

WASC WORDS 2010



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Western Association of Schools and Colleges
ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS

WASC Mission

The purpose of the Commission is to foster excellence in elementary, secondary, adult, and postsecondary education by encouraging school improvement through a process of continuing evaluation and to recognize, by accreditation, schools that meet an acceptable level of quality in accordance with established criteria.

WASC Philosophy

The Commission 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.

WASC Territory

The Commission extends its services to public and private schools located in California, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and to American and international schools in East Asia and the Pacific.

Thoughts from the Chair

By Dale J. Mitchell, Ph.D. | Chair, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



21st Century Learning. This is an interesting concept given that we are now well into the century. It is difficult to read literature or research today without some reference to this concept. However, for many people, 21st century learning is something new when it really should not be. Each school that closely looks

at its mission statement and expected schoolwide learning results would immediately recognize that they have already articulated these concepts in key documents. Unfortunately, the focus on learning discrete skills/standards can undermine our attention to broader skills such as critical and creative thinking, effective communication, responsible citizens, and effective users of technology. Regardless of where your school is in the accreditation process, much work remains to intentionally align curriculum and instruction to ensure students achieve the expected schoolwide learning results. Schools will continue to have fewer resources to support their efforts to fulfill their mission and expected schoolwide learning results, but the commitment, passion, and focus on students must remain.

The Accrediting Commission of Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) is able to support schools throughout the accreditation process. Services are provided through a blend of professional staff and volunteers who commit much time and energy on behalf of our schools. Specifically, training is offered for staff members of schools going through the self-study process. Resource documents and tools are both provided at the trainings, through webinars, and at the Commission's website. There are also numerous workshops for volunteers desiring to serve on visiting teams. Schools that are preparing for a visit are encouraged to have staff members serve as a visiting team member in order to better understand the

accreditation process and expectations for the completion of the self study and hosting a visit. The staff in both the Burlingame and Temecula offices continue to do an outstanding job of providing excellent accreditation services and training. Please contact them at any time.

The accreditation process would not be as effective as it is without the significant contributions of volunteers. Participating as a Visiting Team member enables the volunteer to both provide a service to the profession and to engage in personal professional development. In my opinion, there is not a better professional growth experience.

I encourage you to utilize the resources and opportunities available to your school and to you as together we support efforts to focus on student learning.

Executive Director's Update

By David E. Brown, Ph.D. | Executive Director, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



The 2010–11 school year promises to be an exciting year of change for ACS WASC. Our Commission developed a Strategic Plan in June of 2009, which was outlined in WASC Words last year, and has now received one full year of significant attention. I will provide an update on this plan and comment on our

relationships with other Regional Accrediting Commissions as well as with other private accrediting bodies. Finally, in these brief remarks, I plan to make a hopefully effective argument for encouraging all of you to help recruit new folks to the WASC family.

First, I would like to make sure you are all aware of changes in leadership in the WASC Temecula Office. After a decade of dedicated and impactful influence on our work, both Dr. George Bronson, Associate Executive Director, and Dr. Warren Stephenson, Coordinator of Member and School Services, have retired (well, at least from paid service — we plan to keep them active in service to schools for many years to come). Their service was profound and they will be missed by all of us. Nonetheless, their replacements are excellent educational leaders who bring a similar level of expertise, experience, and enthusiasm. Dr. Lee Duncan, former Dean of Students at the Masters College, has become ACS WASC's Associate Executive Director in Temecula, and Dr. Ginger Hovenic, former charter school principal and executive director of the San Diego-area Business Roundtable, is now the Director of Member and School Services for Southern California. We welcome them both and are confident they will make significant contributions to the quality of education in our region as did George Bronson and Warren Stephenson.

The Strategic Plan has five major areas for focus.

1. WASC Clients — Whom Do We Serve?
 - We are working to establish representatives in Hawaii and in countries in the East Asia region to better support the schools we serve in these areas. We have also created a partnership with the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Secondary Schools, and we are working on a common protocol for Supplementary Education Programs.
2. Training, Self-Study, Accreditation Visits, and Follow-up
 - Many of our protocols for self-study work are being refined and strengthened this summer. We are also completing work with the California Department of Education to strengthen the notion of a Single Plan for Student Achievement that embeds the WASC Action Plan to ensure that schools complete a Single Plan for School Improvement.
3. Governance and Decision-Making
 - The Commission now includes 31 members with authorization to move to 32. Most recent Commission discussion has centered on adding a thirty-second Commission member who would represent charter schools in our region.
4. Technology
 - As WASC moves in the “paperless” direction, we will be piloting the use of reading devices (iPads) to reduce copying and paperwork costs for Commission actions. We are also continuing to work on alternative methods, like Accreditation-Plus, that will facilitate more online work at the school level. Finally, the use of recorded webinars has significantly enhanced our training programs.

5. WASC Fiscal and Business Practices

- The Commission has developed a new investment policy for our limited reserves. The costs of accreditation are being controlled, but not unlike all of our public and private schools, WASC budgets are challenged by the realities of our present economy.

WASC is supporting an alliance of Regional Commissions that all support and embrace regional accreditation. Participating regions include the accrediting commissions in New England, the Middle States, and the Northwest and Western States. We are confident that we have developed a common national approach to accrediting schools over the years, which represents the best in successful practices that ensure school quality and support improvement. The alliance is tasked with ensuring that common approaches are strengthened and updated without diminishing the value of regional accreditation work.

Furthermore, WASC's work with accrediting bodies that represent private, religious, and independent schools continues to be at the core of successful accreditation work. Collaboration with organizations that represent a wide variety of schools and approaches to educational delivery has made us stronger and created a broader capacity to serve all the schools accredited by WASC.

Finally, let me repeat that "the least expensive and most productive form of professional development for educators" continues to be delivered through service on accrediting teams. The volunteers who serve are trained to identify how to focus in on "What students learn," "How students learn," and "How we assess the quality of student learning" to know whether or not a school actually adds value to each student's academic and personal growth. Please consider recommending teachers and administrators new to the profession who can carry on the noble and quality work done by WASC volunteers.

Accreditation Actions, 2009–10

WASC accreditation is based on a six-year cycle, with a full Self-Study occurring every six years. Please visit the WASC website for additional details.

Full Self-Study Visits

Awarded full terms.....	402
6 year	87
6 year with a midterm review.....	309
5 year	6
Awarded other terms.....	160
3 year	134
2 year	18
1 year	7
No term given	1

Three-Year Term and Limited-Term Revisits

Awarded terms on revisits.....	205
3 year	134
2 year	9
1 year	62
Denials of Accreditation	2
Initial Visits	150
Awarded initial term of accreditation	98
Awarded candidacy status.....	51
Denied candidacy status.....	1

Committee Statistics, 2009–10

The 2009–2010 school year was another active year for visiting committees. Nearly 2,700 volunteers, many serving on multiple visits, served on teams during this past school year. A special thanks to the committee chairs and members who served on the 1,289 teams during the previous school year! See page 18 for information on volunteering to serve on a visiting committee.

Full Self-Study Visits.....	562
Initial Visits	150
Three-Year Term Revisits.....	158
Midterm Review Visits.....	274
Midterm Return Review Visits	7
Limited-Term Revisits.....	49
Special Visits	14
East Asia Midterm Visits	10
CIS Preparatory Visits.....	2
CIS Five-Year Renewal Visits.....	3
Substantive Change Visits.....	54
Validation/Appeals Visits	6
Total Committees	1,289

WASC Focus on Learning: On Target for 21st Century Schools — Learning Must Be the Passion

By Marilyn S. George, Ed.D. | Associate Executive Director, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



Focus on Learning: Schoolwide Student Learner Outcomes—Current and Future Student Learning Needs

For almost 20 years, the Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC, has been focusing on all students' learning based on schoolwide student outcomes that complement academic standards. The educators within the region who contributed to the major

revamping of the WASC process in 1992–93 were already thinking about the 21st century as they posed the following questions regarding schoolwide student learner outcomes (expected schoolwide learning results):

- ▶ What do we want our students to know, understand and be able to do through the school program?
- ▶ What are the current learning needs of the students?
- ▶ What are the 21st century challenges the students will face now and in the future?

In the early 1990s, educators such as Dr. Phil Schlechty and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), began the discussion of how to prepare students for the 21st century.

During the past few years, there has been greater emphasis on the need for schools to reexamine all aspects of their programs and support systems in light of the 21st century skills and competencies. Of particular note, the work by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills has provided a framework as schools reexamine their schoolwide student goals to ensure the resulting programs and organizational support addresses 21st century critical student learner outcomes and skills.

The Challenge: Assessment of the Schoolwide Student Learner Outcomes (Expected Schoolwide Learning Results)

The struggle expressed by many schools is the measurability of these student learner outcomes and skills that are beyond the core knowledge. These skills need to be learned and demonstrated by all students: the ongoing *WASC Focus on Learning* process serves as a foundation for the journey of school improvement.

Once a school has established its core beliefs, vision, mission, and schoolwide student outcomes based on student achievement data and 21st century needs, the following questions must be asked:

- ▶ How do we know that all students are achieving the desired schoolwide student outcomes and the essential academic standards that prepare students for the 21st century?
- ▶ Are we doing everything possible to support that learning?

All staff, students, and parents must be involved in regular review and analysis of both formative and summative data about student achievement as well as the programmatic and operational aspects of the school. The WASC high-quality criteria and supporting indicators guide schools in this ongoing endeavor as the school implements its single schoolwide action plan. The action plan involves annual review and refinement based on the regular analysis of multiple sources of student data for both the schoolwide student outcomes and the academic standards.

Inherent in the WASC criteria is the expectation that school leadership and staff focus on learning through meaningful dialogue, analysis of multiple sources of data, and action, i.e., the schoolwide action plan. The criteria that guide a school in evaluation of the effectiveness of all organizational and programmatic aspects always go back to the impact on student learning, e.g., leadership empowerment, continual growth and learning by staff, learning and teaching, resource allocation, and student support systems. Within the *Focus on*

Learning process, the interdisciplinary focus groups as well as the stakeholder groups have been vehicles not just during the formal self-study process (every five to six years), but as current structures to examine data, review school processes, and support and take action on modifying the curricular and instructional approaches.

Focus on Learning: Collaborative Strategies within the Ongoing Process of Assessment of Student Learning

There are many collaborative strategies that can be used by schools within the ongoing WASC accreditation process. One example is the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) that focuses on professional development to develop facilitative and collegial processes and reflective practices to support increased student achievement, i.e., the NSRF's Critical Friends Groups. Another approach that many schools have embraced is establishing professional learning communities (PLCs). WASC focus groups and stakeholder groups can actually be viewed as PLCs as the goal of the WASC groups is to examine and determine if all aspects of the school support high-quality student learning. The basic ideas of PLCs reflect what is expected in the WASC groups during the formal self-study and the annual implementation of the resulting schoolwide action plan and analysis of progress made in relation to improved student learning. As Dr. Richard DuFour has stated, the basic principles of a school should be centered upon learning: this is exactly the intent of the WASC *Focus on Learning* process.

- ▶ The school is centered on results-based learning for all students, rather than teaching as the core.
- ▶ The WASC criteria expect that a school works as a “collaborative culture.”
- ▶ The school uses multiple sources of assessment to determine the degree of student learning based on defined learning, and regularly uses those formative and summative results to modify the learning and the teaching.

The four critical questions that are part of the PLC process are powerful ones that are also essential to the ongoing “nonhyperventilating” WASC school improvement process. These are summarized below:

1. What do we want students to learn (grade, course, and/or unit)?

21st Century Outcomes and Support Systems

- Core Subjects
 - ✓ English, reading, world languages, arts, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history, government, and civics
- 21st Century Themes
 - ✓ Global Awareness
 - ✓ Financial, Economic, Business and Entrepreneurial Literacy
 - ✓ Civic Literacy
 - ✓ Health Literacy
 - ✓ Environmental Literacy
- Learning and Innovation Skills
 - ✓ Creativity and Innovation
 - ✓ Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
 - ✓ Communication and Collaboration
- Information, Media, and Technology Skills
 - ✓ Information Literacy
 - ✓ Media Literacy
 - ✓ Information, Communications, and Technology (ICT) Literacy
- Life and Career Skills
 - ✓ Flexibility and Adaptability
 - ✓ Initiative and Self-Direction
 - ✓ Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
 - ✓ Productivity and Accountability
 - ✓ Leadership and Responsibility

21st Century Support Systems

- 21st Century Standards
- Assessments of 21st Century Skills
- 21st Century Curriculum and Instruction
- 21st Century Professional Development
- 21st Century Learning Environments

*Framework for 21st Century Learning,
Partnership for 21st Century Skills
December 2009*

2. How will we know that students have achieved the determined knowledge, skills, and broader outcomes?
3. What do we do if students have not achieved their goals?
4. How do we enhance the learning for those demonstrating they have achieved?

This is one example of a collaborative structure that meshes perfectly with the WASC *Focus on Learning* process, a school's foundation for the enduring journey of school improvement. Schools that have PLCs, either organized by a single (i.e., content area) or interdisciplinary focus can be powerful structures to assess student learning not just on the core subjects but the schoolwide student goals or essential 21st century student outcomes. A question that can guide the work of the groups: If students are going to be successful and contribute to a "flat" or interdependent world, what evidence do we need to examine to ensure students are meeting our schoolwide student outcomes as well as essential standards?

Therefore, the WASC Focus on Learning process provides the structure for ongoing rich, meaningful dialogue by staff that focuses on student learning and results. Strategies that guide staff members, students, and parents in these conversations, such as PLCs, are integral to the basic accreditation principles and the *Focus on Learning* process.

Dr. Doug Reeves, Dr. Richard Elmore, Dr. Mike Schmoker, and Dr. Michael Fullan, to name just a few educators, emphasize important considerations that must not be neglected in any improvement process. These critical factors for successful change or improvement are also integral to the basic philosophical basis of WASC accreditation and the WASC *Focus on Learning*. These might be succinctly summarized from Dr. Fullan's recent book entitled *The Six Secrets of Change* and his other articles over the years. His worldwide research and work with schools on change are so appropriate given the challenges of preparing students for the 21st century. These include the following:

1. Invest in staff: formal and informal training, dialogue, coaching, and support.
2. Connect peers with a purpose: coherent vision and clarification during implementation.
3. Capacity building prevails: provide problem-solving opportunities.

4. Learning is the work: it takes time.
5. Transparency rules: have a plan and show results and accomplishments.
6. Systems learn: changing the culture.

A quote from Dr. Elmore also underscores key elements for improvement that support a school embracing the basic principles and strategies embodied in *Focus on Learning*.

"I continue to believe that the improvement of schools depends on the development of a practice — a shared set of understandings, a body of knowledge, and a set of protocols that can be used to develop a broad network of practitioners within schools and across professional networks that support schools engaged in continuous work aimed at improving the learning of students."

In addition, the following quote by Dr. DuFour, one of the key leaders in helping schools implement professional learning communities, captures the essence of the WASC accreditation's expectation of ongoing meaningful dialogue and action that focuses on high-quality defined learning for all students.

"When learning becomes the preoccupation of the school, when all the school's educators examine the efforts and initiatives of the school through the lens of their impact on learning, the structure and culture of the school begin to change in substantive ways."

In summary, the WASC *Focus on Learning* accreditation process is more than a stamp of approval or quality assurance. It is a *collaborative results-oriented school improvement process that serves as the underpinning of an effective school*.

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WASC in Temecula — A Summer of Change

By Lee Duncan, Ed.D. | Associate Executive Director, Operations, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



As I walked into the WASC office on my first day on the job, I wandered into Warren Stephenson's office and saw a picture on the wall with the caption, "Most children define love as 'time.'" It made me reflect on the mission of WASC — to give ourselves, our time to students and schools in the accreditation process to allow every child reach their fullest potential.

With George Bronson retiring this past summer after many years of faithful service, we thank him for the tremendous work he provided on a daily basis, always with kindness and grace. Warren Stephenson also retired this year after leading countless Visiting Committees and mentoring many of us in what it means to be a chair. Both George and Warren will be greatly missed here in the Temecula office.

We welcome Dr. Ginger Hovenic to our team as she will be working closely with Emily Barton in forming Visiting Committees for the hundreds of visits that take place each year. I am hopeful that Emily, Ginger, and I will be able to meet many of you in the months to come at WASC training sessions or school visits. We are eager to serve you and trust you will feel free to call us any time you have a question or face an issue that needs our support.

In the days to come there will be serious media attention given to "reforming" education. Political campaigns will speak of the need to bring fundamental change to the educational process in America. Every candidate will have his own plan in place and the debate will begin. In the last five years there have been significant "reform" committees that have offered advice to the educators of America.

A December 2006 report published by the National Center on Education and the Economy stated, "The core problem is that our education and training systems were built for another era. We can get where we want to go only by changing the system itself." At the National Governors Association's 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools, Bill Gates stated that the high schools of today were designed 50 years ago to meet the needs of another age. According to Gates, schools today need

to be upgraded to keep pace with the needs of the 21st century. Anne Nelson, noted writer for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, wrote in 2007, "It is no secret that American high schools face significant challenges. The current educational model that was designed to serve the United States in the early 1900s is no longer relevant in preparing students to succeed in today's global economy."

What makes WASC's accreditation process so effective is its collaborative activities that focuses on student achievement in every individual school. Accreditation is not a prescriptive template that is forced upon every school — it is a process that allows school stakeholders to evaluate their own programs and chart their own course for school improvement. WASC accreditation is sensitive to every school's needs and creates an environment of change that allows schools to establish Action Plans that are specifically tailored to their own situations.

As education changes in the coming years, WASC will be able to adapt and continue to act as a catalyst for school improvement that focuses on student learning. Any reform platform will have to unfold in the context of regional accreditation, and WASC is prepared to be part of the discussion and part of the effort to improve education in America.

Change has been the theme of the Temecula office this summer and change very well may be the theme in American education in the days ahead. We look forward to the journey with great anticipation. It is a privilege to serve with school leaders, skilled teachers, committed board members, involved parents, and eager students who desire to prepare their lives for the future. The WASC accreditation process is not just a once-every-six-years event — it is a living and growing enterprise that brings out the best in schools.

If most children define love as "time," may all of us involved in education give our time to our students by committing ourselves to the schools, working in focus groups, serving on accreditation teams to others schools, and volunteering on school sites so that education can truly change lives. WASC can be a key player in educational reform efforts with your help — educators who love students and who desire to see every school improve year by year. Thank you for your shared commitment to this great cause!

WASC Words of Wisdom

We asked our most-active, longest-serving group of WASC volunteers for their comments. We hope that you will find their responses as compelling as we did. They not only provided great advice for newer volunteers, but offered some fascinating historical background on the accreditation process as well. Responses in their entirety can be found on the WASC website. Enjoy!



My advice would be to take off whatever hat you usually wear such as "teacher," "administrator," or "counselor," and put on a WASC hat that includes all aspects of accreditation. Remember at all times, we are visitors and our task is to look at the school from the perspective of community support, resources, tradition, students, and staff. We do not judge the school but make suggestions that will move the school ahead to challenge students during the next accreditation cycle.

I've had so many memorable experiences that it is hard to state just one. I feel honored to have the responsibility of serving on teams and take this responsibility seriously. It is a wonderful feeling to guide a team through the process; the team members see real outcomes at the end of the visit and see the WASC experience is worth the time away from their own school responsibilities. I have visited schools with student populations from 8 to 2000+ and find that the same challenges are present at all schools. Each school is unique, but we are all there for one reason: to make suggestions that will continue to prepare students for the world beyond high school.

KAREN ANDERSON — WASC member since 1981 — Served on over 40 WASC teams

Preparation is essential for an effective and enjoyable school visit. Read and reread the school's self-study. Do your assigned pre-writing early and send it to the chair. During the visit, be thinking about the visiting committee's end product, Schoolwide Areas of Strength and Critical Areas for Follow-Up. Work with fellow visiting committee members and the school to have the school's action plan address the important needs of the school and be appropriately fleshed out and doable. You are there to advance the school's efforts to improve.

The WASC training and preparation for both school personnel and Visiting Committee members has leaped forward with the very helpful WASC website (www.acswasc.org). WASC service is a wonderful way for retired educators to continue to provide service.

TOD ANTON — WASC member since 1975 — Served on over 75 WASC teams



Schools that have really analyzed student learning and instruction and decided what they need to work on in their self-study and then act upon their own strategies for improvement make visits a joy. The schools can then applaud their progress and the Visiting Committee can also applaud that progress. Secondly, when the Visiting Committee suggests a critical area for improvement and the school undertakes to make the suggested improvement, it is great to hear comments like, "We were not completely happy with what the Visiting Committee suggested, but after the visit we decided that the Visiting Committee's suggestions were valid and now are happy that we made the changes and improved in the ways they suggested."

JOHN BEACOM — WASC member since 1986 — Served on over 30 WASC teams

One important piece of advice that I would give to new WASC Visiting Committee members is to read the school's document carefully and then be sure to document your response in your prewrites. Attending training is THE most important advice I can offer. The change from writing the school report by departments to writing by areas, i.e., curriculum, assessment, etc., has been, for me, the best change.

JOANNE BOBELE — WASC member since 1986 — Served on over 40 WASC teams



I think *Focus on Learning* allows the Visiting Committee to be more thoughtful and analytical in how it approaches its responsibilities. The criteria serve as guidelines for the Visiting Committee to tailor its remarks to the uniqueness of each particular school and recognize that there is no cookie-cutter formula for school improvement. For example, when listing the Critical Areas for Follow-Up in Chapter 4, the Visiting Committee can write more than one sentence for each and use examples to give more clarity to the recommendation.

HAROLD BUSH — WASC member since 1987 — Served on over 80 WASC teams

My advice would be to remember that you are part of the Visiting Committee that will study and validate how the school goes about developing programs and procedures to promote student learning. As you attempt to help the school understand what is working at their site and what changes, if any, need to be made, remember to reflect what you are experiencing and how you might apply that experience to your own school. This *Focus on Learning* process often has as much of an impact on Visiting Committee members as it has on the visited staff.



JIM CASWELL — WASC member since 1980 — Served on over 30 WASC teams



The focus has changed from an attitude of “we’re here and we’re looking for bad things,” to “we’re here and we want to find ways to help you improve your program.” I think this is in part due to the *Focus on Learning* approach, and the increased use of primary data where the school itself can analyze the data, see where improvement is needed, and can then develop a more reasonable and accurate action plan.

JOAN DELZANGLE — WASC member since 1980 — Served on over 35 WASC teams

I believe the focus on the six-year continual improvement cycle for all students has established a strong base for schools to work on sustained growth and achievement. This data-driven model has enabled WASC to be more closely aligned with all school reform documents and has woven the *Focus on Learning* process into the fiber of all schools.



I find that valuable experiences occur annually through my exposure to a variety of learning communities during WASC visitations. The policies and practices that schools enact in response to meeting the needs of their learning constituents provides insights that are often replicable to other schools. These experiences in diverse learning communities continually inspire and motivate me as an educator and a visiting team member.

SHEILA FOLAN — WASC member since 1992 — Served on over 25 WASC teams



The best piece of advice is to follow your chair’s lead, complete your previsit assignment, and most of all thoroughly enjoy the experience. The focus that has changed since I started in the early 1970s is that we are now zeroing in on the educational process for better student achievement. Also, WASC has worked diligently to ease the stress on the school staff.

RICHARD FRAGALE — WASC member since 1973 — Served on over 35 WASC teams

You may find that your new role in WASC will turn into a lifetime commitment to helping schools improve. You will also see some good ideas and programs that you will be able to take back to help improve student performance at your school. Finally I encourage you to relax and prepare to work very hard.



WASC has continued to evolve over the decades. I think that the most significant change has been the improvement of the process to focus on student learning outcomes, and measuring student performance and school improvement based on measurable data. The WASC improvement process is now a continuous cycle and provides a structure for school improvement as an ongoing process.

ROLLIN GRIDER — WASC member since 1980 — Served on over 62 WASC teams



Be prepared. Every hour a member can prepare before a visit is worth three hours during the visit. Your experience will be far more positive if you can focus on editing for accuracy rather than having to create and compose while under the tight timeline of a visit. Since 1980 when I did my first WASC visit, the accreditation process has continually evolved and adapted to provide schools a proven model to achieve school improvement and success.

JAMES JOHNSON — WASC member since 1980 — Served on over 30 WASC teams

WASC Words of Wisdom *Continued*



To new members: observe how students are engaged in the classroom and on campus. Talk with students. Ask them what they do in the classroom, what kind of labs do they have, how much homework is given, do they write a lot, is time allotted for class discussions, and do they feel challenged? Are their concerns acknowledged, both in the classroom and on campus? Try to put yourself in the shoes of the students. WASC has evolved from a ritualistic type, formula-driven assessment process into a dynamic, interactive process where the improvement of student achievement is the focus, thus *Focus on Learning*.

JOHN KEEGAN — WASC member since 1987 — Served on over 35 WASC teams

Perhaps the most important thing for a member is to realize that you are a vital member of the team with certain responsibilities:

- 1) Do your homework and be well-organized! The team counts on every member to be well-informed as this is a very collegial process.
- 2) Don't be afraid to ask questions and really listen to what others have to say about the school and the process.
- 3) There's always more than one way to "do it," so be willing to accept what others suggest and work together for the best outcome for the school.
- 4) Be open and transparent throughout your time on a committee.



JANET KNOEPEL — WASC member since 1988 — Served on over 50 WASC teams



Make sure you attend the training session; communicate frequently with your chair; come thoroughly prepared for the visit; and don't be afraid to ask questions. The *Focus on Learning* process has helped all schools to look for yearly, continuous improvement. The most successful schools in the accreditation process are schools that use *Focus on Learning* to always look for ways to improve!

PAT LICKISS — WASC member since 1988 — Served on over 25 WASC teams

For new or beginning chairpersons, my advice would be to follow the guidelines and time frames as set forth in the handbook. If all team members follow through, you should have a full draft of the Visiting Committee Report ready for discussion on the first day you meet with the entire team. Be sure that they come with no other commitments.

During my past 25 years of service, the greatest change has been the use of technology in presenting training sessions, the provision of templates of needed documents, the ability to contact both school and Visiting Committee members on a timely basis, and producing the final Visiting Committee Report at the end of the visit.



HENRY MORITA — WASC member since 1984 — Served on over 35 WASC teams



In the past you could almost complete the entire Visiting Committee Report by just reading the school's Self-Study Report. Since the emphasis is now on LEARNING, it is essential that you talk to the students, look at the results, and work with the school to develop an action plan that will help them continue to improve and meet the needs of all of their students.

The most rewarding experience was, after working hard with a school that was struggling to find their identity during their first full WASC visit on an action plan and getting all stakeholders involved, to be a part of the revisit committee three years later and see that the school took the recommendations to heart and implemented them and much more and is now providing a quality program for all students with representatives from all groups.

RICHARD PUPPIONE — WASC member since 1993 — Served on over 27 WASC teams



Notes to a new Visiting Committee member:

- Concentrate on their issues
- Do your part
- Watch and listen to learn
- Wear comfy shoes
- Enjoy the incredible experience

LOUISE ROBERTSON — WASC member since 1981 — Served on over 60 WASC teams

As I look back on more than 40 years of “doing WASCs” I can honestly attest to the simple truth: I’ve enjoyed every experience I’ve had with accreditation and I feel like I’ve done some important and valuable work for the institution I love so much — the American high school. To the frequently asked question: “What advice do you have for new chairs?” To all chairs, actually, my admonition is simple: Look always, first and foremost, for ways and means to help. In this day and age especially, rarely do schools need more criticism and additional comments of a negative thrust.



JAMES ROULSTEN — WASC member since 1970 — Served on over 80 WASC teams



My advice for new Visiting Committee members is to be prepared by staying in contact with your chairperson, thoroughly reading the self-study, and completing the pre-writing for your assigned sections. Then be prepared to enjoy yourself as you meet fellow committee members, the staff at the school, and the students. The three and one-half days of the visit will be the best professional development you have ever experienced!

WASC has become more student-centered. Earlier formats were more focused upon what teachers said they taught and now the focus is on what and how students learn. The changes have mirrored the change to standards-based material, instruction, and assessment.

VALENE STALEY — WASC member since 1987 — Served on over 35 WASC teams

It has truly been a professional privilege to be involved in the WASC process. Having been a team member and chair for numerous committees since 1975, I certainly learned early on the importance of doing your homework prior to the visit — i.e., read the entire Self-Study carefully, complete your preliminary writing, etc. You need to “know” the school you’re visiting before you arrive!



DEAN WELIN — WASC member since 1975 — Served on over 35 WASC teams



The importance of the schoolwide criteria cannot be overlooked when reviewing a school. The schoolwide criteria are broad, yet succinct, in their purpose. Two major changes have evolved over the years that have had a tremendous effect on schools. First, the move towards “continuous improvement” as a major focal point has helped schools consider that accreditation is a process, not an event. Second, the development of the schoolwide criteria based upon research has strengthened the outcome of the self-study and Visiting Committee review. My most memorable experience during an accreditation review has been when a school comes to understand the importance of data to drive school learning and operations.

WILLIAM WONG — WASC member since 1990 — Served on over 45 WASC teams

Attend the orientation. Read the WASC manual. Approach your visit with an open mind. Do not compare the school that you are visiting with yours or offer suggestions based on how you do things at your school. Placing greater emphasis on student learning and supporting objective data is a major improvement.

BRAN YAICH — WASC member since 1980 — Served on over 50 WASC teams



ACS WASC COMMISSIONERS

(listed by the organizations they represent)

Officers

Dale Mitchell, Chairperson
Harlan Lyso, Assistant Chairperson

Association of California School Administrators

Richard Bray
Rebecca Buettner
Martin Griffin
Mary F. Luebben
Dale Mitchell
Valene Staley
William Wong

Association of Christian Schools International

William Walner

California Association of Independent Schools

Damon Kerby

California Association of Private School Organizations

Kathy Ralston

California Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc. (PTA)

Rosaline Turnbull

California Department of Education

William Ellerbee

California Federation of Teachers

George Martinez

California School Boards Association

Jesus Holguin

California Teachers Association

Lorraine Richards

East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools

Harlan Lyso

Hawaii Association of Independent Schools

Robert Peters
Linda Reser

Hawaii Government Employees' Association

Nancy Soderberg

Hawaii State Department of Education

Gerry Madrazo

Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

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Postsecondary Education

Vacancy

Public Members

Shabaka Heru
Steve Malvini
Frederico Milton
Carl T. Takamura
Vacancy

Western Catholic Educational Association

John Collins
Susan Dillon
Patricia Livingston
Richard Sexton

Commission Update

The Commission is comprised of individuals representing the various constituencies of ACS WASC. The Commission convenes three times a year.

2011 Commission Meetings

Winter

January 31–February 1, 2011
San Diego, CA

Spring

May 2–3, 2011
Burlingame, CA

Summer

June 27–28, 2011
Burlingame, CA

ACS WASC Commission Members

Members who left the Commission this June include: Karen Clancy, Joyce Evans, and Sharon Loucks. We are deeply appreciative of the excellent service provided by these Commissioners and wish them well in their continued service to others.

ACS WASC welcomes the following new Commission members: Richard Bray, William Ellerbee, Martin Griffin, Jesus Holguin, Damon Kerby, William Walner, and Steve Malvini.



Awards given at ACS WASC Summer 2010 Commission Meeting
L-R: Karen Clancy, Joyce Evans, George Bronson,
Warren Stephenson, Sharon Loucks

WASC International School Update

By Harlan Lyso | Assistant Chair, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



The number of English language international schools that exist worldwide has been expanding dramatically. In the past year more than 350 new international schools have been established in Asia alone! A large percentage of these schools offer American style educational programs that prepare their students for entry into American universities. Companies with operations in Asia, sometimes in rather remote locations, need English language schools to serve the children of their employees and the assurance that the schools provide the quality educational services that a family would expect. When an international school successfully undertakes the rigorous WASC accreditation process, employees can confidently accept employment offers knowing that their children will have access to quality educational opportunities.

WASC has long provided exemplary services to international schools in East Asia. These schools vary in size from only a few elementary-aged children to nearly 4,000 K–12 students. They can be found in major cities such as Shanghai or Jakarta, but also in isolated company compounds in the middle of a jungle. Some schools serve largely host country nationals, while others serve students from more than 50 different countries. Regardless of its size, clientele, or location, if the school is truly international in orientation and is committed to continuous improvement, WASC supports the school's improvement efforts and validates quality educational programs through the accreditation process. WASC has earned a reputation in the region for the quality and scope of its accreditation process, and new schools regularly seek out WASC services.

ACS WASC Membership

The school membership of the Accrediting Commission grew 2% during the 2009–10 school year. Currently, approximately 182 new applicant schools are preparing for their initial accreditation visit with WASC.

EVALUATION AREA	# OF SCHOOLS 2007–08	# OF SCHOOLS 2008–09	# OF SCHOOLS 2009–10
California	3,474	3,589	3,630
Hawaii	189	189	189
Out of State	9	9	9
Pacific Islands			
American Samoa	10	10	10
Federated States of Micronesia	2	2	2
Guam	32	34	34
Northern Marianas	23	23	23
Marshall Islands	3	3	3
Palau	1	1	1
Africa	1	1	1
Australia	1	1	1
East Asia	149	163	202
Mexico	1	1	1
TOTAL	3,895	4,026	4,106

Dr. Harlan Lyso is WASC's assistant chair and EARCOS representative. Dr. Lyso is a well-respected international school leader, and he has served as president of the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas School and the Asia Pacific Activities Conference. The East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools (EARCOS) is an organization of member schools in East Asia that serves to inspire student learning and foster intercultural understanding, global citizenship, and exceptional educational practices within its learning community.

Office Update

Burlingame Office



L-R: Lino Gantan, Cris Lunny, Jess Whipple, Cynthia Newton, Jean Belmessieri, Lisa Blaylock, Alice Hauser, Susan Lange, Sheléne Peterson, Frances Rivette, Cristine Toti, Michelle Nunes, Joanne Cacicedo

Temecula Office



L-R: Michelle Allen, Emily Barton, Lee Duncan, Tiffany Thomas, Ginger Hovenic, Alicia Aauto

Staff News



Lee Duncan served for 30 years as a K–12 Christian school administrator, both in Illinois and in California. During these years he also served for eight years as the executive director of The Illinois Association of Christian Schools and twelve years as a member of the Illinois Advisory Committee to the Governor on Non-Public Schools. Dr. Duncan served as the dean of administration at The Master's College, a private Christian baccalaureate college located in Santa Clarita, CA. In 2010, he joined the Western Association of Schools and Colleges as the associate executive director. Lee is married to Nancy and together they have seven children, six boys and one girl — and now one granddaughter. They enjoy traveling, golf (Lee), marathon running (not Lee), and any activities which involve their children.



Ginger Hovenic is a proactive educator who has held various K-12 administrative positions. Dr. Hovenic served as the head of International University High School in London, an educational consultant for the U.S. Department of State's Office of Overseas Schools, an advisor to the Department of Education on the state and national level, and as a George Lucas Educational Fellow. She served on a number of local, state, and national education boards and taught at several colleges and universities. She served as president/CEO of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce Foundation, executive director of the Business Roundtable for Education, and the executive director and founder of San Diego County's Classroom of the Future Foundation. She has received numerous awards in the field of education. Ginger is married to Mike Hovenic, a soccer coach, and has two sons, and one grandson, Evan.



Michelle Nunes recently joined WASC and is working with the Members Desk in the Burlingame office. She was born and raised in Pacifica, CA. She is the mother of two daughters. Michelle enjoys spending time with her family and friends, reading, and outdoor activities. She worked as an administrative assistant for six years in the construction field and five years at the San Francisco Giants AT&T Ballpark.

Continue

By George Bronson, Ed.D. | Associate Executive Director, Operations (Retired), Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



Graduation speeches often slide by me with little notice since I have heard most themes repeatedly for the last fifty years or more. They generally have a certain sameness about them that fails to arouse my attention much less interest. A June commencement address did cause me to sit up and take notice though, perhaps because it was short but more likely because it was simple and

to the point. The theme focused on one word: "Continue." The remarks were directed toward both the graduates and the institution. Both would experience considerable change after the commencement exercises concluded, but both would need to continue: students to continue learning; the institution to continue its good work of teaching. Some may view commencement day as the end. Of course, it is not. It simply denotes the time when students, teachers, administrators, boards, and the institution's stakeholders are to continue — continue to learn; continue to teach, doing both very well.

WASC recently had a commencement exercise of sorts. Two of us graduated from being employees to being retirees. Dr. Warren Stephenson and I headed for the exit door on June 30. There were also several commissioners whose terms ended and

new commissioners are taking their places. During the ten-plus years I have served as Associate Executive Director, there has been almost a complete turnover of commissioners and there have been two executive directors. The commissioner turnover has been due almost entirely to the ending of terms and has occurred over several years. The change of executive director was due to a retirement.

Despite the many changes during the past decade, WASC seems to have an amazing capacity to continue its important work unfazed as the premier accrediting organization. It is a testament to the people associated with WASC — both employees and volunteers — that the organization is able to maintain an unwavering focus on its mission. It has been a distinct honor and privilege to have served as a member of the WASC employee team, and I am confident that all those affiliated with WASC will continue to provide exemplary leadership and support in encouraging schools to continue their *Focus on Learning*.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the incredible staff at both the Temecula and Burlingame offices without whose support I could have accomplished little. The outstanding leadership provided by Dr. Don Haught and Dr. David Brown set a tone that encouraged high standards and a desire to excel. Thanks to all of the thousands of volunteers who have been so supportive, willing to help whenever needed. It has been an incredible, memorable, fulfilling journey, because of all of you! Continue!



WASC Accreditation-Plus

Online Tools to Support Your School's Ongoing Accreditation Process



WASC Accreditation-Plus is an optional, fee-based program consisting of a suite of online tools within a dedicated and hosted website environment. The Accreditation-Plus program was designed to offer schools a modern, technological approach to organizing and managing the WASC self-study and ongoing improvement processes.

Visit the "Accreditation-Plus" page on the WASC website at www.acswasc.org or contact Cynthia Newton, Accreditation-Plus School Liaison, at (650) 548-4387 or cnewton@acswasc.org for additional information.



Accrediting Commission for Schools

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Volunteering: Serving on a WASC Visiting Committee



Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC

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WASC accreditation visits rely entirely on volunteers. Your support is greatly appreciated.

WASC Overview

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), one of six regional accrediting associations in the United States, is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and is known worldwide. WASC provides assistance to schools in California, Hawaii, the Pacific Islands, and East Asia, currently serving over 4,000 schools.

WASC's philosophy centers upon three beliefs: a school's goal is successful student learning; each school has a clear purpose and schoolwide student goals; and a school engages in external and internal evaluations as part of ongoing school improvement to support high-quality student learning.

In addition to its official title, WASC also stands for: *"We Are Student-Centered."*

Accreditation is integral to a school's perpetual cycle of assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring. The WASC accreditation process fosters excellence in elementary, secondary, and adult education by encouraging school improvement. WASC accreditation recognizes schools that meet an acceptable level of quality, in accordance with established, research-based WASC criteria.

Visiting Committees

WASC accreditation visits range from one-day initial visits to three- or four-and-a-half day full self-study reviews.

Visiting committees are composed of two to eight members, one of whom is the chairperson. A committee is comprised of educators representing a wide range of educational experience and expertise. Training workshops are provided and new members work closely with experienced chairs.

Visiting team members review the WASC criteria and study reports from the school in preparation for the visit. During the visit, the team observes the school in operation and other evidence; reviews student performance data; observes students engaged in learning; and dialogues individually and collectively with administrators, teachers, students, and other stakeholders. The visiting team then prepares a report outlining the team's findings for the school and WASC Commission.

"Serving as a visiting team member is by far the best professional development opportunity available in education today. Taking the time to see a school from all facets does so much for the perspective that we bring back to our own sites."

Shawn Marshall, WASC VC Member
Riverside, CA

Why Serve?

- Learn about a variety of educational strategies, approaches, and practices
- Observe programs in action
- Develop and cultivate new professional friends
- Provide insights and reflections as a fellow educator
- Work together to ensure the high achievement of all learners
- Demonstrate one's professional commitment to quality education
- Give back to the educational community

Please contact our office or visit the WASC website: www.acswasc.org for further information.

The WASC Volunteer Data Sheet can be found on the WASC website at www.acswasc.org/vc_volunteering.htm

WASC
Accrediting Commission for Schools



WASC Words 2010

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