Internalizing WASC accreditation is synonymous with ongoing school improvement and meaningful change, thereby providing the underpinning for effective functioning of a school. The underlying WASC accreditation principles or expectations embedded within the Focus on Learning (FOL) process should enable a school to demonstrate the following:

- Ongoing improvement and accountability, i.e., a follow-up process that includes annual analysis of student achievement resulting in the update of action plan sections based on impact of progress on student learning and the integration of program and initiatives into one schoolwide action plan.
- Total involvement and collaboration of all stakeholders.

The WASC process provides the foundation for a culture of clear understanding of a school’s purpose and schoolwide student goals and for the analysis of achievement and actions to improve learning. The WASC process enables a school to be critical and honest about what is working and not working to support student achievement. Such meaningful analysis and dialogue builds capacity and coherence in the WASC “never-ending, non-hyperventilating improvement process.” If the WASC accreditation process is integral to a school’s culture of learning, evaluation, and assessment, then the initiatives or best practices that a school chooses are grounded in an environment of collaboration, openness, and trust among the stakeholders. Too often school leaders believe that new initiatives, such as professional learning communities, small learning communities, curricular mapping, differentiated instruction, and special programs for at-risk learners, are panaceas. Although these are all exciting and important approaches and strategies that can support high-quality learning; if the school culture does not adequately support these new initiatives, they can simply become activities or events without sustainability.

The WASC criteria and supporting indicators remind the leadership team that there must be a support system built into the school culture that empowers teachers and other stakeholders to work together and use the ideas of these various initiatives. The WASC process becomes the vehicle for this ongoing conversation because the basic accreditation principles expect that essential information about student
learning and programs must be shared and used by the stakeholders for improving student achievement. For example, built into the WASC process is the examination of the student/community profile data, especially three-year trends and patterns for student demographic and achievement data along with a regular review of other sources of achievement data, such as examining representative student work samples. Ultimately, planning, implementing, and monitoring schoolwide actions to support change or new initiatives are essential WASC expectations: a school should have one “roadmap” or schoolwide action plan that guides the work of the school. Therefore, the WASC process provides the internal structure of learning and evaluation that enables the school to be its own professional learning community.

WASC accreditation is the school’s overall foundation for establishing the conditions for change and it creates the platform for shared vision and ownership, maximizing stakeholders’ collective insight. This latter point is a critical message often emphasized by Dr. Michael Fullan, a worldwide authority on educational reform. As Dr. Richard Elmore, another key leader in school improvement, stated: “We’ve paid a fairly high price for being casual about how to organize for high-quality instruction.” In summary, now is the time for new and returning leaders at school to review the existing culture of the school based on the WASC criteria and process and move forward with a revised vision and actions that support high-quality student learning.


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**School Tips: Updating the Single Schoolwide Action Plan**

Following the full self-study visit:

- Review the current schoolwide action plan and the critical areas for follow-up in the Visiting Committee Report.
- Identify the **concepts or suggested ideas** stated in the critical areas for follow-up.
- Integrate all appropriate concepts and suggested ideas from the Visiting Committee Report’s critical areas for follow-up into the action plan:
  - Update the current goals or areas for improvement.
  - Update the **appropriate tasks and activities**.
  - Update other components, e.g., who is involved, who is responsible, the timeline, the ways of assessing progress, and the fiscal and personnel resources needed.
  - If necessary, add a new section to the action plan.

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- Tasks
- Responsible persons involved
- Professional development/Resources
- Means to assess improvements
- Timeline Reporting

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• Update the current goals or areas for improvement.
• Update the **appropriate tasks and activities**.
• Update other components, e.g., who is involved, who is responsible, the timeline, the ways of assessing progress, and the fiscal and personnel resources needed.
• If necessary, add a new section to the action plan.