

ACS WASC Words 2015-2016

“Education is not preparation for life;
education is life itself.”

John Dewey



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ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Mission

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

Territory

ACS WASC extends its services worldwide to approximately 4,600 public, private, independent, church-related, and proprietary pre-K–12 schools. ACS WASC provides assistance to schools located in California, Hawaii, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Fiji, Asia, and other parts of the world.





Thoughts from the Chair Change and Consistency

Damon Kerby | Chairperson, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



For those of you who have spent a professional lifetime in schools, you know well that it is perpetually a time of transition. We see school improvement efforts — smart, research-based, and always well-intentioned — make some headway in helping students learn. Many of the lessons from them are internalized and institutionalized,

and we move on, embracing new programs and new paradigms. Even today, with the move to more locally controlled funding and the embracing of Common Core Standards, we work continuously to find better ways to organize schools and better ways to deliver and assess student learning.

In the midst of this continuous state of transition, there has been one constant for schools in California, Hawaii, and many accredited international schools. For the past fifty-plus years, the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) has supported, charted, and worked to ensure school improvement through the vicissitudes of change and many eras of thoughtful, yet sometimes tumultuous, reform. Continuous school improvement and regular introspection through rigorous self-study and peer visits have been the hallmarks of ACS WASC; all the while the Commission has kept a laser-like focus on student learning.

The ACS WASC Commission, with the help of a wonderfully capable professional staff in both Burlingame and Temecula, continues to navigate the waters of educational change and works to help the schools it accredits find what is valuable, collaborate as whole communities to incorporate that value, and chart the effects of those changes on student learning. We can do our work only with the help of hundreds and hundreds of teachers, administrators, and community members on visiting committees each year. We represent and accredit not

only public schools, but charter schools, religious schools, independent schools, international schools, adult schools, and supplementary education centers/programs.

As the new chairperson of the ACS WASC Commission, I am proud to be part of this effort and deeply grateful to all the ACS WASC staff and the many visiting committee members who carry out our mission on a daily basis.

Good educators are by nature change-agents, visionaries, and tinkerers. As educators, we will constantly be seeking new ways to improve student learning and better ways to organize our schools. Through all the change that is yet to come, know that ACS WASC is staying abreast of what transpires, but using time-tested principles to assist schools, to support their development, and to ensure quality for the students.



Executive Director's Update ACS WASC Accreditation: Creating a Powerful System

Fred Van Leuven, Ed.D. | Executive Director, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



Schools and district communities have begun to use the ACS WASC process in a new way. Instead of only looking at the individual school completing its self-study, district and school leadership teams are beginning to tie the process to their entire K-12 system. The result: elementary and middle schools are coming on board.

Instantly there is a process to review K-12 learning once the elementary and middle schools are aligned with their high school's accreditation cycle. As a result, there are many more successful studies about transitions between grade levels, attendance, student discipline, etc., and the list goes on.

Some of the findings from schools and districts have been interesting and surprising. For example:

- One middle school was shocked to discover that they were preparing their students for their continuation school.
- Elementary school math intervention programs thought to be meeting student needs were actually found to be detrimental to middle school progress.
- Success in several high schools' "a-g" coursework improved dramatically when both middle school and elementary school staff better understood the curricular expectations.
- Student discipline issues and transitions between schools and grades are also showing remarkable improvement once school educators review the data and begin to ask key questions — an important time of reflection about student achievement that is critical for our students.

Perhaps you are not aware that we continually align our accreditation protocols to the individual state departments of education reporting requirements. The Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), Strive High (Hawaii), and the Guam

Strategic Plan have all been included in the self-study process not only to assist schools meet their specific state requirements but also to take a deeper look at local student achievement.

Included in this edition of *ACS WASC Words* are examples of how public and private school organizations look at student learning, not only at the site level, but from the perspective of the entire school system. Pretty powerful stuff is being discovered about what is holding back students when entire school communities not only look at what happens at their own school but at what happens before they arrive and after they leave.

So, how might your school organization best use the ACS WASC protocols and tools? Serving on site visits, learning new ways to review data, and creating opportunities for others both in and outside of the school to share findings all have an important place in school improvement. How action plans are shared and monitored on a regular basis and asking tough questions are important skills we all must learn in order to improve.



ACS WASC Principles: Essential Tools in a Learning Community

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



Viewing the school as a learning community requires essential elements or tools in order to focus on improved student learning. Once a school has established its core beliefs, vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes based on the students' current and future learning needs, the questions that a school must ask are the following:

- How do we know that all students are achieving the desired schoolwide learner outcomes and the essential academic standards that prepare students to be globally competent, i.e., college and career ready?
- Are we doing everything possible to support that learning?

These overarching questions have led to the ACS WASC accreditation *principles or tools*, embedded within the *Focus on Learning (FOL)* process and reflected in the ACS WASC Accreditation Cycle of Quality. These *principles* empower a school to have the means, or *tools*, to be an effective learning community that focuses on increased student learning. These principles/ tools are:

1. Accomplishment of the stated vision, mission, schoolwide learner outcomes, and functions as appropriate for a school of its type.
2. High achievement of all students in relation to schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards.
3. Use of multiple sources of data analysis regarding students and student achievement to modify the learning and the teaching, e.g., student work, students working, talking with students, other types of internal and external assessments. The use by a school of a professionally acceptable assessment process to collect, disaggregate, and analyze student performance data is a critical part of the accreditation process.
4. Assessment of program and operations through analysis of critical evidence in relation to: 1) impact on high-quality student learning based on schoolwide learner outcomes, critical learner needs, and academic standards; and 2) meeting an acceptable level of quality in accordance with the ACS WASC criteria concepts linked to student learning.

All the ACS WASC criteria and indicators that guide a school in the evaluation of its organization and program refer to the impact on student learning, e.g., leadership empowerment, continual professional learning by staff, use of assessment, student involvement in challenging, learning experiences, relevant, cohesive, challenging curriculum, resource allocation and planning, and student support systems.
5. Alignment of a comprehensive schoolwide action plan to the areas of greatest need to support high achievement of all students. This includes supportive encouragement and feedback to a school about its action plan implementation, monitoring, and assessment through accreditation progress reports and visits.
6. Ongoing improvement and accountability, i.e., a follow-up process that includes annual analysis of student achievement resulting in the revision and refinement of the schoolwide action plan sections based on the impact of progress on student learning.
7. Total involvement of all stakeholders as a “collaborative culture” in meaningful dialogue, self-reflection, problem-solving, and shared decision-making. This includes the advantage of an objective perspective and feedback from the visiting committee as the school refines its areas for improvement based on student learning and implements its schoolwide action plan.



ACS WASC Principles: Essential Tools in a Learning Community – *continued*

As Yogi Berra, who recently passed away, stated, “If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll end up someplace else.” Translating this into a question for all schools leads to the following questions:

- * What is our vision for our students?
- What will be different for students as we implement our focused changes?
- Will these changes be immediate and ongoing?

Involving all staff in the use of the ACS WASC tools is paramount: essentially a school must view itself as a learning community. What we must ask is:

How do the tools within the accreditation process serve as a means to facilitate a school’s focus on high-quality student achievement and provide a quality roadmap?

Preparing students for today’s interdependent global society is critical. Educators and students recognize the need to focus on creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, which are all integral to global competence. These are the four “Cs” which are emphasized to prepare students now and for the future. As schools determine what students should know, understand, and be able to do in order to be college- and career-ready, it is extremely important to involve all staff in assessing the degree to which students are achieving these desired outcomes. The ACS WASC tools provide the vehicle for this analysis.

Dr. Shirley Hord, Learning Forward’s scholar laureate, has researched learning communities worldwide. Her recent comments support the value of the ACS WASC tools. She states in a recent article in the June 2015 *JSD*, the Learning Forward Journal: “I believe the professional learning community is the most powerful structure and strategy for enhancing educators’ effectiveness and increasing students’ successful learning.” She also states “*Improvement* requires exchanging what is not working for something that has the potential to do so — this means making a change — and to change requires *learning* what the change is and how to use it.” Dr. Hord further delineates six research-based attributes of effective professional learning communities: 1) structural conditions; 2) supportive relational conditions; 3) shared values and vision; 4) intentional collective learning; 5) peers supporting peers; and 6) shared and supportive leadership.”

Dr. Rick DuFour’s explanation of the three major ideas that drive a professional learning community also re-enforces the use of the ACS WASC accreditation tools. The first idea is that schools have the express purpose to ensure that all students are able to achieve at defined high levels. The second idea is that if a school is to help all students learn, all stakeholders must work collaboratively to address student needs. And finally, the third idea is that school educators will need to use an analytical process to determine if students are learning and appropriately address students’ needs.

The ACS WASC accreditation process includes the total involvement of all stakeholders as a “collaborative culture” in meaningful dialogue, self-reflection, problem-solving, and shared decision-making. Student learning, and therefore, adult learning are integral to the process. The accreditation process reinforces the basic tenets of how adults learn best: the ability to be self-directed and involved with problem-solving approaches related to their passion — high-quality student learning.

The tools of the ACS WASC *Focus on Learning* accreditation process empowers schools to focus on student learning as the change. This is reaffirmed in a recent article entitled “First Focus on Outcomes.” “Educators must build a coherent way of thinking and use language to connect the dots. The intended outcomes for students must be clearly articulated along with educator learning outcomes, changes in educator practices, needed professional learning, and appropriate resources (time, materials, people). By using the tools, i.e., the *seven principles of ACS WASC* that are integral to the entire ongoing ACS WASC Accreditation Cycle of Quality, schools have a built-in structure for a powerful learning community.

If the ACS WASC accreditation tools are integral to a school’s culture of learning, evaluation, and assessment, then the foundation is laid for the analysis and action to increase student learning. The process reminds the school’s leadership that there must be a support system built into the culture that empowers teachers and other stakeholders to work together regarding student learning in an environment of openness and trust. Furthermore, it enables a school to be critical and honest about what is working and what is not working to support increased student achievement. Such important analysis and dialogue builds capacity and coherence in the ACS WASC expectation that this is



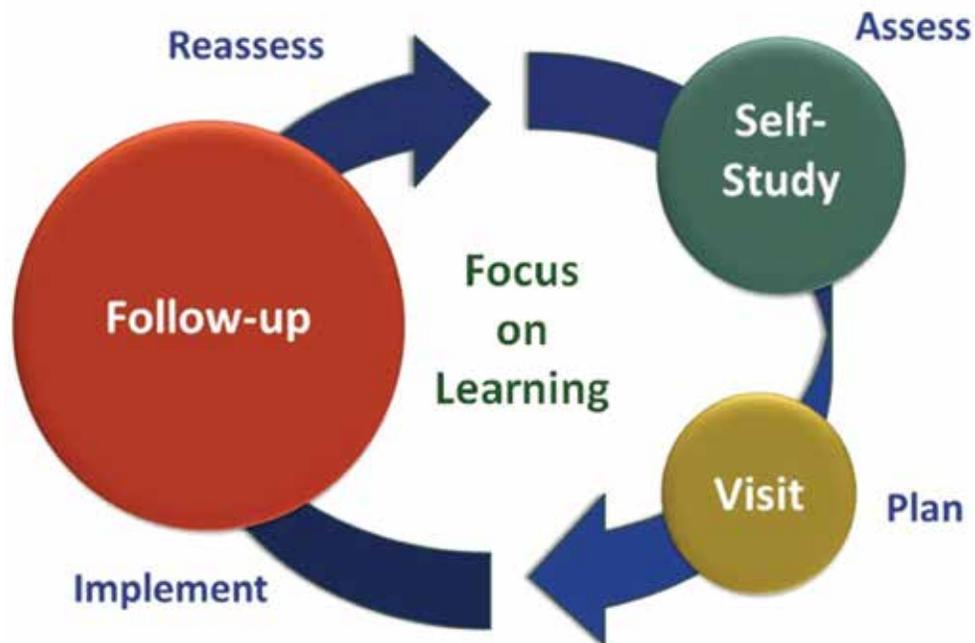
a “never-ending, non-hyperventilating improvement process.” The ACS WASC accreditation process and resulting accreditation status supports a school by providing transparency in the school’s vision of what needs to be accomplished.

In summary, the ACS WASC process provides the tools for the internal structure that enables a school to be its own professional learning community that focuses on student achievement and takes appropriate action. Through the use of the ACS WASC tools, a school can be self-directed and hold itself accountable for demonstrating improved student learning. These tools enable a school to focus on a single schoolwide action plan that has evolved from a shared, collaborative focus and commitment to

the desired student learning and a process for regular reflection and analysis of data-based student progress as it continually builds the teaching and leadership capacity of all. Overall, the ACS WASC accreditation is a data-informed decision-making process whose principles and/or tools do indeed drive student learning.

References

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ACS WASC Accreditation Cycle of Quality



Tools for School Improvement: Using Collaboration in Our Schools

Ginger Hovenic, Ed.D. | Director of School and Member Relations, Southern California, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



Many of our ACS WASC visitation team members and chairs say that going to visit a school on an ACS WASC team has been the most profound professional development that they have ever had. This is a unique chance to visit other schools for three days and to analyze how that school provides a great learning environment for their students. Our teams are made up of teachers,

staff, and administrators to mirror the focus of the school so these members are colleagues of the schools that are visited. Many have served on Focus Groups, Home Groups, or even have been on leadership teams at their school and have wondered what it was like to be on the analyzing side as a visiting team member.

I have heard them say what seems like more than a hundred times, “Now I get it, the five categories of school improvement; Governance, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and School Culture are the basis for everything that goes on at my school and when we visit a school and look at these elements it is amazing! I get ideas for change that I take back to my school and just as important, through the collaborative dialogue of the team with the school, I get a sense of how decisions are made and how change can take place on a schoolwide level.”

No one can doubt that significant school improvement requires considerable planning. An important tool for school improvement is the Action Plan and the various ways schools use the Action Plan to drive change. Members and chairs have remarked at the myriad of ways the Action Plans have been implemented and when used in a collaborative process can track the significant change the school has made. Reviewing the Action Plan at the beginning of the school year at staff and community meetings sets the stage for the school’s focus for that year. And then reviewing again at the end of the year helps everyone see the changes that have been made. Having everyone involved in the conversation and direction the school is taking makes all the difference in the world and when people feel a part of the process they take on part of the responsibility for making it happen.

The Action Plan created by using data collected and analyzed by all stakeholders serves as a roadmap to where the school started and how much progress the school has made. It also provides the framework for analyzing problems and addressing instructional issues as teams of educators work together. Many remark that they really didn’t realize that they had completed so much work over a three-year period until they went back to their Action Plan and charted the change. The Action Plan also provides new teachers, staff, and administrators starting points for discussions as a collaborative process within their organization so they can look forward and look back at what has been accomplished.

Without question school improvement matters because it affects the lives of all our students. It is important that the ACS WASC process tools become a permanent part of school practice, not a one-time or occasional event. Using these tools develop the habits of collaboration, discussion, inquiry, assessing progress over time, and data-driven decision-making — tools that are all necessary for ongoing improvement through a cycle of inquiry and action.



ACS WASC Membership, Accreditation Actions, and Committee Statistics, 2014–2015

ACS WASC Membership, 2014-2015

The school membership of the Accrediting Commission continued to grow during the 2014–2015 school year. Currently, approximately 229 new applicant schools are preparing for their initial accreditation visit with ACS WASC.

EVALUATION AREA	# OF SCHOOLS 2012–2013	# OF SCHOOLS 2013–2014	# OF SCHOOLS 2014–2015
California	3,795	3,873	3,901
Hawaii	202	264	290
Out of State	33	58	58
Pacific Islands			
American Samoa	10	10	10
Federated States of Micronesia	2	1	1
Guam	36	36	40
Northern Marianas	1	1	1
Marshall Islands	5	5	5
Palau	1	1	1
Africa	1	3	6
Asia	217	230	242
Europe	1	1	2
India	—	1	3
Mexico	1	1	2
Middle East	19	33	34
TOTAL	4,325	4,518	4,597

Accreditation Actions, 2014–2015

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

Self-Study Visits

Awarded full accreditation status	813
7 year	50
6 year	196
6 year with a mid-cycle review	501
5 year	9
2 year	43
1 year	8
No status given	5
Accreditation withheld	1

Initial Visits

Awarded initial accreditation.....	97
Awarded candidacy status	62
Denied candidacy status	4

Visiting Committee Statistics, 2014–2015

The 2014–2015 school year was another active year for visiting committees. Over 3,428 visiting committee chairs and members, many serving on multiple visits, participated on teams during this past school year. A special thanks to the committee chairs and members who served on the 1,652 teams during the school year! See page 18 for information about serving on a visiting committee.

Self-Study Visits	813
Initial Visits	163
Mid-cycle Visits.....	391
Return Mid-cycle Review Visits.....	10
Three-Year Term Revisits.....	132
Limited-Term Revisits.....	4
Probationary Visits.....	13
Progress Visits.....	21
Special Visits	8
International Mid-cycle Visits	11
CIS Preparatory Visits.....	1
CIS Five-Year Renewal Visits.....	7
Substantive Change Visits	65
Corporate Review Visits.....	—
SEP Previsits.....	8
Appeal Visits	5
Total Committees	1,652



ACS WASC Words of Wisdom

The following articles show a variety of ways that the ACS WASC accreditation process is being used by educators, schools, and school communities systemwide.

For the first fourteen years of my career as a high school teacher and administrator, my association with ACS WASC was tenuous at best. I was what I refer to as a journeyman educator: changing schools frequently to try living somewhere else, to get married, to take my first full-time administrative job, and eventually to become a principal. As a matter of coincidence, it seemed that I was always leaving a school as it was poised to begin its self-study and arriving at the next just after they completed one. Having heard the collective heavy sighs by veteran colleagues at heading into a self-study and having heard the collective sighs of relief by colleagues who just completed one, I counted myself lucky and wore it as a badge of honor that I had escaped ACS WASC unscathed. It wasn't until my first year as a principal that the inevitable happened.

On the first day behind my first principal's desk, the school's ACS WASC Coordinator walked into my office to introduce himself and brief me on the school's upcoming visit that spring and to discuss my vision for the process. As he introduced himself and started telling me about his background with ACS WASC, having been a member of many visits and chairing a number of visiting committees, I began to realize how very little I knew about the ACS WASC process and how it was intended to be used for ongoing school improvement. The more I listened and learned the more acutely aware I became of how misinformed I had been about ACS WASC all along.

Needless to say, I spent the better part of the next week and most of the weekend pouring over the school's last self-study and learning volumes about my new school. Somewhere along the way, I began formulating strategies for using ACS WASC as the lynch pin for all of our school improvement efforts. For too long, I realized that I had assumed that the ACS WASC process was another bureaucratic exercise, another in a long line of reports and plans that schools were required to write and which largely gathered dust.

With a new perspective on ACS WASC, I began to see how all of our school plans and reports — our Single Plan for Student Achievement; our strategic plan; our technology plan, now our Local Control Accountability Plan; and many others — could be knit together under the umbrella of our ACS WASC Action Plan, creating a unified vision for the future of our school which was developed by and for our stakeholders. The ACS WASC self-study process teaches schools to reflect regularly on their goals and to act accordingly to advance those goals, modifying them when circumstances change, but always looking towards the future and improvement. The beauty of it is that every six years stakeholders are brought together in a meaningful and structured way to reassess their school's vision and mission and to evaluate their progress and create the next Action Plan to guide them. The future is made manageable by being broken into realistic activities which can be taken on one at a time. Interim reports which have to be written every year are intentionally designed to address the critical areas for growth identified in the self-study and addressed in the Action Plan.

I have since moved to another school, and taking the lessons I had learned as a rookie principal, I knew exactly where I needed to exert leadership influence to begin aligning our plans and focusing our teachers' attention. I am pleased to report that with thoughtful and deliberate attention to the ACS WASC principles, the model works and is transferable to any school's staff. What I have found is that when people know that a self-study is more than just a report to file every six years but is a living breathing document which will impact their professional lives every, they take it seriously, and our schools and our students are the better for it.



Mark Swantz, Principal
Santa Ynez Valley Union High School



The first time a school goes through the *Focus on Learning* process, the school typically finds the examination of student learning and program effectiveness highly intensive as participants involve themselves in dialogue and data gathering and analysis. At the end of the visit, one can almost hear the well-deserved collective sigh of relief at completing an important milestone. But staff who go back to “business as usual” until the next round begins are risking three consequences:

1. They fail to reap some of the benefits of a continual improvement process like *Focus on Learning*
2. They don’t maximize the use of analyzed data on student learning in an era when all schools are expected to be regularly accountable
3. They miss the opportunity to experience a much easier and less taxing self-study in the future.

The *Focus on Learning* process produces the best results if it marks the beginning of a continuous process. The protocol recommends a yearly update which emphasizes student achievement data and the progress students are making towards meeting the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards, along with accomplishment of the action plan. Each year the action plan should be examined against student achievement results: are the identified strategies paying off? If not, the plan should be revised. This would also be a good time to review the schoolwide learner outcomes and subject area standards, incorporating any new academic standards which may apply to the school or revising the original product to reflect changing needs or conditions in the school and community.

At the mid-cycle point in the accreditation cycle, schools are required to complete a mid-cycle progress report. This report must be approved accepted by the school board and provided to the ACS WASC office. Like the yearly reviews, the emphasis will be on student learning and whether the action plans are being completed on an appropriate schedule, or should be revised to better meet student needs.

If a school faithfully reviews its student/community profile, updated data and school progress — standards, plans, and progress every year, the reports generated by this process will comprise the bulk of the new self-study at the end of the accreditation cycle. Most schools would only need to update their profiles, perform one more annual reviews to bring everything fully up to date, and incorporate any revisions to the *Focus on Learning* process which may have been added since the last self-study. The ideal is for the *Focus on Learning* process to be part of the ongoing life of the school, not a monumental disruption every six years.



Florence Webb, Ph.D.
Consultant and Writer



ACS WASC Words of Wisdom — *Continued*

During the 2008-09 school year, Roosevelt High School participated in an ACS WASC accreditation visit and received a limited accreditation status that could have resulted in a life-changing outcome for thousands of Roosevelt High School students in the Fresno Unified School District: the potential loss of accreditation and students graduating from a non-accredited school. This was a call to action that immediate change was needed to ensure that:

- The learning process for supporting students was sound
- The school’s vision and purpose for schoolwide student goals for achievement were clear
- The school continued to collaborate with the school community to provide accountability and transparency.

It was evident that without immediate action and support from a variety of resources — at the school, district, county, and state level — our school would cease to be accredited and our students would essentially have a future with limited options.

With so much on the line, our district leadership sought additional support from ACS WASC. We were given the opportunity to work with ACS WASC and take a fresh look at our school’s process. We were given six months to prepare for a revisit which could remove the limited accreditation status and grant the two additional years of accreditation remaining in the six-year accreditation cycle — which we coined our “6-2-6” goal.

The faculty took a bold leap of faith and fully embraced the process and became open to what the data was saying about our achievements and student support services. Members of the community were brought in to provide needed support. Transparency was crucial to keep students from leaving Roosevelt High School and parents and students needed to be assured that we would meet the accreditation requirements.

Thankfully, both our district and our school site acted, communicated, and participated as a team, and emerged from the cloud of uncertainty and met our “6-2-6” goal. We demonstrated that our school is fully committed to ongoing school improvement and full accreditation status was restored. ACS WASC afforded us the opportunity to incorporate much-needed change into our school’s process of school improvement and provide ongoing accountability to our students, parents, and school community.



Bryan Wells, Principal
Theodore Roosevelt High School



Over the past decade, Fusion Education Group (FEG) and ACS WASC have worked together to address the evolving accreditation needs of the Fusion Academies in California. Fusion Academy began as one California-based campus in Solana Beach and is now a network of 32 Fusion Academies throughout the United States. This rapid growth, in combination with the ever-changing educational needs of 21st century students, has posed new challenges as FEG seeks to meet accreditation goals and sustain an organization-wide culture of continuous improvement through accreditation.

One challenge faced by FEG is that our campuses historically have been assigned rolling accreditation cycles aligned to the opening of each campus. Thus, resources allocated to accreditation were focused on individual campus data analyses and preparations for the visit year. Although each campus engaged meaningfully with the protocol, this was a missed opportunity for Fusion teachers and administrators to learn about practices and processes beyond their own campus. In order to rectify this, FEG and ACS WASC aligned the accreditation cycles of Fusion Academies during the 2014–15 academic year. The decision to align these accreditation cycles resulted in a domino effect wherein one positive change in one campus led to the next in ways that have been transformative for Fusion staff, students, and families.

One powerful change through the alignment of the accreditation cycles involved data collection and analysis. This alignment made it possible for campuses not only to study their own practices and data, but to collaborate with other campuses. The “Fusion WASC Summit” Consisted of representatives from each of the Fusion Academies and convened in order to critically examine the outcome and perception data within each campus and also comparatively across all campuses. Interview and survey data collected from the summit representatives and subsequent observation data taken during the 2014–15 ACS WASC visits indicated that the intercampus collaboration resulted in transformational professional development. Prior to the summit, representatives were uncertain of how to analyze and interpret data or effectively use it in their everyday work as teachers or school administrators. After the summit, they were more adept at:

- Utilizing quantitative and qualitative data effectively to drive campus initiatives and instructional strategies
- Writing effectively about student outcome data and schoolwide data in the context of a self-study document
- Facilitating focus groups and home groups to support critical examination of student learning needs
- Articulating and sharing newly developed professional and leadership skills
- Identifying powerful educational practices and sharing them across campuses
- Examining data critically and understanding how different Fusion Academies are serving students effectively.

Returning for a moment to the metaphoric domino effect, FEG’s partnership with ACS WASC has also lead the Fusion Academies to take a closer look at the kinds of student data analyzed. Since Fusion is a one-to-one learning model and because our overarching purpose is to individualize, customize, and personalize the educational process for each student, data collection and analysis efforts have historically focused on individual student progress. Although individual student data has helped us make meaningful and relevant instructional decisions, the ACS WASC self-study process made visible new ways of looking at multiple measures of student well-being and academic achievement from a schoolwide perspective. This change supports the study of student learning from multiple perspectives using multiple qualitative and quantitative measures. FEG’s commitment to educational improvement through the ACS WASC self-study process provides the foundation for offering educational programs that are sustainable and relevant as learning needs continue to change and evolve.



Damian Jenkins, Ph.D., Director of Accreditation
Fusion Education Group



ACS WASC COMMISSIONERS

(listed by the organizations they represent)

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Barry Groves, Vice Chairperson

Association of California School Administrators

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Gregory Franklin
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California Teachers Association

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Thomas Butler
Chad Colden
Nina Russo
Sally Todd

Commission Update

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

2016 Commission Meetings

Winter

January 25–26, 2016
Honolulu, HI

Spring

April 25–26, 2016
Burlingame, CA

Summer

June 27–28, 2016
Burlingame, CA

ACS WASC Commission Members

Members who left the Commission this June include: William Ellerbee, Lorraine Richards, Valene Staley, Carl Takamura, and William Walner. We deeply appreciate 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: Samantha Benish, Stephen Cathers, Gregory Franklin, Suzanne Mulcahy, H. Mitchell D'Olier, Dale Phillips, Russell Weikle, and Laurel Salerno White.



International Update

Harlan E. Lyso, Ph.D. | International Consultant, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



For nearly fifty years, ACS WASC has been supporting the school improvement efforts of international schools through the ACS WASC accreditation process. Though we originally served exclusively international schools located in Asia, more recently international schools from around the world have contacted ACS

WASC requesting authorization to utilize *Focus on Learning* to drive their school improvement efforts. Many such schools cite the reputation ACS WASC has earned for its ability to individualize aspects of the self-study process to address the unique needs of individual schools. Equally important has been the level of support that ACS WASC provides schools as they undertake the *Focus on Learning* process.

Though *Focus on Learning* has served as the ACS WASC accreditation protocol for many years, it remains fresh and current as it is reviewed and revised annually to provide additional support for schools and adapt to changes in the educational environment. These adjustments in the protocol have, for example, resulted in a more intentional emphasis on global competencies — skills and attitudes that will enable its students to become effective participants in an increasingly complex, diverse, and interdependent environment. In addition, as increasing numbers of international schools utilize online learning environments as elements of their instructional programs, prompts and exemplars specifically related to online instruction have been incorporated within each ACS WASC criterion.

To ensure that schools utilizing *Focus on Learning* maximize the benefits from the process, each year ACS WASC provides numerous training opportunities in Asia. These training sessions will now also be provided in the CEESA and NESA regions as a result of requests received from schools in these areas. Online webinars provide additional support for schools that are unable to send staff to regional training sessions or that wish to update their staff on important elements of the process.

As large numbers of international schools are seeking their initial ACS WASC accreditation, the documentation that describes and supports this initial effort has been revised, expanded, and updated. Additionally, the ACS WASC Commission has provided additional funding to enable several experienced international school leaders to provide direct and individually targeted support for these schools.

Supplementary educational programs are increasingly being offered to students affiliated with international schools, as they have long been offered to students within the United States. In order to ensure that these programs are quality instructional programs that meet ACS WASC criteria, the ACS WASC Commission recently authorized the development of a process through which International Supplementary Educational Programs can become accredited. The documentation for the accreditation of such programs is currently being developed and is expected to be in use shortly.

International schools are largely independent institutions that are not subject to the oversight or have access to the resources normally available to stateside schools. As such, the *Focus on Learning* accreditation process is even more critical to an international school's school improvement efforts than it might be for their stateside counterparts. ACS WASC is committed to ensuring that international schools choosing to undertake the *Focus on Learning* process have access to the support needed to implement the process appropriately and meaningfully impact student learning through its ongoing school improvement process.



Office Update

Northern California Burlingame Office



L-R: Cynthia Newton, Susan Lange, Frances Rivette, Alice Hauser, Kristen Chow, Francesca Lorenzo, Alexandria Silva, Christian Punzalan, Christine Toti, Ari Nishiki-Finley, Beni Malla, Judy Abbott, Lino Gantan, Joanne Cacicedo

Southern California Temecula Office



L-R: Elizabeth Oberreiter, Alicia Hutchinson, Emily Barton, Ginger Hovenic, Denise Jagoda

New ACS WASC Staff



Kristen Chow joined the ACS WASC team in September 2015. She grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and has experience working with students. Outside the office, Kristen and her husband enjoy exploring new places around the bay. Her hobbies include playing the guitar and team sports.



Beni Malla joined ACS WASC Accounting/Business Office in March 2015. She has Bachelor's degree in Accounting and an Associates' degree in Business, and she aspires to become a Certified Public Accountant. Beni is quadrilingual and is originally from Nepal. At her leisure Beni likes to bike, kayak, and go on hikes. She enjoys cooking and spending quality time with her friends and family. She cares about animals, environment, education, and human rights.



Christian Punzalan was born in the Philippines and grew up in the Bay Area and currently lives in Daly City. He attended the University of Phoenix, and obtained a degree in Business Administration. Chris started working for the ACS WASC office in Burlingame on September 1, 2015 as a Bookkeeper. He is excited to be part of this organization and looks forward to working with the new team. When not working, Chris likes to go to the gym and stay healthy and fit. He also likes domestic and international travel, eating out, and spending time with friends and family.



New ACS WASC Staff – *continued*



Elizabeth Oberreiter joined ACS WASC in October 2015 in the Temecula office. Elizabeth’s career as a school administrator and teacher ranges from private, public, and charter schools to the online world. She has enjoyed her career in education and is excited about her new journey at ACS WASC. She enjoys spending time with her family traveling, going to her niece’s school and sports events, and helping her community through various service projects throughout the year.



Alexandria Silva began to work at the Burlingame ACS WASC office in September 2015. She is originally from Palo Alto. She attended high school in Manteca and moved back to the Bay Area in 2012 to continue her college education. Alex graduated from San Francisco State University in 2015 with a degree in Art History. She recently married in June of this year. She loves to travel, work out, and enjoy good food. She has two cats that are basically her children.

New ACS WASC Website

ACS WASC recently launched a new and improved website. We hope that you find it user friendly and easy to navigate. Some of the new features that have been added to the website are a new Document Upload link where reports and documents can easily be submitted directly to ACS WASC; a Calendar of Events page where you can view upcoming training events; and updated visiting committee materials pages where chair and member materials have been combined into one page. We hope that you find the streamlined site intuitive and easy to use.





Accrediting Commission for Schools Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Serving on an ACS WASC Visiting Committee



Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC

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ACS WASC Overview

The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC), a world-renowned regional accrediting association, provides assistance to schools in California, Hawaii, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Fiji, Asia, and other parts of the world; currently serving approximately 4,600 schools.

ACS 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.

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

Visiting Committees

ACS WASC accreditation visits range from one-day initial visits to three- or four-and-½ 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 ACS 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 ACS WASC Commission.

Why Serve?

- Learn about a variety of educational strategies, approaches, and practices
- Observe programs in action
- Develop and cultivate new professional relationships
- 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

"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, ACS WASC VC Member
Riverside, CA

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

The ACS WASC Member Data Sheet can be found on the ACS WASC website at

www.acswasc.org/vc/serving-on-a-visiting-committee

Accrediting Commission for Schools
Western Association of Schools and Colleges



**ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

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