaries and action plan.
- f. 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. Ask for the comparison of the school's self-study findings to the concepts of the criteria and the expected schoolwide learning results
 - 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, especially the summaries on the two to three selected expected schoolwide learning results and the criteria categories.
 - g. → **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.
 - f. Provide schedule for visit
- ___ 11. Maintain regular contact with school to double-check the following:
 - a. Progress of report, including the continuation of critiquing sample report sections and action plan sections
 - b. Date school mailed report
 - c. Preparation of reference/evidence materials for visit
 - d. Receipt of list of reference/evidence
 - e. Availability and knowledge of clerical and technical support
- ___ 12. 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
- ___ 13. 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; response to school's progress report; comments on the self-study process with respect to accuracy and the degree to which the expected outcomes have been met. 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).

- ___ 14. 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 WASC/CDE criteria, school's expected learning results, and academic standards as the basis for the self-study and the visit
 - d. Discussion of school direction(s) and where school is with respect to development and refinement of expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards
 - e. Discussion of self-study report: trends and perceptions based on expected schoolwide learning results, academic standards, and WASC/CDE criteria (questions, concerns and tentative written comments); type of verification needed
 - f. Discussion of ways to gather and review evidence
 - g. Review of initial meeting with school and overall schedule, including important strategies to use during the meetings
 - 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 #14 above.
- ___ 2. Conduct initial meeting with school’s leadership team that includes a reflective discussion on the general perceptions gleaned from the self-study report (planned jointly with principal and self-study coordinator prior to visit)
- ___ 3. Facilitate the visit; keep in mind the following:
 - a. Maintain a positive atmosphere.
 - b. Keep to the task.
 - c. Maintain open communication and collaboration at all times.
 - d. Ensure that all visiting committee members are active participants in the school committee meetings.
 - e. Ensure that the gathering and review of evidence occurs throughout the school. This includes class/program observations, interviews, examination of student work and other data, subject area/support group meetings.
 - f. Ensure that no area is overlooked.
 - g. Assist committee members.
 - h. Avoid issues related to school policies or negotiations.
 - i. Stress with visiting committee to avoid prescription and “how we do it at our school” discussion.
 - j. Lead all visiting committee discussions on the findings, relating them to the accomplishment of the expected schoolwide learning results and the WASC/CDE criteria.
 - k. Coordinate the preparation of the visiting committee report.
- ___ 4. At all visiting committee meetings during the three and a half days, facilitate the dialogue about the school’s program and its impact on student learning in relation to the expected schoolwide learning results, academic standards, and the WASC/CDE criteria.
- ___ 5. Regularly communicate with the school leaders, including the leadership team, about visiting committee findings and their implications for refinement of the schoolwide action plan.

- ___ 6. At the final meeting with the leadership team, facilitate a thorough dialogue about the schoolwide action plan based upon the school and visiting committee findings in relation to the expected schoolwide learning results, academic standards, and the WASC/CDE criteria.
 - a. Ensure the leadership team has an opportunity to ask questions and clarify areas of the report.
 - b. Point out that after the visit the leadership team should integrate the visiting committee's key issues and critical areas for follow-up into the schoolwide action plan.
 - c. 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/CDE criterion within the five categories. Have them individually make decisions regarding the quality of the school's educational program with respect to the WASC/CDE 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" and the "Confidential Summary" for the Commission.

Ensure:

 - a. Alignment between the visiting committee report and the recommended term
 - b. Member signatures on the term sheet
 - c. Brief description of the discussion and term option considered by the visiting committee
 - d. 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. Leave a draft copy of the report with the principal.
- ___ 14. Continually stress the importance of immediate follow-up to integrate the visiting committee narrative suggestions and critical areas for follow-up into the school's schoolwide 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 has final copy of the visiting committee report and 10 copies are received by WASC office as soon as possible after visit.
- ___ 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.)