

Initial Visit Procedures Manual

ACS WASC Initial Visit Procedures for:

- **All Private Schools**



2016 EDITION

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Preface

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

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

This document, *ACS WASC Initial Visit Procedures Manual*, provides information on the accreditation process and explains the initial steps toward ACS WASC affiliation.

ACS WASC Philosophy

The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) believes that the goal of any school should be to provide for successful student learning. Programs encompassing both the cognitive and affective components of learning should foster human growth and development and enable students to become responsible, productive members of the school community and of society. Each school should develop a school purpose to reflect its beliefs. For ongoing program improvement, each school should engage in objective and subjective internal and external evaluations to assess progress in achieving its purpose.

The primary goals of accreditation are:

- *Certification to the public that the school is a trustworthy institution of learning*
- *The improvement of the school's programs and operations to support student learning.*

The school's self-study and the visiting committee's report provide compelling evidence that:

- *The school is substantially accomplishing its stated purposes and functions identified as appropriate for an institution of its type.*
- *The school is meeting an acceptable level of quality in accordance with the ACS WASC criteria adopted by the Accrediting Commission for Schools.*



ACS WASC Mission

ACS WASC advances and validates quality ongoing school improvement by supporting its private and public elementary, secondary, and postsecondary member institutions to engage in a rigorous and relevant self-evaluation and peer review process that focuses on student learning.

ACS WASC Territory

ACS WASC extends its services worldwide to public, private, independent, church-related, and proprietary pre-K–12 and adult schools. ACS WASC 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, Asia, and other parts of the world.

Affiliation Categories

After a school completes the necessary documentation in their application for affiliation with ACS WASC and an on-site visit is conducted, one of three possible accreditation status outcomes will be made by the Accrediting Commission for Schools:

1. **Initial** accreditation is granted to schools that meet the ACS WASC criteria for full accreditation and have a history and support system indicating a high-quality program that can be sustained into the foreseeable future.
2. **Candidacy** is a status of affiliation indicating that an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward, but has not yet achieved, accreditation. The candidate for accreditation classification is designed for institutions that are not yet ready for the full evaluation based on the ACS WASC criteria for accreditation. The institution must provide evidence of sound planning with sufficient resources to implement these plans, and must appear to have the potential for attaining its goals within a reasonable time. Candidate schools are required to submit a written report to the Commission during the spring of the school year following the initial visit, indicating the progress being made in meeting the recommendations of the initial visiting committee and noting any substantial changes in the organization or operation of the school. Schools are normally expected to conduct a self-study and participate in an accreditation visit for full accreditation by the third year of candidacy.

3. **Accreditation status may be withheld** if it is determined that the school does not fully meet ACS WASC criteria for affiliation with the Accrediting Commission for Schools. A school may reapply after deficiencies have been remedied.

RUBRICS: Criteria for Initial Affiliation

Rubrics containing descriptions to assist in determining the level to which each criterion is being met can be found on pages 9–24. Documentation examples are also included.

Application Guidelines

Both public and private schools must meet the legal requirements of the jurisdiction in which they are located in order for their application for ACS WASC affiliation to be considered. California private schools must list with the California Department of Education submitting an affidavit indicating compliance with Education Code Section 33190. Likewise, Hawaii private schools must be licensed by the Hawaii Council of Private Schools, or certified by the Western Catholic Educational Association and accredited in association with ACS WASC, under the authority of Act 188, Session Laws of Hawaii, 1995.

Conditions of Eligibility

To be considered for ACS WASC affiliation, the applicant school must be a school meeting the following conditions:

1. Schools must meet the legal requirements of the jurisdiction in which they are located in order for their application for ACS WASC affiliation to be considered.
2. School must be in at least the second semester of operation, with students, teachers, and administration in place.
3. School enrollment must reach a minimum of 6 full-time students.
4. The school's program must include at least two grade levels. One exception would involve a new high school that opts to begin only with grade 9.
5. Have developed and published a clear statement of purposes together with plans for a curriculum to carry out those purposes.
6. Have a management system that provides appropriate direction and oversight for the overall program.
7. Have employed a chief administration officer who is qualified for the position.
8. Have an organization, facilities, course offerings, and staffing acceptable for the school's stage of development.

9. Have an overall plan including objectives for student achievement and assessment plans to measure progress toward those objectives.
10. Have an admissions policy compatible with the school's stated objectives.
11. Have a written curriculum appropriate to the organization's purpose.
12. Have a qualified instructional staff.
13. Have plans to provide access to appropriate extracurricular and enrichment activities, if appropriate.
14. Have developed an adequate financial base to give reasonable assurance of continuing financial stability.

Procedures

- A school seeking affiliation will complete a "Request for ACS WASC Affiliation" form and submit it to ACS WASC with a \$160 nonrefundable application fee. Schools that reschedule or postpone the initial visit to a different school year will be required to pay an **additional** application fee to restart the application process.
- After the "Request for ACS WASC Affiliation" is processed, the school will be provided with initial visit materials and a school description report template to complete and submit to ACS WASC. The information provided to the ACS WASC office in this report should describe the purposes and operation of the school and gives evidence of the school's status in relation to the conditions of eligibility. In addition to the evidence provided in the report, the school should make available other supporting documentation during the initial visit.
- Upon receipt of the forms, ACS WASC will arrange for a two-member, one-day visit to the school. Newly established schools may host the initial visit as early as the second semester of operation. Following the visit, the committee will prepare a report to present to the Accrediting Commission for Schools for action. This will include recommendations regarding the school's ongoing improvement and assess the school's readiness for initial affiliation. The school will be notified by the executive director of the Commission's action.
- If the Commission's action is unfavorable and the institution is not granted affiliation, the school may reapply when, in its judgment, it meets the conditions of eligibility. The school may reapply as early as the following semester.
- If the Commission's action is favorable, the school will be granted either initial accreditation or candidacy for a period not to exceed three years. It is expected that the school will conduct a self-study and participate in an accreditation visit during the third year.

- Schools that are granted candidacy status are to submit a first-year progress report addressing the visiting committee recommendations indicating the progress being made in meeting the recommendations of the initial visiting committee and noting any substantial changes in the organization or operation of the school.

ACS WASC fees for the 2016–17 school year are:

Initial Visit.....	\$700
Annual membership fee (high schools and intermediate schools)	\$920
Annual membership fee (elementary)	\$660
Annual membership fee – multi-campus schools	
2–3 Campuses – accredited or candidate.....	\$1,320.00
4–6 Campuses – accredited or candidate.....	\$1,520.00
7–9 Campuses – accredited or candidate.....	\$1,720.00
10–12 Campuses – accredited or candidate.....	\$1,920.00
13–15 Campuses – accredited or candidate.....	\$2,120.00
16–55 Campuses – accredited or candidate.....	\$2,320.00
56+ Campuses – accredited or candidate	\$2,520.00

A detailed fee schedule may be obtained from the ACS WASC office.

Schools that have been approved for initial accreditation may use the following phrase in advertising and/or on student transcripts.

**Accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Schools,
Western Association of Schools and Colleges.**

Schools that are approved as candidates for accreditation may use the following phrase in advertising and/or on student transcripts.

**Candidate for Accreditation. Approved by the Accrediting Commission for Schools,
Western Association of Schools and Colleges.**

Candidate schools are NOT authorized to use the word “accredited” or “accredited by” until full accreditation has been granted by the Commission. Candidate schools MAY NOT use the WASC logo or WASC accreditation stamp on transcripts or school advertising.

ACS WASC Criteria for Initial Affiliation

The ACS WASC criteria for initial affiliation can be found on the following pages. The criteria are organized into four categories:

- Organization for Student Learning
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth
- Resource Management and Development

Within each of the categories are specific criteria that must be addressed by the school. The three columns on the following pages include:

- Criteria for Initial Accreditation status, in which the school is fully accredited for a period not to exceed three years.
- Criteria for Candidacy status, in which the school is moving toward accreditation but is not yet fully accredited.
- Examples of documentation that can be used as evidence of the school's compliance with each of the criteria.

In the process of applying for the initial visit, the school will have already provided, in direct or summary form, much of the information listed in the "Examples of Documentation" column.

The school can provide additional documentation to the committee on the day of the visit.

The Visiting Committee will write a report after the visit that will include recommendations regarding the school's ongoing improvement and assess the school's readiness for initial affiliation.

Category A Organization for Student Learning

A1. School Purpose Criterion: The school has established a clear vision and mission (purpose) that reflects the beliefs and philosophies of the institution. The purpose is defined further by adopted schoolwide learner outcomes* that form the basis of the educational program for every student.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has established a clear statement of vision and mission (purpose) that reflects the beliefs and philosophy of the institution. • The student/community profile data has impacted the development of the school purpose and the schoolwide learner outcomes. • A high degree of involvement by representatives of the entire school community has occurred in the development of the school purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes. • There is a clear and systematic network of communication of the school's purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes within the school community. • Staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders understand and are committed to the purpose of the school. • There is a process in place for the regular review or revision of the school purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes. • There is consistency between the school purpose, the schoolwide learner outcomes, the school program, and ongoing improvement. • Publications and other media are used to inform parents and community members about the school purpose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has adopted a clear statement of purpose • The student/community data has impacted the development of the school purpose. • The school has designed a system and process to communicate the school's purpose that will lead to further development of schoolwide learner outcomes. • Plans to carry out the school purpose are in place and implementation has begun that show alignment of the schoolwide learner outcomes, the program, and ongoing improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of school purpose (Note: school purpose is a general term for terminology used by schools such as vision, mission, or philosophy and objectives). • Schoolwide student goals (schoolwide learner outcomes) and the process for development. • Student/community demographic and performance information and data. • Admission policies and materials. • Master schedule. • Any academic or operational plans the school may have in place. • Process for regular review or revision of school purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes. • Processes and publications/media for communication to all stakeholders within the school community.

* Schoolwide learner outcomes are interdisciplinary statements about what all students should know, understand, and be able to do by the time they complete the planned program or graduate.

Category A Organization for Student Learning

A2. Governance Criterion: The governing authority (a) adopts policies which are consistent with the school’s mission and vision (purpose) and support the achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes for the school; (b) delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff; and (c) monitors results.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has a functioning governance structure, with clear lines of authority and responsibility. • The governing authority has adopted policies that are consistent with the school’s purpose and support student achievement as defined in the school’s schoolwide learner outcomes. • There is participation of central office personnel, if applicable, and board in the development of the school purpose, and schoolwide learner outcomes of the school. • The governing authority delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff. • Authority and responsibility are allocated in a way that promotes effective functioning of staff at all levels. • The school community understands the governing authority’s role. • The governing authority carries out clear evaluation procedures on the identified goals. • There is a process in place for evaluation of the governing authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has a functioning governance structure, with clear lines of authority and responsibility. • The governing authority has adopted policies that are consistent with the school’s purpose and support student achievement as defined in the school’s schoolwide learner outcomes. • The governing authority delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff. • There is participation of central office personnel, if applicable, and board in the development of the school purpose, and schoolwide learner outcomes of the school. • The school community understands the governing authority’s role. • The governing authority carries out clear evaluation procedures on the identified goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents relating to the organization of the school, including roles and relationships of the governing board and administration and other areas of the school’s infrastructure. Could include job descriptions, organizational charts, personnel rosters, board policies, admission policies, procedures, and forms. • Minutes of board meetings.

Category A Organization for Student Learning

A3. School Leadership Criterion: The school leadership (a) makes decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energies of the school on student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes; (b) empowers the staff; and (c) encourages commitment, participation, and shared accountability for student learning.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chief administrative officer effectively leads the entire staff in exercising a decision-making process that focuses on the school purpose, student accomplishment of the schoolwide learner outcomes, and academic standards. • The school leadership is working to ensure that standard operational practices, decision-making processes, and established procedures for internal communication and conflict resolution are clearly written, agreed upon, understood, and practiced. • The school leadership empowers the staff and encourages commitment, participation, and shared accountability for student learning. • There are written policies, charts, and handbooks that define the responsibilities and relationships of administrators, faculty, and staff. • The actions of the leadership are directly linked to student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A chief administrative officer has been employed. This individual has adequate qualifications for the position. • The school leadership demonstrates understanding of the purpose and the student goals of the school. • The school leadership is working to ensure that standard operational practices, decision-making processes, and established procedures for internal communication and conflict resolution are clearly written, agreed upon, understood, and practiced. • The actions of the leadership are directly linked to student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team dialogue with the principal or head of school and discuss the school’s needs, potential, and plans for the future. • Discussion with leadership regarding modes of operation. • Review of brief summaries about professional background of leadership and defined responsibilities. • Review of policies and procedures. • Dialogue with faculty and support staff. • Documents relating to the organization of the school, including roles and relationships of the administration to other areas of the school’s infrastructure. Could include job descriptions, organizational charts, roles, responsibilities, personnel rosters, board policies, admission policies, procedures, and forms.

Category A Organization for Student Learning

A4. Staff Criterion: The school leadership and staff are qualified for their assigned responsibilities and are committed to the school’s purpose and engage in ongoing professional development that promotes student learning.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school staff is qualified for their assigned responsibilities, and is involved in ongoing professional development. • The school has clear employment policies/practices related to qualification requirements of staff. • The school reviews all information regarding staff background, training and preparation. • The school leadership supports a schoolwide professional development program with time, personnel and fiscal resources based upon student needs, the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards. • There is a clearly articulated supervision and evaluation process in place. • Staff evaluations are used to promote professional growth and improve the quality of instruction. • Processes are used to determine the measurable effect of professional development on student learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school staff is qualified for their assigned responsibilities. • The school has clear employment policies/practices related to qualification requirements of staff. • The school reviews all information regarding staff background, training and preparation. • The school has plans to provide ongoing professional development that supports student learning. • The school leadership and staff are developing a supervision and evaluation process. • Processes are being put in place to determine the measurable effect of professional development on student learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of teaching staff credentials and preparation. • Schedule of teaching assignments with staff credentials and preparation to assess appropriateness of instructional staff assignments. • Roster of administrative and support staff with qualifications and job assignments. • Staff development plans, descriptions of current or ongoing professional development activities that promote student learning. • Examination of the written professional development plan. • Examination of the supervision and evaluation process and procedures. • Interviews with staff. • Review of policies and procedures for employee hiring, professional development, and supervision.

Category A Organization for Student Learning

A5. School Environment Criterion: The school has a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school’s purpose and is characterized by respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school’s facilities (buildings, labs, technology, library, and other) are sufficient to support the program in a functional, safe, clean, and healthy setting. • The school’s environment reflects a respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student. • Written policies and procedures are in place to ensure a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that is conducive to learning. • Students and staff have a clear understanding of safety policies and procedures. • There is mutual respect, two-way communication, and support in relationships among the staff, between staff and students, between staff and parents (where applicable), and between staff and leadership. • Caring, concern, and high expectations for students are demonstrated on a daily basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school’s facilities (buildings, labs, technology, library, and other) are sufficient to support the program in a functional, safe, and healthy setting. • The school’s environment reflects a respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student. • Written policies and procedures are being developed to ensure a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that is conducive to learning. • Students and staff have a clear understanding of safety policies and procedures. • Mutual respect and effective communication among staff is evident. • Caring, concern, and high expectations for students are demonstrated on a daily basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour of the school plant and review the site master plan to assess the current and planned adequacy in meeting the needs of the student body. • Tour of instructional materials center, visits to representative classrooms, laboratories, library/media center(s), and discussions with teachers regarding their judgments as to the adequacy of instructional materials and aids. • General discussion with students, staff, parents, and other stakeholders about the environment.

Category A Organization for Student Learning

A6. Reporting Student Progress Criterion: The school leadership and staff regularly assess student progress toward accomplishing the schoolwide learner outcomes and report student progress to the rest of the school community.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student progress is determined and monitored on a regular basis with respect to course content standards and schoolwide learner outcomes. • There is a linkage between what is learned and the schoolwide learner outcomes, which is understood by staff, students, and parents (if applicable). • Student work/performance is used to determine the degree to which students are achieving the schoolwide learner outcomes. • There is correlation between school improvement, professional development activities/topics and student progress of the schoolwide learner outcomes. • There are published lists of graduates, students progressing from one level to another; job placements (if applicable); students pursuing further education. • There are written procedures in place to regularly communicate to the governing authority and members of the school community about student progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student progress is determined and monitored on a regular basis with respect to course content standards and schoolwide learner outcomes. • The school is working to ensure that there is a link between what is learned and the schoolwide learner outcomes. • The school is developing written procedures to communicate to the governing authority and members of the school community about student progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzed and interpreted student achievement data with respect to content standards and schoolwide learner outcomes. • Evidence of professional development addressing learning issues and/or modifications in curriculum. • Lists of graduates and identification of next steps. • Means of communication with parents and other stakeholders regarding student achievement. • Dialogue with parents, other community members, staff and students.

Category A Organization for Student Learning

A7. School Improvement Process Criterion: The school leadership facilitates school improvement which (a) is driven by plans of action that will enhance quality learning for all students, (b) has school community support and involvement, (c) effectively guides the work of the school, and (d) provides for accountability through monitoring of the schoolwide action plan.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school leadership has demonstrated an understanding of ongoing school improvement and the importance of plans of action to enhance learning for all students. • The school leadership has monitored the accomplishment of a schoolwide action plan directly linked to the results of student achievement measurements. • There is evidence of stakeholder involvement in development of the plan, and evidence of support for its implementation. • There is correlation between allocation of time, fiscal and personnel resources, improvement plans, and student achievement of the learner outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school leadership is developing a schoolwide action plan with identified measures of success that show the impact of the results on student learning. • The school leadership has an understanding of ongoing school improvement and the importance of plans of action to enhance learning for all students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination of the school’s action plan showing measures of success and with respect to student learning. The action plan should include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statement of area for improvement 2. Brief statement of the rationale for identifying this area 3. Schoolwide learner outcomes addressed 4. Specific steps 5. Timeline 6. Person(s) responsible and involved 7. Resources 8. Ways of assessing progress of steps and overall area of improvement 9. Means to report progress to all members. • Evidence of stakeholder involvement in the action plan development. • Discussion with leadership and staff about the action plan and the ongoing improvement process, i.e., the degree of correlation between school improvement, professional development, and student learner outcomes. • The historical development of the school, including current enrollment and demographics, trends in student body makeup, etc. • Instructional plans and goals and other evidence to assure the school resources, operations, and procedures are managed at a level to achieve the purpose.

Category B Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

B1. What Students Learn Criterion: The school provides a challenging, coherent, and relevant curriculum for each student that fulfills the school’s purpose and results in student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes through successful completion of any course of study offered.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has defined what all students should know and be able to do for each subject area and this is reflected in the taught curriculum. • The school’s taught curriculum correlates with a well-developed written curriculum that is based on high-quality content standards and schoolwide learner outcomes for all students. • The evaluation of each student’s academic performance is based on defined performance indicators for the content standards. • The school has established a regular cycle of review and revision for each curricular area to ensure a challenging, relevant, and rigorous curriculum for all students. • There is consideration by the school of current educational research and thinking related to various subject areas and curricular programs to maintain a meaningful instructional program for students. • Clear policies exist regarding course completion, credits, grades, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has defined what all students should know and be able to do for each subject area and this is reflected in the taught curriculum. • The school is further refining its written curriculum to ensure that it reflects high-quality content standards and learner outcomes for all students. • The evaluation of each student’s academic performance is at the initial stages of being linked to the defined performance indicators for the content standards. • The school is establishing a regular cycle of review and revision for each curricular area to ensure a challenging, relevant, and rigorous curriculum for all students. • Clear policies exist regarding course completion, credits, grades, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written curriculum that includes content standards, performance indicators, examples of ways to assess learning, suggested learning activities, instructional materials used, and references. • Instructional materials. • Discussion with staff, students, and parents about the curriculum. • Evidence of regular review and revision of curriculum. • Observations of taught curriculum and overall linkage to school’s learning goals. • Examination of student work and student engagement in learning.

Category B Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

B2. How Students Learn Criterion: The professional staff (a) uses research-based knowledge about teaching and learning, and (b) designs and implements a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students at a high level of learning consistent with the school’s purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff uses a variety of techniques that effectively engage students in learning and are consistent with the school’s purpose, schoolwide learner outcomes, and standards. • The staff addresses the various learning styles and needs of the students. • The staff is current in the instructional content taught and research-based methodology. • Staff development activities enhance instructional repertoires of the staff to improve student achievement through greater engagement and comprehension. • There is regular student use of resources for learning beyond the limits of textbooks, such as effective use of the library media center, technology, collaborative activities, and community resources. • Students engage in learning and their work demonstrates the use of critical thinking, problem solving, knowledge, and application skills. • Students have a positive perception about their learning experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and leadership utilize a variety of instructional methods to address student needs and improve student learning. • The staff is current in the instructional content taught and research-based methodology. • Staff development plans are in place that will enhance instructional repertoires of the staff to improve student achievement through greater engagement and comprehension. • There is student use of resources for learning beyond the limits of textbooks, such as effective use of the library/media center, technology, collaborative activities, and community resources. • Students engage in learning and their work demonstrates the use of critical thinking, problem solving, knowledge, and application skills. • Students have a positive perception about their learning experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations of students engaged in instruction. • Interviews with students and instructional staff. • Evidence of attention to the needs of individual students, such as accelerated programs, remediation plans, individual learning plans. • Examination of representative student work. • Documentation of professional development activities. • Documentation of resource use beyond the classroom.

Category B Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

B3. How Assessment Is Used Criterion: Teacher and student use of assessment are frequent and integrated into the teaching/learning process. The assessment results are the basis for (a) measurement of each student’s progress toward the schoolwide learner outcomes; (b) regular evaluation, modification, and improvement of curriculum and instructional approaches; and (c) allocation of resources.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school’s instructional program includes identification of ways to evaluate student learning on an ongoing basis. • The teachers regularly use appropriate assessment strategies to measure student progress toward acquiring a specific body of knowledge or skills such as selected responses, essays, individual or group projects, etc. • The teacher and student use of assessment is integral to the teaching/learning process. • Assessment results measure the progress of students toward defined content standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes. • Assessment data is collected, disaggregated, and analyzed, and is used to make changes and decisions about curriculum, instruction, resource allocation, and professional development activities. • Student feedback is an important part of monitoring student progress over time based on standards and schoolwide learner outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school’s instructional program includes identification of ways to evaluate student learning on an ongoing basis. • The teachers regularly use assessment strategies to measure student progress toward acquiring a specific body of knowledge or skills such as selected responses, essays, individual or group projects, etc. • The teacher and student use of assessment is becoming integral to the teaching/learning process. • Assessment results measure the progress of students toward defined content standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes. • The school is beginning to use assessment data collected, disaggregated, and analyzed to make changes and decisions about curriculum, instruction, resource allocation, and professional development activities. • Student feedback is becoming an important part of monitoring student progress over time based on standards and schoolwide learner outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination of student achievement results for at least three years (if available) • Examination of sample representative student work. • Policies or other documentation relating to assessment policies, grading standards, reporting of student progress, and communications with parents and/or students about student achievement. • Discussion regarding examples of curriculum and instructional modifications based on learning results. • Plans and schedules for standardized testing and other assessment activities. • Examples of allocating resources based on student learning results.

Category C

Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

C1. Student Connectedness Criterion: Students are connected to a system of support services, activities, and opportunities at the school and within the community that meet the challenges of the curricular and co-curricular programs in order to achieve the schoolwide learner outcomes.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school provides personalized student support correlated to student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes. • The school staff implements strategies to develop students’ self-confidence, a personalized approach to learning, and connection to the learning environment. • The school provides adequate services, including referral services, to support students in such areas as health, career, academic, and guidance counseling. • The school offers co-curricular and enrichment activities, correlated with the school’s schoolwide learner outcomes. • Students are involved in curricular/co-curricular activities such as student leadership organizations and service projects. • The school regularly evaluates the level of student involvement in curricular/co-curricular activities and student use of support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is working to ensure adequate services, including referral services, support students in such areas as health, career, academic, and guidance counseling. • The school staff implements strategies to develop students’ self-confidence, a personalized approach to learning, and connection to the learning environment. • The school offers extracurricular and enrichment activities commensurate with its stage of development, with plans to expand these services as the school evolves. • Students are involved in curricular/co-curricular activities such as student leadership organizations and service projects. • The school is developing a process to evaluate the level of student involvement in curricular/co-curricular activities and student use of support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil personnel services: information about how academic and guidance services are provided. • Student activity program: discussion about the range of activities, including student government. • Interviews with students, parents, and teachers about the range of activities, including student government. • Review of related policies, handbooks, forms, and publications, e.g., health forms, student and parent handbooks, and newsletters.

Category C

Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

C2. Parent/Community Involvement Criterion: The school leadership employs a wide range of strategies to ensure that parental and community involvement is integral to the school’s established support system for students.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has established a formal process for involvement of parents and/or a parent or community-based organization that connects school and student life with the larger community. • Parents and community are active in the school, and roles, responsibilities, and communication channels are clearly delineated. • Parents have an understanding of the schoolwide learner outcomes and content standards in relation to student achievement, and their role in helping students learn. • The school has a well-developed system for communication with all parents regarding specific problems, issues, and general school information. • The school’s stakeholders take part in planning for the school’s further development. • The school uses community resources to support students through activities such as career days, business partnerships, speakers, and professional services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is working toward educating parents and community members in understanding that student achievement is based on student accomplishment of the schoolwide learner outcomes and content standards. • Parents and community members are becoming active partners in supporting student learning, and understand how to access school personnel regarding all concerns. • The school is working to establish a formal process or organization that involves parents and the school community with the school and student life. • The school regularly communicates to parents and other stakeholders. • The school is encouraging stakeholders to take part in planning for the school’s further development. • The school is beginning to explore the use of community resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue with school staff, parents and/or community members about the means of communication, and level of involvement in the support programs at the school for all students. • Examination of materials and other means to engage parents and community members in the school’s educational program for students.

Category D Resource Management and Development

D1. Resources Criterion: The resources available to the school are sufficient to sustain the school program and are effectively used to carry out the school’s purpose and student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has developed an adequate financial base to give reasonable assurance of continuing financial stability. An external audit ensures the trustworthiness of the school’s financial records. • Resources are sufficient to support anticipated growth, multi-year planning is in place to ensure continued viability, and resources are targeted toward achieving the school’s most important short- and long-term goals, and are linked to student learning. • The school has in place procedures for ensuring a well-qualified staff, adequate facilities, and adequate instructional materials. • There is correlation between decisions about resource allocations and the school’s purpose and assessment of the schoolwide learner outcomes and content standards. • There are written procedures for acquiring and maintaining adequate instructional materials, such as textbooks, other printed material, audio-visuals, support technology, manipulatives, and laboratory materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has developed an adequate financial base to give reasonable assurance of continuing financial stability. Sound business and accounting practices are followed, including an external annual audit. • The school has facilities that are safe, functional, and well-maintained. • The school has in place and is further defining procedures for ensuring a well-qualified staff, adequate facilities, and adequate instructional materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school’s budget. • Description of the budgeting process. • Any plans relating to facilities. • Examination of current facilities, including safety, maintenance, and adequacy. • Review of equipment and materials procurement policies. • Latest financial audit.

Category D Resource Management and Development

D2. Resource Planning Criterion: The governing authority and the school execute responsible resource planning for the future.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has developed a process and uses a master resource plan to focus the school on the goal of student accomplishment of the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards. • The school’s governing authority uses research and internal and external information to form the master resource plan. • The school’s governing authority, leadership, and staff understand the ways internal and external resources are obtained and used to support student learning. • Governing authorities and school leaders are involved with informing the appropriate entities and constituencies about the short-term and long-term financial needs of the institution. • Stakeholders are involved in the future planning for the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well aware of the necessity of long-range resource planning and is in the process of developing such a plan. • The resource planning process is centered upon the goal of student accomplishment of the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards. • The school’s governing authority, leadership, and staff are understanding the ways internal and external resources are obtained and used to support student learning. • Stakeholders are becoming part of the future planning for the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination of planning documents, such as long-term financial plans, future site and building plans, enrollment projections, and staffing needs. • Interviews with governing body representatives, leadership, and staff about the long-range planning process and strategies used. • Enrollments projections. • Development plans.

**Accrediting Commission for Schools
Western Association of Schools and Colleges
(ACS WASC)**

Dr. Fred Van Leuven
President

Dr. Marilyn S. George
Vice President

Northern California Office
533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 200
Burlingame, CA 94010-2009
Phone: (650) 696-1060
Fax: (650) 696-1867

Southern California Office
11590 West Bernardo Court, Suite 120
San Diego, CA 92127-1624
Phone: (951) 693-2550
Fax: (951) 693-2551

www.acswasc.org
mail@acswasc.org

