Initial Visit Procedures Manual

ACS WASC Initial Visit Procedures for:

- **International Schools**

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS

2019 EDITION

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Contents

Preface iii
Background 1
Philosophy 1
Mission 2
International Accreditation Process 3
Conditions of Eligibility 5
Procedures 6
Initial Visit Status Options 8
ACS WASC International Criteria 9
Category A: Organization for Student Learning 11
Category B: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment 19
Category C: Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth 23
Category D: School Culture and Environment 25
Boarding Program 28
Key Terminology 30

Preface

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

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

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

Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Background

The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC), a world-renowned accrediting association and a regional accrediting agency in the United States, works closely with the Office of Overseas Schools under the U.S. Department of State.

ACS WASC extends its services to approximately 5,000 public, independent, church-related, and proprietary pre-K-12 and adult schools, works with 18 associations in joint accreditation processes, and collaborates with other international educational organizations.

ACS WASC works with public and private schools worldwide. It extends it services to schools in California, Hawaii, Guam, Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific Islands, Europe, and other parts of the world.

Philosophy

The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges believes that the goal of any school should be to provide for successful student learning. The philosophy of ACS WASC centers upon three beliefs: (1) a school's goal is successful student learning; (2) each school has a clear purpose and schoolwide student goals; and (3) a school engages in external and internal evaluations as part of continued school improvement to support student learning.

Therefore, the primary goals of accreditation are:

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

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

Mission

The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges advances and validates quality ongoing school improvement by supporting its private and public elementary, secondary, and postsecondary member schools to engage in a rigorous and relevant self-evaluation and peer review process that focuses on student learning.

Guiding Principles

The ACS WASC accreditation principles are embedded within the *Focus on Learning* (*FOL*) process and reflected in the ACS WASC Accreditation Cycle of Quality. These guiding principles enable a school to demonstrate:

- Total involvement and collaboration of all stakeholders
- A culture that nurtures and supports the well-being of all students
- Accomplishment of its vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes
- High achievement of all students in relation to district goals, schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards
- Use of multiple ways to analyze data about student achievement, including student and staff perceptions/interviews, examining student work, and observing students engaged in learning
- Evaluation of the program effectiveness in relation to 1) impact on student learning based on schoolwide learner outcomes, critical student learning needs, and academic standards; and 2) meeting an acceptable level of quality in accordance with the ACS WASC criteria
- Alignment of prioritized findings to a schoolwide action plan focusing on student achievement
- Ongoing improvement/accountability.

School's Vision, Mission, and Schoolwide Learner Outcomes Aligned with Global Competencies

An essential element of systemic school improvement is the collective vision on the part of the school's stakeholders for all students: what all students should know, understand, and be able to do to be globally competent citizens. International schools need to define what it means to prepare students to be internationally minded or globally competent and ensure there is understanding and commitment of all. What are the current and future learning needs of the students? What does it mean to be an educated person? What is the most effective preparation of students for their future? In addition, the schoolwide learner outcomes should include the identified critical learner needs of the students.

Global competencies include:

- The use of concepts, knowledge, skills and languages of various disciplines to research current global issues
- The understanding of the interdependence of economic, political, technological, environmental, and social systems worldwide
- The understanding of multiple perspectives
- The valuing of diversity
- The ability to communicate with multilingual skills, through fluency in reading, writing, speaking and listening and through the use of technologies
- Engaging responsibly in action and service to improve conditions both locally and globally
- The ability to function effectively in an interdependent world.

This vision and mission provide the school's foundation for establishing schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards which drive the instructional program and the support operations of the school.

International Accreditation Process

Initial Visit Process

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

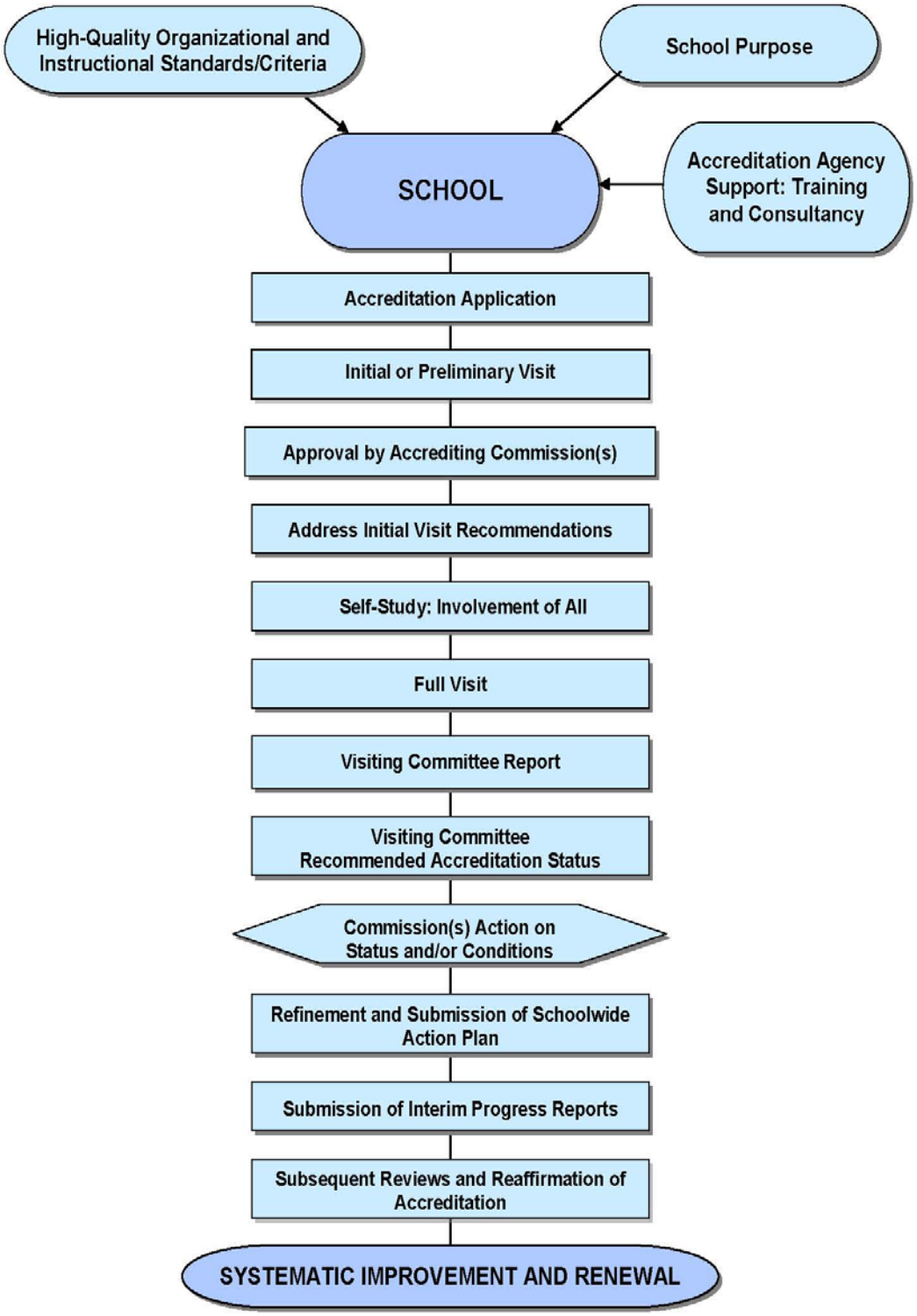
Self-Study Process/Full Visit

- Involvement of all stakeholders in the self-study process.
- Clarification of the school's purpose and the schoolwide learner outcomes.
- Assessment of student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the ACS WASC criteria.
- Development of a schoolwide action plan that addresses identified areas for improvement.
- Visiting committee validation and enhancement based on accreditation criteria/standards, self-study and findings from visit.

Follow-Up Process

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

ACCREDITATION: A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS



Conditions of Eligibility

To be considered for ACS WASC accreditation, the applicant school must meet the following conditions:

Legal Requirements

- International schools must meet the legal requirements of the jurisdiction for an international school [i.e., country (local and nationwide)] in which they are located in order for their application for ACS WASC accreditation to be considered. Based on the country, there may be restrictions to the type of passport held by the students enrolled. The legal authority which approves the school as an international school must be listed. A copy must be submitted with an English translation if necessary.

  Note: ACS WASC does not accredit programs or divisions within a school; there must be evidence that a school located within a school has separate operations, leadership, budget, curriculum, etc. in order to be eligible for ACS WASC accreditation.

Student Well-Being

- The school utilizes policies and procedures that protect students from abuse and neglect and afford a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop.

Student Learning: School Purpose and Program

- English is a major part of the instruction even though the school may be bilingual.
- The school has developed and published a clear statement of purpose (beliefs, core values, vision, mission, schoolwide learner outcomes) that reflect defined global competencies and form the basis of the educational program for every student.
- The school has an admissions policy compatible with the school's stated purpose.
- The school has a written well-developed curriculum appropriate to the organization's purpose as an internationally focused school preparing students to be globally competent.
- The course of study, as well as marking, grading and reporting procedures, facilitates student and faculty transfer to other schools of a similar type in other countries and within the United States. The international curriculum is meets the minimum requirements for admission to North America and other worldwide English-speaking programs in colleges and universities.
- The student body is oriented toward programs commonly found in the United States and other English-speaking countries, including those of an extra-curricular or co-curricular nature.
- Programs of studies include courses dealing with the history, culture, and language of the host country and region, in addition to those that cover other parts of the world.

School Governance, Leadership, and Staff

- The governing body is not subordinated solely to a national government or a central ministry, but is a local entity responsive to the needs of the users of the school, i.e., students, parents, faculty.
- The school has employed a chief administrative and instructional leader, who is qualified for the position.
- The school has qualified instructional staff for all the subject and program/grade levels. The majority of teachers are fluent in English and potentially other languages. In addition the qualified staff members have had training and experience in the facilitation of English language acquisition in the areas of reading, writing, listening and speaking.
- The school has an overall schoolwide action plan that includes strategies and approaches to measure student progress toward meeting the schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards in order to ensure students are globally competent.
- The school has developed an adequate financial base to give reasonable assurance of continuing financial stability.

School Operating Minimum Requirements

- The school must be in at least the second semester of operation, with students, teachers, and administration in place.
- School enrollment must reach a minimum of 6 full-time students.
- The school's program must include at least two grade levels. **Note**: An exception would be a new high school that begins with only grade 9 or grade 10.

Procedures

The ACS WASC initial visit procedures are as follows:

- An international school seeking accreditation will complete an "ACS WASC International Application" and submit it to ACS WASC with a $500 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 Application is processed, the school will be informed regarding its eligibility to continue with the accreditation process. A pre-initial visit may be required.
- 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 school report, ACS WASC will arrange for a two-member, two-day visit to the school. Initial visits to newly established schools will not occur prior to the

second semester of operation, i.e., a spring visit if a school opens in the fall. 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 its readiness for initial accreditation. The school will be notified of the Commission's action.

- If the Commission's action is unfavorable and the school is not granted affiliation, the school may reapply when, in its judgment, it meets the conditions of eligibility.
- If the Commission's action is favorable, the school will be granted either initial accreditation or candidacy for a period not to exceed three years. It is expected that the school will conduct a self-study and participate in an accreditation visit during the third year.
- Schools that are granted candidacy status are to submit a first-year progress report addressing the visiting committee recommendations indicating the progress being made in meeting the recommendations of the initial visiting committee and noting any substantial changes in the organization or operation of the school.
- ACS WASC initial visit fees for international schools for the 2019–20 school year are:

Application Fee	$500
Initial Visit Administrative Fee	$1,500*
Annual membership fee (high schools, intermediate, and K-12 schools)	$1,750
Annual membership fee (elementary)	$1,500

* International schools and schools in the Pacific Islands are charged actual travel costs in addition to the initial visit fee.

A detailed fee schedule can be found on the Fee Schedule page of the ACS WASC website.

Schools that have been approved for <u>initial</u> 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 <u>candidates</u> 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 accreditation stamp on transcripts or school advertising.

Initial Visit Status Options

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

1. **Initial** accreditation is granted to schools that meet the organizational and support criteria for full accreditation and have a history and support system which indicate a high-quality program that can be sustained into the foreseeable future.

2. **Candidacy for accreditation** is a status which indicates that an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward, but does not assume, accreditation. The candidate for accreditation classification is designed for institutions which are not yet ready for the full evaluation based on the ACS WASC criteria for accreditation. The institution must provide evidence of sound planning, provide evidence of resources to implement these plans, and appear to have the potential for attaining its goals within a reasonable time.

   A candidate school is required to submit an annual report and is expected to apply for full accreditation by the third year of candidacy. Candidacy status shall expire at the end of three years. By the end of three years, the school in candidacy status should conduct a full self-study or host a second one-day visit to determine if the school should remain in candidacy for accreditation.

   An extension of candidacy status may be given once for one additional year pending a positive one-day visit or when deemed necessary by the President of the Commission. In some limited circumstances, the President is authorized to change a school's "Candidacy" status to "Initial Accreditation" when conditions at the school have been sufficiently enhanced (based on the Initial Visit Rubric) to justify such a change. While an Initial Visit decision on candidacy may not be appealed, the Commission's decision to later withhold candidacy status following the grant of such status may be appealed in accordance with Policy A4.

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

Initial accreditation and candidacy each carry a maximum three-year period, before the end of which schools must conduct a self-study and participate in a full accreditation visit.

ACS WASC International Criteria

The criteria are organized into five categories:

- Organization for Student Learning
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth
- School Culture and Environment
- Boarding Program

The criteria and indicators organized by categories are provided on the following pages. Schools respond to questions regarding the criteria and provide supporting information. A school description form is sent to the school for completion.

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 accreditation.

Category A:
Organization for Student Learning

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

Indicators

Beliefs and Philosophy: The written mission and vision reflects the beliefs and philosophy of the international school and its constituency**.**

Purpose, Schoolwide Learner Outcomes, and Profile Data: The student/community profile data and identified global competencies have impacted the development of the school's vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes**.**

Involvement of All: The school has a process for involving representatives of the entire school community in the defining of global competencies and the development/refinement of the core values, mission, vision, and schoolwide learner outcomes**.**

Consistency of Purpose, Schoolwide Learner Outcomes, and Program: There is a strong degree of consistency between the school core values, vision, mission, the schoolwide learner outcomes, and the school program that reflects the school's explanation of global competencies.

Communication about Vision, Mission, and Schoolwide Learner Outcomes: The school has means to publicize the vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes to the students, parents, and other members of the school community.

Regular Review/Revision: The school has a process for regular review/revision of the school's vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes based on current and future learner needs and other local and global trends and conditions.

Category A:
Organization for Student Learning

A2. Governance Criterion: The governing authority (a) adopts policies which are consistent with the school's mission and vision and support the achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes, i.e., global competencies, (b) delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff, and (c) monitors results.

Indicators

Written Procedures and Coherent Practices: The governing authority/ownership has written procedures and coherent practices that define their roles and responsibilities.

Pretraining of Potential Board Members: Individuals who seek board membership or are being considered as appointees by the board will have some form of training in the principles and skills essential to the effectiveness of the international school board.

Relationship to Professional Staff: There is clear understanding about the relationship between the governing authority and the responsibilities of the professional staff. The governing authority limits its actions to policy making and strategic planning — authorizing the administration to implement its decisions.

Relationship of Policies: The governing authority's policies and financial/educational plans are directly connected to the school's vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes that focus on student achievement of global competencies and the governing authority is involved in their regular review and refinement.

Involvement of Governing Authority: The governing authority is involved in the regular review and refinement of the school's vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes. The governing authority uses a variety of strategies to remain current in research-based knowledge about effective schools.

Professional Development of Governing Authority/Ownership: Governing authority/ownership will participate in professional development that will enhance their knowledge and skills essential to effective international school governance. The governing authority/ownership uses a variety of strategies to remain current in research-based knowledge about effective schools.

School Community Understanding: The school community understands the governing authority's role.

Stakeholder Involvement: The governing authority/ownership consistently seeks and considers the stakeholders views and gains in-depth knowledge about the school.

Board's Evaluation/Monitoring Procedures: There is clarity of the evaluation and monitoring procedures carried out by the governing board, including the review of student performance, overall school programs and operations, and the fiscal health of the school.

Complaint and Conflict Resolution Procedures: The established governing board/school's complaint and conflict resolution procedures as they apply to the school's stakeholders are effective.

Evaluation Procedures: The governing authority has clearly defined procedures for the evaluation of the school leadership, i.e., Head of School.

Evaluation of Governing Authority: The governing authority evaluates its processes and procedures.

Category A:
Organization for Student Learning

A3. School Leadership Criterion: The school leadership (1) makes decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energies of the school on student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes, i.e., global competencies, (2) empowers the staff, and (3) encourages commitment, participation, and shared accountability for student learning in a global environment.

Indicators

Defined Responsibilities, Practices, etc.: The school has administrator and faculty written policies, charts, and handbooks that define responsibilities, operational practices, decision-making processes, and relationships of leadership and staff.

Existing Structures: The school has existing structures for internal communication, planning, and conflict resolution.

Involvement of Staff: The school leadership has processes and procedures for involving staff in shared responsibility, collaborative structures and actions, and accountability to focus ongoing improvement on student learning and teaching in a global environment.

Evaluation of Existing Processes: The school leadership regularly reviews the existing processes to determine the degree to which actions of the leadership and staff focus on successful student learning and teaching in a global environment.

Child Protection: The school has clearly defined leadership responsibilities for child safety and duty of care.

Interconnectedness of the School to the World: The school leadership involves staff in assessing the school's interconnectedness to the world to promote a globally minded culture.

Category A:
Organization for Student Learning

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

Indicators

Employment Policies/Practices: The school has clear employment policies/practices related to qualification requirements of staff.

Qualifications of Staff: The school reviews all information regarding staff background, training, and preparation, including international expertise.

Child Protection: The school has recruitment policies and executes rigorous recruitment procedures that ensure all employees and volunteers are of sound moral character and are suitable people to work with children and young adults. These procedures may include criminal records/background checks, training, and/or other such means as may be suitable. The school has developed and adopted a code of conduct and written guidelines for appropriate behavior of adults towards children and children towards other children. All faculty, staff, volunteers and contractors agree to abide by this code of conduct. The school provides training for all faculty and staff in the implementation of child protection policies.

Maximum Use of Staff Expertise: The school has a process to assign staff members and provide appropriate orientation for all assignments, including online instruction and specialized programs so that the expertise of the staff members is maximized in relation to impact on quality student learning.

Defining and Understanding Practices/Relationships: The school has clear administrator and faculty written policies, charts, and handbooks that define responsibilities, operational practices, decision-making processes, and relationships of leadership and staff.

Staff Actions/Accountability to Support Learning: The school evaluates the effectiveness of the processes and procedures for involving staff in shared responsibility, actions, and accountability to support student learning throughout all programs. This includes an evaluation of the collegial strategies used to implement innovations and encourage improvement, such as shadowing, coaching, observation, mentoring, and group presentations.

Support of Professional Development: The school effectively supports professional development/learning with time, personnel, material, and fiscal resources to facilitate all students achieving the academic standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes. Teachers are involved in experiences such as visits, exchanges, and professional development to strengthen their understanding of global competencies. The school supports professional learning of the staff members that develops their use of important skills that are inherent in developing the global competencies of the students; these include collaboration, communication, creativity, and problem-solving.

Supervision and Evaluation: The school implements effective supervision and evaluation procedures in order to promote professional growth of staff in 21st century skills and thinking. Teachers regularly reflect on their approaches to develop global competencies in the students.

Measurable Effect of Professional Development: There are effective operating processes that determine the measurable effect of professional development, coaching, and mentoring on student performance.

Category A:
Organization for Student Learning

A5. School Improvement Process Criterion: The school leadership facilitates school improvement which (a) is driven by plans of action that will enhance quality learning for all students, (b) has school community support and involvement, (c) effectively guides the work of the school, and (d) provides for accountability through monitoring of the schoolwide action plan.

Indicators

Broad-Based and Collaborative: The school's planning process is broad-based, collaborative, and has commitment of the stakeholders, including the staff, students, and parents.

School Plan Correlated to Student Learning: The school's action plan is directly correlated to the analysis of student achievement data about the critical student learning needs, schoolwide learner outcomes, and academic standards.

Systems Alignment: Within the school there is evidence of systems alignment in areas such as professional goals, teacher evaluation, and strategic planning for the purpose of ongoing school improvement.

Correlation between all Resources, Schoolwide Learner Outcomes, and Action Plan: There is correlation between allocation of time/fiscal/personnel/material resources and the implementation, monitoring, and accomplishing of the schoolwide action plan.

Category A:
Organization for Student Learning

A6. Resources Criterion: The resources available to the school are sufficient to sustain the school program and are effectively used to carry out the school's purpose and student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes, i.e., global competencies.

Indicators

Allocation Decisions: There is a relationship between the decisions about resource allocations, the school's vision, mission, and student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards. The school leadership and staff are involved in the resource allocation decisions.

Practices: The school develops an annual budget, has an annual audit, and at all times conducts quality business and accounting practices, including protections against mishandling of institutional funds.

Facilities: The school's facilities are adequate, safe, functional, and well-maintained and support the school's mission, desired learner goals, and educational program.

Child Protection: Due regard is given to building and facility design, layout and use to ensure best practice in child safety and protection

Instructional Materials and Equipment: The policies and procedures for acquiring and maintaining adequate instructional materials and equipment, such as textbooks, other printed materials, audio-visual, support technology, manipulatives, and laboratory materials are effective.

Well-Qualified Staff: Resources are available to enable the hiring, nurturing, and ongoing professional development of a well-qualified staff for all programs such as online instruction and college/career.

Category A:
Organization for Student Learning

A7. Resource Planning Criterion: The governing authority and the school leadership execute responsible resource planning for the future.

Indicators

Long-range Resource Plan: The governing authority and the school has developed and implemented a long-range resource plan. The governing authority and the school have a process for regular examination of this plan to ensure the continual availability of appropriate resources that support the school's vision, mission, and student learning of schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards.

Use of Research and Information: The governing authority and the school use research and information to form the master resource plan.

Involvement of Stakeholders: Stakeholders are involved in the future planning.

Informing: The governing authority and school leaders are involved in informing the public and appropriate governmental authorities about the financial needs of the organization.

Marketing Strategies: The school has marketing strategies to support the implementation of the developmental program.

Category B:
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

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

Indicators

Current Educational Research and Thinking: The comprehensive and sequential documented international curriculum is modified as needed to address current educational research; other relevant community, national, and international issues; and the needs of all students.

Academic Standards for Each Area: The school provides a comprehensive and sequential documented international curriculum that is articulated within and across grade levels for the improvement of programs, learning, and teaching.

Embedded Global Perspectives: The school leadership and certificated staff ensure that global competencies, perspectives, and issues are embedded within the curricular areas.

Congruence: There is congruence between the actual concepts and skills taught, the academic standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes.

Student Work — Engagement in Learning: The school's examination of representative samples of student work show consistent critical analysis and application of thought in different contexts. Observation of student engagement in learning demonstrates students' awareness of their own learning as well as the purpose of the work connected to a standards-based curriculum and the schoolwide learner outcomes.

Accessibility of all Students to Curriculum: A rigorous, relevant, and coherent curriculum that prepares students to be global citizens is accessible to all students through all courses/programs offered. The school examines the demographics and situation of students throughout the class offerings. The school's instructional practices and other activities facilitate access and success for all students toward achieving the standards.

Acceptable Student Achievement: The school identifies and defines performance indicators in order to monitor acceptable student progress toward achievement of the academic standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes.

Integration among Disciplines: There is integration among disciplines at the school and, if applicable, integration of outsourced curriculum into the program for which curricular integrity, reliability, and security is maintained.

Curricular Review, Revision, and Evaluation: The school assesses its curriculum review, evaluation, and review processes for each program area, including graduation requirements, credits, grading policies, and homework policy to determine the impact of these on providing a challenging, coherent, and relevant curriculum for all students.

Collaborative Work: The administrators and teachers use various collaborative strategies to examine curriculum design and student work in order to refine lessons, units and/or courses.

Policies — Rigorous, Relevant, Coherent Curriculum: The school assesses the curriculum and its rigor, relevancy, and coherency after examination of policies regarding course completion, credits, grading policies, homework, use of technology, etc.

Articulation and Follow-up Studies: The school conducts student follow-up studies that provide insight to the effectiveness of the instruction to prepare students for pursuing further education, entering the work force, or meeting their personal goals.

Category B:
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

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

Indicators

Research-based Knowledge: The administrators and teachers use a variety of approaches to remain current in research-based professional knowledge and apply the knowledge to improve teaching and learning. All students regardless of background and ability are actively involved in the learning that is based on the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards.

Planning Processes: The planning processes, including the use of formative assessment results, focus on the engagement of all student activity at a high level of learning consistent with the academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes, i.e., global competencies.

Professional Collaboration: Administrators and teachers use various collaborative strategies to examine curricular design and student work to improve learning and teaching, including demonstrating critical thinking, problem solving, knowledge, and application. This would include examples of the selection of the instructional approaches based on the learning purpose(s) desired.

Professional Development: The school uses ongoing professional development to enhance the curriculum and improve learning and teaching. This includes learning through worldwide partnerships with other teachers and schools.

Challenging and Varied Instructional Strategies: The teachers strengthen student understanding and achievement of the learning outcomes, including targeted global competencies, through the use of a variety of instructional strategies that are selected on the basis of the learning purpose(s) and effectively engage students at a high level of learning. This includes the integration of multimedia and technology as appropriate and the linking of students' experiences to the world.

Technological Integration: Teachers systematically integrate technology within the school so that all students develop a wide range of technological skills.

Evidence of Results based upon Challenging Learning Experiences: Students working and their work demonstrate critical and creative thinking, problem solving, knowledge attainment, and application skills.

Student Understanding of Learning Expectations: The students know the standards/expected performance levels for each area of study.

Student Perceptions: Interviews and dialogue with representative students inform the degree to which learning experiences are relevant in preparing students for college, career, and life.

Student Needs: Teachers address student needs through the instructional approaches used.

Student Use of Resources: Students use resources for learning beyond the limits of the textbook such as effective use of collaborative activities, technology, library/media resources and community resources and information from various cultures and languages.

Category B:
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

B3. How Assessment Is Used Criterion — Reporting and Accountability Processes: The school leadership and staff use effective assessment processes to collect, disaggregate, analyze and report school performance data to all stakeholders about student progress toward accomplishing the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards. The analysis of the data guides the school's programs and processes, the allocation and usage of sources, and forms the basis for the development of the action plan.

Indicators

Professionally Acceptable Assessment Process: The school leadership and instructional staff use effective assessment processes to collect, disaggregate, analyze, and report school performance data to appropriate stakeholders.

Basis for Determination of Performance Levels: The school leadership and instructional staff determine the basis for students' grades, growth and performance levels to ensure consistency across and within grade levels and content levels.

Modifications Based on Assessment Results: The school uses assessment results to modify the school program, professional development activities, and make decisions about resource allocations to demonstrate a results-driven continuous process.

Monitoring of Student Growth: The school has an effective system to monitor all students' progress toward meeting the academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes.

Reporting Student Progress: There are effective processes to inform the board, parents, and other stakeholders about student progress toward achieving the academic standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes, i.e., global competencies.

Security Systems: The school employs security systems that maintain the integrity of the assessment process.

Category B:
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

B4. How Assessment Is Used Criterion — Classroom Assessment Strategies: Teacher and student uses of assessment are frequent and integrated into the learning/teaching process. The assessment results are the basis for (a) measurement of each student's progress toward the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards; and (b) regular evaluation, modification, and improvement of curriculum and instructional approaches to support the educational progress of every student.

Indicators

Appropriate Assessment Strategies: The teachers regularly use appropriate assessment strategies to measure student progress toward acquiring understanding of a specific body of knowledge or skills, such as critical thinking and communication skills; examples of assessment strategies include essays, portfolios, individual or group projects, tests, etc. (This includes the global competency areas of students being able to investigate the world, recognize multiple perspectives, communicate ideas effectively to diverse groups, and take action to improve the situation.)

Demonstration of Student Achievement: A range of examples of student work and other assessments demonstrate student achievement of the academic standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes, including those with special needs.

Modification/Decisions based on Assessment Data: Assessment data is collected and analyzed and used to make changes and decisions about curriculum, instruction, professional development activities, and resource allocation. Teachers modify and revise the curriculum and instruction as a result of student assessment, both collectively and individually.

Teacher Feedback to Students: Teachers provide timely, specific and descriptive feedback in order to support students in achieving learning targets, academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes.

Category C:
Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

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

Indicators

Adequate Personalized Support: The school has available adequate services, including intervention and referral services, to support all students in such areas as health, career and personal counseling, and academic assistance. There is appropriate application of assessment tools and processes for determining interventions.

Strategies Used for Student Growth/Development: Strategies are used by the school leadership and staff to develop personalized approaches to learning and alternative instructional options which allow access to and progress in the rigorous standards-based curriculum. Examples of strategies include: level of teacher involvement with all students, a curriculum that promotes inclusion, processes for regular review of student and schoolwide profiles, and processes and procedures for interventions that address retention and redirection.

Support Services and Learning: The school leadership and staff ensure that the support services and related activities have a direct relationship to student involvement in learning, e.g., within and outside the classroom, for all students.

Co-Curricular Activities: School leadership and staff link curricular and co-curricular activities to the academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes, i.e., global competencies. Students have the opportunity to communicate with diverse audiences locally and worldwide. Students contribute to local and/or global actions and service opportunities.

Student Involvement in Curricular/Co-Curricular Activities: The school has an effective process for regularly evaluating the level of student involvement in curricular/co-curricular activities and student use of support services. This includes students involved in projects on global issues, joining networks, and exchanges.

Student Perceptions: The school is aware of the student view of student support services through such approaches as interviewing and dialoguing with student representatives of the school population.

Category D:
School Culture and Environment

D1. School Environment and Child Protection Criterion: The school has a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school's purpose and is characterized by respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student.

Indicators

Caring, Concern, High Expectations: The school demonstrates caring, concern, and high expectations for students in an environment that honors individual and cultural differences.

Student Self-Esteem: The school fosters student self-esteem through high expectations for each student and recognition of successes.

Collaborative Culture of Mutual Respect, Inquiry and Communication: A collaborative culture of mutual respect, inquiry and effective communication among and between staff, students, and parents is evident. There is understanding of the importance of cross-cultural communication in improving teaching, learning, and management.

Teacher Support and Encouragement: There is a culture that provides support and encouragement for teachers to use innovative approaches to enhance student learning.

Safe, Clean, and Orderly Environment: The school has existing policies, regulations and uses its resources to ensure a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning, including internet safety.

Child Protection: The school has developed and adopted an appropriate definition of child abuse including physical, emotional or sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, neglect and commercial exploitation and inappropriate behavior of children towards other children. The school has specific child protection policies, practices and faculty and staff training programs to ensure the safety and welfare of all students within boarding facilities, homestay and residential arrangements and on excursions, trips and student exchanges. These policies and practices are reviewed regularly. The school has a scheduled program of regular, systematic professional training for volunteers, contractors, faculty and staff on student safeguarding, child abuse prevention, recognition, intervention and reporting. The school has in place formal learning programs through the school experience related to child protection. The school has developed structured procedures for reporting suspected or disclosed maltreatment or abuse and adopts a formal policy identifying actions to be taken, including informing appropriate authorities. The school is cognizant of cultural expectations and complies with the legal and ethical expectations and requirements regarding child abuse within the country in which it operates.

Category D:
School Culture and Environment

D2. Parent/Community Involvement Criterion: The school leadership employs a wide range of strategies to ensure that parental and community involvement is integral to the school's established support system for students.

Indicators

Regular Parent Involvement: The school implements strategies and processes for the regular involvement of parents and the community, including being active partners in the learning/teaching process for all programs. The school involves non-English speaking parents and/or online parents.

Use of Community Resources: The school uses community resources of the host country to support students such as professional services, partnerships, speakers, etc.

Parent/Community and Student Achievement: The school ensures that the parents and school community understand student achievement of the academic standards/schoolwide learner outcomes through the curricular/co-curricular program. The school works with the parents to help them understand the focus on global competencies and their involvement as partners in the learning.

Boarding Program

School Boarding Program

The school's boarding program embraces the school's purpose, complements the school's program, and enhances the personal and academic growth of the students.

- The boarding program embraces the school's vision, mission, and supports student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes.
- There is a body that holds the boarding program accountable to goals, policies, and procedures that are well-documented and aligned with the school's mission, vision, and schoolwide learner outcomes. There is a well-established appeal process related to decisions made related to students in the boarding program.
- There is evidence of full support and understanding by the governing authority, leadership, teachers, staff, students, parents, guardians, and community of the expectations of the boarding program.
- The implementation of operational procedures and systems support the goals of the boarding program and include specific health and safety boarding expectations include code of conduct and consequences.
- The staff members of the boarding program are qualified for their roles and responsibilities with the maturity, character, skills, knowledge, and experience appropriate to the age and needs of the boarders to ensure a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment.
- There is an ongoing supervision, evaluation, and professional learning process for all boarding staff.
- There is support of the needs of all staff members of the boarding staff to ensure they can address the goals of the program.
- The culture of the boarding program is responsive to and respectful of the diversity and personal and academic needs of the students.
- The staff of the boarding program works closely and communicates regularly with the parents and/or guardians regarding all aspects to support the students who are boarding. This includes clear expectations and monitoring for those under guardianship or legal authority of the school.
- There is a well-planned program of academic and personal support that is integral to the program for the day students and overall supports the school's mission, vision, and schoolwide learner outcomes. This includes the boarding staff's responsibility to communicate with teachers and to provide emotional support through counseling and/or advocate support.
- There is a process for an ongoing evaluation of all aspects of the boarding program in relation to the school's purpose; this evaluation supports staff implementation of a well-developed short- and long-range plan.
- The functioning boarding facilities are regularly assessed based on the school's purpose, specifically in the following areas: the ratio of staff to students; the number of students per adequate individual living and study quarters; and the basic services such as medical support, laundry, meals, transport, technology, etc.

Key Terminology

To ensure common understanding of the language that is used in the criteria and the *Focus on Learning* process, the following explanations are provided and will be operational for *Focus on Learning*.

Accreditation

A process of ongoing school improvement that examines all aspects of the school program and operations in relation to the impact on high-quality student learning. This is in Governance, Leadership, Curriculum, Student Learning, and Resources. A school conducts a self-study that serves as the basis for review by a visiting committee of professional educators who assist the school in assessing the school's effectiveness of the school's program and operations and their impact on student learning. The school is assessed on the degree to which the school is meeting the ACS WASC criteria and related accreditation factors that emphasize the important aspects of the ongoing school improvement process.

Accreditation Status

A status granted by the ACS WASC Commission within the ACS WASC Accreditation Cycle of Quality whereby the school demonstrates the capacity, commitment, and competence to support high-quality student learning and ongoing school improvement. The status is based on the evidence contained in the school's report and reviewed during the school visit that indicates the following: the degree to which high achievement by all students is occurring; the capacity of the school to implement, monitor, and accomplish the action plan aligned to the areas of greatest need impacting student achievement.

Accreditation Factors Based on Accreditation Principles

The important aspects of the accreditation process based on the accreditation principles: 1) accomplishment of the vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes; 2) high achievement of all students in relation to schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards; 3) use of multiple ways to analyze data about student achievement; 4) evaluation of the program effectiveness based on schoolwide learner outcomes (critical student learning needs) and academic standards; 5) alignment of prioritized findings to a schoolwide action plan focusing on student achievement; 6) ongoing improvement/accountability; and 7) total involvement and collaboration of all stakeholders.

All Students

A reference to the belief that all students can learn at high levels and should have sufficient support to enable them to achieve the schoolwide learner outcomes. Every student enrolled in the school, regardless of subpopulation or unique characteristics, is included.

Challenging Relevant Coherent Curriculum

A demanding curriculum that is viewed as a broadly conceived concept and is based on themes and concepts that encourages students to achieve at high levels, to use "higher order thinking skills," and to apply and synthesize knowledge that prepares them to be globally competent.

Critical Student Learning Need

Based on the analysis of multiple sources of data, an identified priority student learning need for which immediate attention must be given throughout the analysis of the school based on the ACS WASC criteria and the resulting schoolwide action plan.

Current Educational Research and Thinking

Research and related discourse and publications on education and learning. Examples include the work of such authors as Richard Elmore, Doug Reeves, Grant Wiggins, Jay McTighe, Michael Fullan, and Robert Marzano; publications on state, national, and subject area standards; and government, business and industry research.

Online Instruction: Definitions applicable to all types of online instruction

Asynchronous Learning: A learning environment in which everyone participates at the different times. Examples are email, online discussion forums, message boards, blogs, podcasts, etc.

Synchronous Learning: A learning environment in which everyone participates at the same time.

Online Instruction: Education in which instruction and content are delivered primarily over the Internet for course completion and earned credit.

Correspondence Education: Consists of stand-alone educational materials or software, such as broadcast television, radio, video cassettes, or educational software that is completed by students in their own home at their own pace.

Distance Education: General term for any type of educational activity in which the participants, student and teacher, are at a distance from each other.

Blended Learning: Blended learning is any time a student learns in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home and learns at least in part through online delivery with some element of student control.

Online Support Materials: Refers to the general use of online resources by teachers in the traditional classroom environment. This use of online materials in classrooms is a supplement to instruction and is not considered online instruction that leads to course completion and the awarding of credit.

Expectations of Self-Study

Through completing the *Focus on Learning* self-study process the school will have accomplished:

1. The involvement and collaboration of all staff and other stakeholders to support student achievement

2. The clarification and measurement of what all students should know, understand, and be able to do through schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards

3. The analysis of data about students and student achievement

4. The assessment of the entire school program and its impact on student learning in relation to schoolwide learner outcomes (including critical student learning needs), academic standards, and ACS WASC criteria.

Portfolio

A collection of representative student work.

Purpose

A clarification of the beliefs, vision, and mission held by members of the school community about what the school can do for students with respect to knowledge, skills, and understandings through the school program.

School Community

The school community includes (1) local business and industry, educational institutions, agencies, and service organizations; (2) parents, students, school board; and (3) all employees.

Schoolwide Action Plan

The overall improvement strategies as a result of the self-study process that is reviewed and refined regularly based on progress and impact on student learning. Schools are guided by one action plan that has integrated all initiatives.

Schoolwide Learner Outcome

What each student should know, understand and be able to do upon exit (e.g., graduation) from the school, or by the time the student completes the planned program in order to be globally competent. These learner outcomes are collaboratively developed and represent the focus of the entire school community based on current and future learning needs of the students. These global outcomes must be assessed as they complement the school's vision, mission, and academic standards.

Special Needs

Students who need additional physical and/or mental support services to accomplish the schoolwide learner outcomes at their maximum potential.

Standards-based System

Curriculum, instruction, assessment, and reporting to parents, students, and the public are all aligned to a common set of standards.

Self-Study Coordinator (SC)

The facilitator/leader of the school's accreditation process in collaboration with the school leadership.

Stakeholders

A general term referring all members of a school community: administrators or leadership, governing board, teachers, support staff, students, parents, etc.

ACS WASC Criteria, Indicators, and Prompts

ACS WASC criteria are research-based guidelines for school improvement that focus on student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards. **Indicators** highlight important points of the ACS WASC criteria. **Prompts** are analytical questions that help guide the analysis, examination, and evaluation of the school in relation to the ACS WASC criteria and indicators; this results in specific findings supported by evidence and the determination of strengths.

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