



## WASC ACCREDITATION

### Overview

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), a world-renowned accrediting association and one of the six regional accrediting agencies in the United States recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education, works closely with the Office of Overseas Schools under the U.S. Department of State. This regional association provides assistance to schools located in California, Hawaii, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Fiji, and East Asia. WASC consists of three commissions that accredit different levels of education: (1) four-year universities, e.g., Stanford University; (2) two-year community/junior colleges; and (3) pre-K–12 schools.

The Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC, extends its services to over 4,500 public, independent, church-related, and proprietary pre-K–12 and adult schools, works with 16 different associations in joint accreditation processes, and collaborates with other organizations such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). One example is the seamless joint process with the Western Catholic Educational Association (WCEA): there is one initial visit, self-study, full visit and visiting committee report, and ongoing follow-up process; two accreditation terms are independently awarded by the two agencies.

The Accrediting Commission is composed of 31 representatives from the educational organizations that it serves; this includes representatives from the Association of California School Administrators, California School Boards Association, California Teachers Association, and the California Federation of Teachers.

### WASC Philosophy

The philosophy of the Accrediting Commission for Schools centers upon three beliefs: (1) a school's goal is successful student learning; (2) each school has a clear purpose and schoolwide student goals; and (3) a school engages in external and internal evaluations as part of continued school improvement to support student learning.

Accreditation is integral to a school's perpetual cycle of assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, and reassessment based upon student achievement. It fosters excellence in elementary, secondary, adult, and postsecondary education by encouraging school improvement through a process of continuing evaluation and to recognize, by accreditation, schools that meet an acceptable level of quality in accordance with established criteria. In addition to its official title, WASC also means *We Are Student-Centered*.

### Why Accreditation?

- ✓ Assures a school community that the school's purposes are appropriate and being accomplished through a viable education program — a trustworthy institution for student learning
- ✓ Validates the integrity of the school's program and transcripts
- ✓ Facilitates transfer of credits to other English-speaking schools — critical for college/university acceptance worldwide
- ✓ Fosters the ongoing improvement of the school's programs and operations to support student learning
- ✓ Provides valuable insight from fellow educators visiting the school
- ✓ Benefits schools that choose joint accreditation or other collaborative processes, e.g., WASC/WCEA

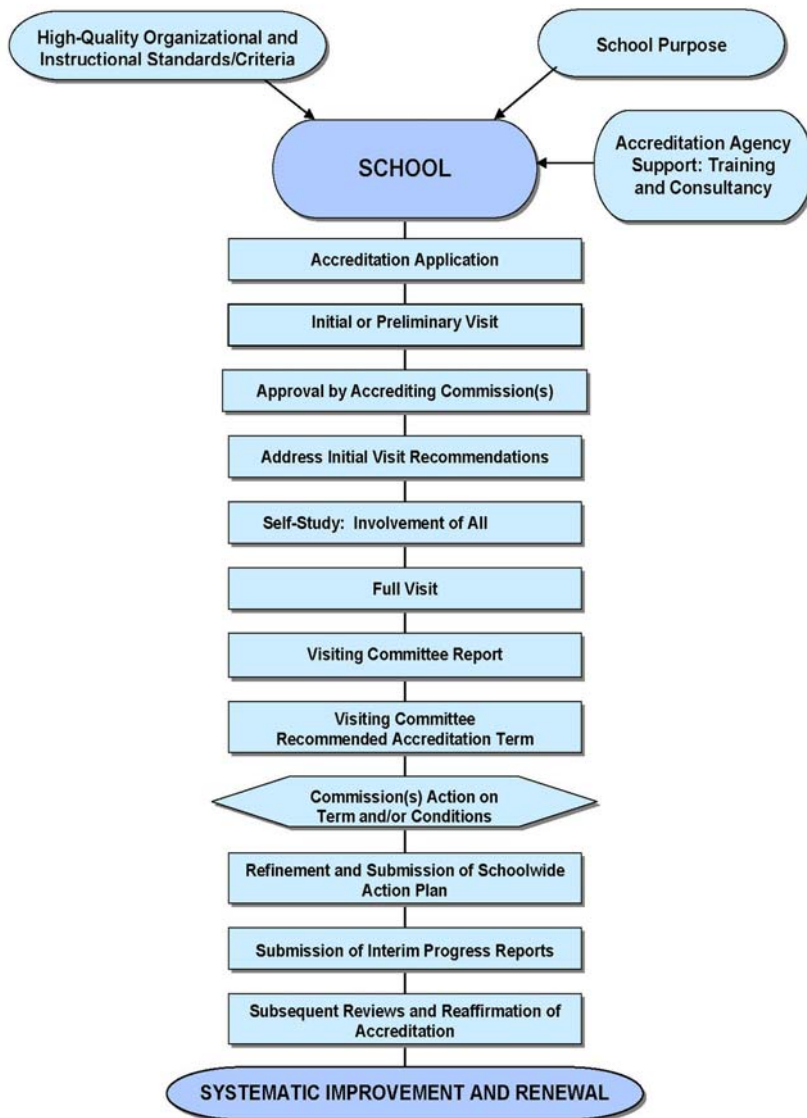


**Accreditation: A Value-Added Test**

Schools add value by...

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

## ACCREDITATION: A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS



## WASC Accreditation Process

### Initial Visit Process

- ✓ The purpose of the one- or two-day visit by a two-member team is to understand the school's purpose, its program, and operations based upon the WASC criteria and detailed school description
- ✓ If the Commission grants candidacy, the school addresses recommendations from the visiting committee report and completes first full self-study by the end of the third year

### Self-Study Process/Full Visit

- ✓ Involvement of all stakeholders in self-study process
- ✓ Clarification of the school's purpose and the schoolwide student goals (expected schoolwide learning results)
- ✓ Assessment of student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the WASC criteria
- ✓ Development of a schoolwide action plan that addresses identified areas for improvement
- ✓ Visiting Committee validation and enhancement based on accreditation criteria and standards, self-study, and findings from the visit

### Follow-Up Process

- ✓ Annual assessment of action plan progress and refinement of plan as needed
- ✓ Completion of progress reports and/or reviews, e.g., annual reports
- ✓ Celebration of success

## Contact Us

The WASC staff looks forward to working with you.

- ✓ Meetings and trainings provided continually throughout the WASC region for individual and groups of schools
- ✓ Provision of approved WASC consultants, who have years of WASC accreditation experience, upon request
- ✓ Individual phone call, conference calls, and emails; we will contact you at your convenience



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