

# Initial Visit Procedures Manual

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**ACS WASC Initial Visit Procedures for:**

- **California Public Schools**
- **California Charter Schools**



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**2016 EDITION**

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# CONTENTS

.....	1
Preface .....	v
ACS WASC Philosophy .....	1
ACS WASC Mission.....	2
ACS WASC Territory .....	2
Affiliation Categories .....	2
Application Guidelines .....	3
Conditions of Eligibility .....	3
Procedures .....	4
ACS WASC Criteria for Initial Affiliation .....	7
Category A: Organization .....	9
Category B: Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum.....	17
Category C: Standards-based Student Learning: Instruction .....	21
Category D: Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability .....	23
Category E: School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth .....	25



## 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, church-related, and 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 for California Public Schools*, provides information on the accreditation process and explains the initial steps toward ACS WASC affiliation. This manual parallels the criteria and standards that were collaboratively developed with WASC and the California Department of Education (CDE), and that are listed in the most recent edition of the full accreditation manual for ACS WASC/CDE public schools. All criteria and standards for California public schools, along with two additional criteria, apply to California charter schools.



## 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 our democratic 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 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 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 to 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. Initial accreditation is a three-year status.
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. Candidacy is a three-year status. Schools are 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 7–28. 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 by 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 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	
<b>2–3 Campuses</b> – accredited or candidate.....	\$1,320.00
<b>4–6 Campuses</b> – accredited or candidate.....	\$1,520.00
<b>7–9 Campuses</b> – accredited or candidate.....	\$1,720.00
<b>10–12 Campuses</b> – accredited or candidate.....	\$1,920.00
<b>13–15 Campuses</b> – accredited or candidate.....	\$2,120.00
<b>16–55 Campuses</b> – accredited or candidate.....	\$2,320.00
<b>56+ Campuses</b> – 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 ACS WASC logo or ACS 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 five categories:

1. Organization
2. Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum
3. Standards-based Student Learning: Instruction
4. Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability
5. School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

The three columns contain rubrics to assist in determining the level to which each criterion is being met as well as provide examples of documentation that can be used as evidence of the school's compliance with 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

**A1. Vision and Purpose Criterion:** The school has a clearly stated vision and mission (purpose) based on its student needs, current educational research, the district Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), and the belief that all students can achieve at high academic levels. Supported by the governing board and the district LCAP, the school’s purpose is defined further by schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has established a clear, coherent vision and mission (purpose) of what students should know and perform; it is based upon high-quality standards and is congruent with research, practices, the student/ community profile data, and a belief that all students can learn.</li> <li>• Development of the school’s purpose and the schoolwide learner outcomes included a high degree of involvement by representatives of the entire school community.</li> <li>• There is a clear and systematic network of communication of the school’s purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes within the school community.</li> <li>• Staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders understand and are committed to the purpose of the school.</li> <li>• There is consistency between the school purpose, the schoolwide learner outcomes, student learning needs, the school program, and ongoing school improvement process.</li> <li>• There is a process in place for the regular review or revision of the school purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has adopted a clear vision and mission (purpose) of what students should know and perform; it is based upon high-quality standards and is congruent with research, practices, the student/ community profile data, and a belief that all students can learn.</li> <li>• Development of the purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes has involved representatives of the entire school community.</li> <li>• Plans to carry out the purposes are in place and implementation has begun.</li> <li>• The school has designed a system and process to communicate the school’s purpose that will lead to further development of schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> <li>• At this initial stage of school development, there is clear evidence of consistency between the school vision and purpose, the student learning needs, and the school program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement of school purpose (Note: school purpose is a general term for school vision, mission, or philosophy and objectives).</li> <li>• Student/community demographic and performance information and data.</li> <li>• Current schoolwide learner outcomes and the process for development.</li> <li>• Admission policies and materials.</li> <li>• Master schedule.</li> <li>• Any academic or operational plans the school may have in place.</li> <li>• Process for regular review or revision of school purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> <li>• Processes and publications/media for communication to all stakeholders within the school community.</li> </ul>

## Category A: Organization

**A2. Governance Criterion:** The governing board (a) has policies and bylaws that are aligned with the school’s purpose and support the achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes, the academic standards, and the college- and career-readiness standards based on data-driven instructional decisions for the school; (b) delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff; and (c) monitors results regularly and approves the single schoolwide action plan and its relationship to the LCAP.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has a functioning governance structure, with clear lines of authority and responsibility.</li> <li>• The vision (purpose) is consistent with and supported by board and district* policies.</li> <li>• There is participation of central office personnel, if applicable, and board in the development of the vision, purpose, and schoolwide learner outcomes of the school.</li> <li>• Authority and responsibility are allocated in a way that promotes effective functioning of staff at all levels.</li> <li>• Means of monitoring results have been identified.</li> <li>• There is parent participation in the school’s governance.</li> <li>• The governing authority carries out clear evaluation procedures on the identified goals.</li> <li>• There is a process in place for evaluation of the governing authority.</li> <li>• Complaint and conflict resolution policies and procedures are in place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has a functioning governance structure, with clear lines of authority and responsibility.</li> <li>• The vision (purpose) is consistent with and supported by board and district* policies.</li> <li>• There is participation of central office personnel, if applicable, and board in the development of the vision, purpose, and schoolwide learner outcomes of the school.</li> <li>• The governing authority delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff.</li> <li>• There is parent participation in the school’s governance.</li> <li>• The school community understands the governing authority’s role.</li> <li>• The governing authority monitors results.</li> <li>• The governing authority carries out clear evaluation on the identified goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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, organization charts, personnel rosters, board policies, admission policies, procedures, and forms.</li> <li>• Minutes of meetings, e.g., site councils, faculty, and board.</li> </ul>

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\*District involvement may vary for charter schools.

## Category A: Organization

### **A3. Leadership: Empowerment and Continuous Planning and Monitoring Criterion:**

Based on student achievement data, the school leadership, parent/community, and staff make decisions and initiate activities that focus on all students achieving the schoolwide learner outcomes, the academic standards, and the college- and career-readiness standards. The school leadership and staff annually monitor and refine the single schoolwide action plan and make recommendations to modify the LCAP based on analysis of data to ensure alignment with student needs.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school leadership 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.</li> <li>• There are written policies, charts, and handbooks that define the responsibilities and relationships of administrators, faculty, and staff.</li> <li>• The school leadership is working to ensure that standard operational practices, decision-making processes, and established procedures for internal communications and conflict resolution are clearly written, agreed upon, understood, and practiced.</li> <li>• The school leadership empowers the staff and encourages commitment, participation, and shared accountability for student learning.</li> <li>• The actions of the school leadership are directly linked to student achievement of the academic standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> <li>• The school leadership maintains effective communication with the district and board to facilitate mutual support of district and site expectation of student learning results and academic standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school leadership understands the purpose and the goals of the school.</li> <li>• The school has been developing written policies, charts, and handbooks that define the responsibilities and relationships of administrators, faculty, and staff.</li> <li>• The school leadership is developing standard operational practices, decision-making processes and procedures for internal communication, and conflict resolution which will be clearly written, agreed upon, understood, and practiced.</li> <li>• The school leadership understands the importance of empowering the staff and encourages commitment, participation, and shared accountability for student learning.</li> <li>• The actions of the school leadership are directly linked to student achievement of the academic standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team dialogue with the principal to discuss the school’s needs, potential, and plans for the future.</li> <li>• Discussion with leadership regarding modes of operation.</li> <li>• Review of brief summaries about professional background of leadership and defined responsibilities.</li> <li>• Review of policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Dialogue with faculty and support staff.</li> <li>• Documents relating to the organization of the school, including roles and relationships of the administration to other areas of the school’s infrastructure. Examples include job descriptions, organizational charts, roles, responsibilities, personnel rosters, board policies, administration policies, and procedures and forms.</li> </ul>

## Category A: Organization

**A4. Staff: Qualified and Professional Development Criterion:** A qualified staff facilitates achievement of the student academic standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes through a system of preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development. There is a systematic approach to continuous improvement through professional development based on student performance data, student needs, and research.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school staff is qualified* for their assigned responsibilities, and is involved in ongoing professional development.</li> <li>• The school/district has clear employment policies/practices related to qualification requirements of staff.</li> <li>• All professional development focuses upon priorities based on student achievement needs linked to schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards.</li> <li>• The professional development is an integral part of the school’s single plan for student achievement.</li> <li>• There is clearly articulated supervision and evaluation process in place.</li> <li>• Staff evaluations are used to promote professional growth and improve the quality of instruction.</li> <li>• Processes are used to determine the measurable effect of professional development on student learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has qualified* staffing* sufficient to carry out its purpose.</li> <li>• The school/district has clear employment policies/practices related to qualification requirements of staff.</li> <li>• The school has plans to provide ongoing professional development that supports student learning.</li> <li>• The school leadership and staff are developing a supervision and evaluation process.</li> <li>• Processes are being put in place to determine the measurable effect of professional development on student learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of teaching staff credentials and preparation.</li> <li>• Schedule of teaching assignments with staff credentials and preparation to assess appropriateness of instructional staff assignments.</li> <li>• Roster of administrative and support staff with qualifications and job assignments.</li> <li>• Staff development plans, descriptions of current or ongoing professional development activities that promote student learning.</li> <li>• Examination of the written professional development plan.</li> <li>• Examination of the supervision and evaluation process and procedures.</li> <li>• Interviews with staff.</li> <li>• Review of policies and procedures for employee hiring, professional development, and supervision.</li> </ul>

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\*The school leadership reviews all information regarding staff background, training, and preparation.

## Category A: Organization

**A5. Resources Criterion:** The human, material, physical, and financial resources are sufficient and utilized effectively and appropriately in accordance with the legal intent of the program(s) and LCAP to support students in accomplishing the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 that are linked to student learning.</li> <li>• Annual data analysis regarding student achievement forms the basis of school and community discussions to guide future resource allocations.</li> <li>• The district and school have policies and procedures for ensuring a well-qualified staff, adequate facilities, and adequate instructional materials, including current textbooks.</li> <li>• Assessment data determines the qualifications, requirements and placement of staff, as well as all decisions regarding professional development.</li> <li>• The school has adequate facilities that are safe, functional, clean, and well-maintained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school/district is working to ensure that (1) resources are sufficient to support anticipated growth; (2) multi-year planning is in place to ensure continued viability, and (3) resources are targeted toward achieving the school’s most important short- and long-term goals that are linked to student learning.</li> <li>• Annual data analysis regarding student achievement form the basis of school and community discussions to guide future resource allocations.</li> <li>• The district and school have and are further refining policies and procedures for ensuring a well-qualified staff, adequate facilities, and adequate instructional materials, including current textbooks.</li> <li>• The school is beginning to use assessment data to determine the qualifications, requirements and placement of staff as well as all decisions regarding professional development.</li> <li>• The school has adequate facilities that are safe, functional, clean, and well-maintained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school’s budget.</li> <li>• Description of the budgeting process.</li> <li>• Examination of current facilities with respect to safety, maintenance, and adequacy.</li> <li>• Review of equipment and materials procurement policies.</li> <li>• Planning documents, such as future site and building plans, enrollment projections, and staffing needs.</li> <li>• Long-term financial plans.</li> </ul>

## Category A: Organization

**A6. Resources Criterion:** The governing authority and the school leadership execute responsible resource planning for the future. The school has developed policies, procedures, and internal controls for managing the financial operations that meet state laws, generally accepted practices, and ethical standards. The school is fiscally solvent and uses sound and ethical accounting practices (budgeting/monitoring, internal controls, audits, fiscal health, and reporting).

### [FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS ONLY]

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-range financial (and other resources) plans are in place that are regularly reviewed and linked to the school's purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> <li>• There are well-defined accounting and external audit policies and procedures in place, and meet State requirements.</li> <li>• There is involvement of stakeholders in future planning.</li> <li>• There are adequate reserve funds to ensure the financial stability of the school.</li> <li>• The school's planning process addresses long-range capital needs, such as buildings, equipment, endowments, etc.</li> <li>• Governing authorities and school leaders are involved in informing the public and appropriate governmental authorities about the financial needs of the school.</li> <li>• The school provides adequate financial compensation to employees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic financial plans are in place to support the school's operations.</li> <li>• The school is aware of the necessity of long-range planning and is in the process of developing such a plan.</li> <li>• There are basic policies and procedures in place for financial practices that meet state requirements.</li> <li>• Reserve funds meet minimum state requirements.</li> <li>• The school is beginning to develop policies and procedures for the handling of institutional funds.</li> <li>• There are protections against mishandling of institutional funds.</li> <li>• The school is beginning to develop policies regarding the signing of contracts, checks, and the use of credit cards and other lines of credit.</li> <li>• Institutional funds are handled in a transparent and ethical manner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school's yearly budget.</li> <li>• Description of the budgeting process.</li> <li>• Any plans relating to facilities.</li> <li>• Most recent monthly financial statement.</li> <li>• Most recent audit and management letter.</li> <li>• Salary schedules.</li> <li>• Enrollment projections.</li> <li>• Development plans.</li> <li>• Policy manuals relating to handling of institutional funds.</li> <li>• Equipment and materials procurement procedures.</li> <li>• Lists of banks or other financial institutions where funds are held.</li> <li>• Copies of insurance policies that cover fraud.</li> <li>• Copies of contracts for services, leases, etc.</li> </ul>

## Category A: Organization

### A6. Resources Criterion: (Continued)

**[FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS ONLY]**

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are written and adopted fiscal policies and procedures for internal controls.</li> <li>• There is evidence of compliance of personnel consistently following the fiscal policies and procedures.</li> <li>• The school responds appropriately to exceptions and deficiencies in the audit report.</li> <li>• There are protections against mishandling of institutional funds.</li> <li>• There are written policies regarding person(s) who are authorized to sign contracts, write checks, and release institutional funds.</li> <li>• There are written policies and procedures for the use of credit cards and other lines of credit.</li> <li>• There is evidence that the chartering authorizing agency reviews the annual audit report and responds to any corrective action plans of the school.</li> <li>• Institutional funds are handled in a transparent and ethical manner.</li> </ul>		



## Category B: Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum

**B1. Rigorous and Relevant Standards-based Curriculum Criterion:** All students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes. Through standards-based learning (what is taught and how it is taught), these are accomplished.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has defined what all students should know and be able to do for each subject area. These goals support the school’s learner outcomes and are aligned with the academic standards.</li> <li>• Through the written and taught curriculum, a high degree of congruence is evident between the concepts and skills taught, the academic standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> <li>• All academic and career-technical program areas are meaningful, open to all students and are guided by the standards and learner outcomes.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The school uses current educational research and thinking to maintain a viable, meaningful instructional program.</li> <li>• There is a high level of articulation with K-8 feeder schools and local colleges and universities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has begun the process of defining what all students should know and be able to do for each subject area. These goals support the school’s learner outcomes.</li> <li>• The school is further refining its written curriculum to ensure that it reflects high-quality academic standards for all students, meeting or exceeding state and national standards.</li> <li>• The schools is working to ensure that all academic and career-technical program areas are meaningful, open to all students and are guided by the standards and learning results.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written curriculum that includes the academic standards, performance indicators, examples of ways to assess learning, suggested learning activities, instructional materials used, and references.</li> <li>• Instructional materials.</li> <li>• Discussion with staff, students, and parents about the curriculum.</li> <li>• Evidence of regular review and revision of curriculum.</li> <li>• Observations of taught curriculum and overall linkage to academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> </ul>

## Category B: Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum

**B2. Access to the Curriculum Criterion:** All students have equal access to the school’s entire program and are provided assistance with a personal learning plan to prepare them for the pursuit of their academic, personal, and career goals.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students have personal learning plans that are used as a basis for course selection and enable the student to meet or exceed the academic standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> <li>• Students’ learning styles, interests, and postsecondary goals are reflected in their personal learning plans.</li> <li>• All students have opportunities to explore, analyze, and evaluate educational and career goals that show a full range of career and educational options.</li> <li>• Parents, students, and staff collaborate in developing, guiding, and monitoring and ongoing revisiting of a student’s personal learning plan.</li> <li>• Students have access to a rigorous, standards-based curriculum as well as opportunities to explore real-world applications of their educational interests.</li> <li>• Programs are in place to actively recruit students for rigorous classes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students and their parents have opportunities to explore, analyze, and make appropriate choices and pursue a limited range of career and educational options.</li> <li>• All students are in the process of developing personal learning plans.</li> <li>• Procedures are being established for monitoring and revisiting students’ personal learning plans.</li> <li>• Students have access to a rigorous, standards-based curriculum.</li> <li>• The majority of students take advantage of the rigorous, challenging classes and programs at the school.</li> <li>• The school plans to expand the number of academic support programs and the involvement of students in the programs.</li> <li>• Plans have been developed to analyze information on students meeting graduation requirements.</li> <li>• The school/community is beginning to gather information on the success of their students after graduation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review master schedule.</li> <li>• Review examples of student’s personal learning plans and means of monitoring and modifying plans reflecting student’s current interests, goals, and needs.</li> <li>• Interviews with students, instructional staff, and parents.</li> <li>• Review examples of graduate studies.</li> <li>• Observation of classrooms.</li> <li>• Review of graduation statistics.</li> <li>• Review of data related to students meeting a–g requirements.</li> <li>• Interviews with students, parents and staff regarding school program and academic support to meet graduation requirements.</li> <li>• Follow-up studies.</li> </ul>

## Category B: Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum

### B2. Access to the Curriculum Criterion: (Continued)

<b>INITIAL</b>	<b>CANDIDATE</b>	<b>EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic support programs exist to ensure students successfully meet all requirements for graduation.</li> <li>• Information on students meeting the graduation requirements is regularly reviewed.</li> <li>• The school’s program has the flexibility to deal with changes in student interests and areas of career exploration.</li> <li>• The school/community gathers information on the success of their students after graduation.</li> </ul>		



## Category C: Standards-based Student Learning: Instruction

**C1. Challenging and Relevant Learning Experiences Criterion:** To achieve the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes, all students are involved in challenging and relevant learning experiences.

**C2. Student Engagement Criterion:** All teachers use a variety of strategies and resources, including technology and experiences beyond the textbook and the classroom, that actively engage students, emphasize higher order thinking skills, and prepares them to succeed at high levels for college, career, and life.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students are actively involved in a variety of learning activities to assist them in achieving the academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> <li>• Innovative methods are supported by research and professional development activities are frequently used in the classroom and school.</li> <li>• Instructional strategies are used to encourage students to think, reason, and problem solve in-group and individual activities, projects, debates, discussions, and inquiries related to investigations.</li> <li>• Students are assisted in developing techniques to organize, access, and apply knowledge. Inquiry is incorporated as an instructional strategy in many subjects.</li> <li>• Teachers work as coaches to facilitate learning for all students, addressing their various learning styles.</li> <li>• Teachers modify courses on an ongoing basis to ensure that the instructional program is challenging and rigorous.</li> <li>• Student work reflects the use of library/multimedia resources and technology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students are actively involved in learning activities to assist them in achieving the academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> <li>• The instructional staff is working to expand its repertoire of instructional approaches that address the skills of critical thinking, problem solving, inquiry, working cooperatively, and the application of knowledge.</li> <li>• Many teachers work to address various learning styles of students in their instructional approaches.</li> <li>• Teachers and students are beginning to use technology and library/media resources as an integral part of the instructional process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation of students engaged in instruction.</li> <li>• Examination of student work.</li> <li>• Observation of teachers working with students.</li> <li>• Student and staff interviews.</li> <li>• Types of technology available for student and teacher use.</li> <li>• How technology is being used to enhance student learning.</li> <li>• Sample case studies of teachers modifying instruction to ensure quality learning.</li> <li>• Evidence regarding opportunities for shadowing, apprenticeship, community projects, and other real-world experiences and applications that are available to all students.</li> <li>• Other evidence identified by the school.</li> </ul>



## Category D: Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability

**D1. Using Assessment to Analyze and Report Student Progress Criterion:** The school uses a professionally acceptable assessment process to collect, disaggregate, analyze and report student performance data to the parents and other stakeholders.

**D2. Using Assessment to Monitor and Modify Learning in the Classroom Criterion:** Teachers employ a variety of appropriate formative and summative assessment strategies to evaluate student learning. Students and teachers use these findings to modify the learning/teaching practices to improve student learning progress of every student.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school views formative and summative assessment as integral to the educational process and a variety of assessment systems are in place, including disaggregation of data by subgroups.</li> <li>• Student assessment data is reported regularly to parents and other shareholders.</li> <li>• Student assessment data is used to determine achievement of student progress in meeting state academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes, including those students with special needs.</li> <li>• Assessment results are integral to the teaching/learning process and are used as the basis for re-evaluation and modification of the curricular objectives and instructional approaches.</li> <li>• Teachers and administrators use assessment data to implement professional development, observations, discussions, and collegial feedback, including student feedback.</li> <li>• Students recognize and understand the academic standards, schoolwide learner outcomes, and expected levels of performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school understands that formative and summative assessment are integral to the educational process and a variety of assessment systems are beginning to be put in place, including disaggregation of data by subgroups.</li> <li>• Student assessment data is reported regularly to parents and other shareholders.</li> <li>• The school collects various types of student assessment data to determine student progress in meeting state academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes, including those students with special needs.</li> <li>• The school is emphasizing that assessment results are integral to the teaching/learning process and assessment results are used as the basis for re-evaluation of the curricular objectives and instructional approaches.</li> <li>• Teachers and administrators are beginning to use assessment data to implement professional development, observations, discussions, and collegial feedback, including student feedback.</li> <li>• The school is working to ensure students recognize and understand the academic standards, schoolwide learner outcomes, and expected levels of performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examination of student achievement results for at least three years (if available).</li> <li>• Representative samples of student work.</li> <li>• Policies or other documentation relating to grading standards, reporting of student progress.</li> <li>• Samples of ways the school and staff communicate with parents and/or students about achievement results.</li> <li>• Discussion regarding examples of curriculum and instructional modifications based on standards and learning results.</li> </ul>

## Category D: Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability

**D3. Using Assessment to Monitor and Modify the Program Schoolwide Criterion:** The school, with the support of the district and community, has an assessment and monitoring system to determine student progress toward achievement of the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes. The system drives the school’s program to continually improve and to allocate resources to effectively meet student needs.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school and district create a system to continually assess student progress through a comprehensive assessment program with respect to academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> <li>• The school, with support and assistance from the district, assesses its progress by analyzing a wide variety of indicators of student learning, including student work/performance.</li> <li>• There are written procedures in place to regularly communicate to the governing authority and members of the school community about student progress, including post-graduation.</li> <li>• The single plan for student achievement is annually reviewed and refined based on analysis of disaggregated student achievement data.</li> <li>• Allocation of resources in the areas of staffing, professional development, instructional materials, programmatic development, use of school site, and financial planning is based on student achievement results.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school and district are creating a system to assess student progress on a regular basis with respect to academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> <li>• The staff has an initial understanding of what should be involved in meaningful, performance-based assessment and accountability and the importance of using a wide variety of student learning indicators, including student work/performance.</li> <li>• Plans are being developed to communicate to the governing authority and members of the school community about student progress, including post-graduation.</li> <li>• The single plan for student achievement is annually reviewed and refined based on analysis of disaggregated student achievement data.</li> <li>• Allocation of resources in the areas of staffing, professional development, instructional materials, programmatic development, use of school site, and financial planning is based on student achievement results.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examination of the school’s single plan for student achievement and the recent progress reports that include analyzed and interpreted student achievement data.</li> <li>• Analyzed and interpreted student achievement data with respect to academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes. This includes disaggregated internal student performance indicators, standardized tests, state measures, and dropout and college entrance rates (if applicable).</li> <li>• Lists of graduates and identification of next steps (if applicable).</li> <li>• Means of communication with parents and other stakeholders regarding student achievement.</li> <li>• Dialogue with parents, other community members, staff, and students.</li> <li>• Examples of allocating resources based on student achievement results.</li> </ul>

## Category E: School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

**E1. Parental and Community Engagement Criterion:** The school leadership employs a wide range of strategies to encourage family, business, industry, and community involvement, especially with the learning/teaching process.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has a comprehensive system for communicating with parents and community members and regards them as partners in problem-solving and active decision-making.</li> <li>• Parents have an understanding of the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards in relation to student achievement and their role in helping students learn.</li> <li>• Parents and community members are active partners in supporting student learning and understand how to access school personnel regarding all concerns.</li> <li>• Communication is routinely conducted in the appropriate home language(s).</li> <li>• The school’s shareholders take part in advisory committees and planning for the school’s further development of the entire program.</li> <li>• The school uses community resources and services to support students through such opportunities as student internships, mentoring, and project-based learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is developing a comprehensive system for communicating with parents and community members and involving them in problem-solving and active decision-making.</li> <li>• 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 academic standards.</li> <li>• Parents and community members are becoming active partners in supporting student learning, and understanding how to access school personnel regarding all concerns.</li> <li>• The school is working to communicate with parents and other shareholders, including through the home language(s).</li> <li>• The school is encouraging shareholders to take part in planning for the schools’ further development of the entire program.</li> <li>• The school is beginning to explore the use of community resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Examination of materials and other means to engage parents and community members in the school’s educational program for students.</li> </ul>

## Category E: School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

**E2. School Environment Criterion:** The school is a) a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning and b) has a culture that is characterized by trust, professionalism, high expectations for all students, and a focus on continuous school improvement.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school environment is safe, secure, clean, orderly, nurturing and conducive to learning.</li> <li>• Collegiality is observable among all staff.</li> <li>• Current educational research, innovations and practices are regularly reviewed, and staff is supported in their efforts to improve student learning.</li> <li>• Teachers and administrators work together to identify and solve problems related to teaching and student learning.</li> <li>• Accountability for student success is acknowledged and shared by all shareholders.</li> <li>• All shareholders share an energy and enthusiasm and are dedicated to improving student learning through accomplishing the school’s vision, the learning results and the Single Plan for Student Achievement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school environment is safe, secure, clean, orderly, nurturing and conducive to learning.</li> <li>• Collegiality is observable among all staff.</li> <li>• The staff is building a structure in which current educational research, innovations and practices are regularly reviewed, and staff is supported in their efforts to improve student learning.</li> <li>• Teachers and administrators are working together to identify and solve problems related to teaching and student learning.</li> <li>• The school recognizes that all shareholders must be accountable for student learning.</li> <li>• The staff shares a common sense of purpose on improving student learning through a Single Plan for Student Achievement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review policies that exist to ensure a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning.</li> <li>• Evidence provided by the school to demonstrate that the school is safe and orderly.</li> <li>• Classroom observations which demonstrate high expectations and caring for all students in the classrooms.</li> <li>• Staff interviews regarding how current educational research and thinking is shared, discussed, implemented, and reflected upon by the staff.</li> <li>• Other evidence identified by the school.</li> <li>• Review of the Single Plan for Student Achievement.</li> </ul>

## Category E: School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

**E3. Personal and Academic Student Support Criterion:** All students receive appropriate academic support and intervention to help ensure school, college, and career success. Students with special talents and/or needs have access to a system of personal support services, activities, and opportunities at the school. These are enhanced by business, industry, and the community.

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The approach to guidance and counseling is schoolwide, focusing on students’ personal, career, and academic interests and goals.</li> <li>• Enrollment in all classes reflects the diversity of the students.</li> <li>• All students, whatever their abilities, are supported and encouraged to meet the challenges of a standards-based curriculum.</li> <li>• The school focuses the use of existing resources and support activities on the standards-based curriculum and the learning results. This includes various forms of technology and extensive and up-to-date library services and resources.</li> <li>• Through a variety of options, English learners and students with special needs are assisted in successfully meeting the demands of the curriculum.</li> <li>• Students are encouraged and comfortable in seeking support that is vigorously publicized to parents and students.</li> <li>• The school is strongly supported by the district in meeting the academic needs of students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The approach to guidance and counseling is schoolwide, focusing on students’ personal, career, and academic interests and goals.</li> <li>• Enrollment in all classes reflects the diversity of the students.</li> <li>• All students, whatever their abilities, are supported and encouraged to meet the challenges of a standards-based curriculum.</li> <li>• The school is using the current resources and support activities to support the standards-based curriculum and the learning results. This includes various forms of technology and extensive and up-to-date library services and resources.</li> <li>• Programs exist to provide assistance to English learners and students with special needs — including students who need support in meeting the challenges of rigorous courses.</li> <li>• Students are encouraged and comfortable in seeking support that is publicized to parents and students.</li> <li>• The school site is supported by the district in meeting the academic needs of students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine the support mechanism that the school has established to assure access to and success within a rigorous, standards-based curriculum for all students.</li> <li>• Review the master schedule to determine the school’s support for all students having access to a rigorous, standards-based curriculum.</li> <li>• Through interviews with students and teachers, determine the number of effective support programs that exist on campus for special needs students such as the ELL and gifted students.</li> <li>• Talk with counselors regarding procedures and policies regarding student assignment to classes.</li> </ul>

## Category E: School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

### E3. Student Support Criterion: (Continued)

INITIAL	CANDIDATE	EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The approach to guidance and counseling is schoolwide, focusing on students’ personal, career, and academic interests and goals.</li> <li>• Students know who to contact, and their families can easily access social, psychological, and health services through a school-based network of school and community organizations that work together to solve problems and share resources.</li> <li>• Student support is proactive and teachers are actively involved with students within and outside the classroom.</li> <li>• A large number of activities exist which connect students of different backgrounds to the school, to the community, and to each other.</li> <li>• A formal process exists for the regular review of student and schoolwide profiles, identifying and finding solutions to student personal, academic, and behavior problems, and making referrals to counseling, special programs, or administration for further assistance.</li> <li>• Counseling, advisory, articulation, psychological, health, and referral services are available to all students.</li> <li>• Co-curricular activities are connected to the academic standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The approach to guidance and counseling is schoolwide, focusing on students’ personal, career, and academic interests and goals.</li> <li>• The school is working on ensuring that students know who to contact and enabling their families to access social, psychological, and health services.</li> <li>• Student support is evident and teachers are involved with students within and outside the classroom.</li> <li>• Activities exist that connect students of different backgrounds to the school, to the community, and to each other.</li> <li>• A formal process is being developed for the regular review of student and schoolwide profiles, identifying and finding solutions to student personal, academic and behavior problems, and making referrals to counseling, special programs, or administration for further assistance.</li> <li>• The school has plans to connect the co-curricular activities to the academic standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of clubs and the number of active student members in those clubs.</li> <li>• Information about how academic and guidance services are provided.</li> <li>• Interview students regarding the range of activities including student government.</li> <li>• Interview with students, parents, and teachers about personal and academic support services and extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• Review of related policies, handbooks, forms, and publications, i.e., health forms, student and parent handbooks, newsletters.</li> </ul>



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