

# ACS WASC Words 2014-2015

“We are learning more about large-scale change, making it less complicated by focusing on a small number of ambitious goals with a coherent strategy.”

Michael Fullan



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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

Valene Staley, Ed.D. | Chairperson, Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC



The process of accreditation is approached and used in differing ways. All schools seeking accreditation go through the same process of measuring the school's program against internationally recognized criteria or standards and hosting a peer review team.

Many schools recognize that there are multiple tasks that can be accomplished when the school and/or district approaches the accreditation process as a unifying and ongoing process. During the past year, I have taken note of these approaches. They include using the accreditation process as a touchstone measurement, creating organizational structures, celebrating milestones, and determining staff development options.

Teachers and administrators face a daunting array of organizational tasks on an annual basis. Goal setting, the measurement of progress toward goals, curriculum review and revisions, in-service calendar, budget allocations, facilities, parent engagement, data analysis, student support systems, and extra-curricular event scheduling are just a few of the tasks that must be accomplished. With so many varied tasks to complete, it is possible for educators to lose focus on the mission and goals that define the school or district. Schools can use the accreditation process to redefine or confirm their goals and connect each section of the report to the overall goals. Each year the school profile data is updated and analyzed to develop a board report that uses the *Focus on Learning* criteria as a touchstone to measure progress toward these goals.

In some schools, Focus Groups serve as standing committees. New schools can use Focus Groups as the initial organization structure for faculty, students, and parents. Ongoing Focus Groups provide a cross-curricular structure for discussions, program evaluation, and feedback from all stakeholders. Calendared meetings and an annual Focus Group report on action plan progress encourage a unified student, faculty, and

community approach to school improvement. Schools that have such ongoing committees assign new teachers to a Focus Group and provide in-service to communicate the purpose and expectations of the Focus Groups.

Schools celebrate making significant progress as outlined in their action plan. Although test results are often the highlight of the celebrations, the accreditation criteria and school profile focus on the entire educational program. Schools celebrate improvement in student attendance and behavior, parent involvement, and other student activities.

The accreditation process offers many options for staff development, from the identification of in-service needs to serving on visiting teams. The self-study and subsequent annual updates help to identify areas of need for staff development offerings. Teachers and administrators who serve as visiting team members profit from the intense immersion in the accreditation criteria as they read another school's self-study and prepare for four days of focused observations and discussions. Visiting team members also bring back new ideas gained from the classroom observations as well as a better understanding of their own school's programs. There is no better or less expensive staff development than serving on a visiting team.

As you plan for your school's next step in the accreditation cycle, consider the advantages of using the ACS WASC accreditation process to maintain a focus on goals, organize standing committees that include all members of the school community, and provide staff development options. I encourage you to contact the ACS WASC office or visit our website to access the resources available to assist schools before and during the accreditation process.

I am honored to have the opportunity to serve as chairperson of the Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC and to work with organizations that strive to help all schools prepare students with the skills necessary to be successful in a global economy.



## Executive Director’s Update Collaboration at Work: Using ACS WASC Tools for Success

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



This edition of *ACS WASC Words* is sharing how others are using ACS WASC not only for validation but also as a tool for school improvement. ACS WASC is underused in this endeavor, so I challenge all schools and educators to think differently about how to use the various parts of our strategic planning model. To get

you started, in this edition we are highlighting some ideas from the perspectives of a teacher, an assistant principal, a headmaster, a district IT director, an assistant superintendent of educational services, and a district and a complex area superintendent. We hope to share how each envisions the role of and uses of ACS WASC in their school communities. And, ultimately, we hope you will discover how your schools could implement these tools to your students’ advantage.

When I served as a superintendent in a school district exploring International Baccalaureate, I asked department chairs to visit area IB schools and return to our school site to share what they had learned. What a powerful opportunity — teachers, a school, and a district discovering so many aspects of an emerging program. I share this, because reinventing the wheel can be cumbersome. Think about some of the local initiatives you are using for your schools and how you might be able to visit other schools to explore new methods to improve student achievement in an informational exchange of best practices. For instance, many of us are now beginning to define what Common Core is and how it fits within our daily charge as educators. Wouldn’t it be a meaningful undertaking to send teams out to partner schools, public or private, to learn how they are meeting the challenge of this national initiative?

There has also been a major shift in school systems using ACS WASC. Many people continue to think that ACS WASC is only for high schools or that we serve a narrow geographic area. In

truth, we now support K-12 private schools, charter schools, and unified school districts that had at one time only accredited their high schools. Now, these institutions are adding their elementary and middle schools. Why? Because they see the value of providing a “unified” structure to improve their schools. And our reach is only expanding as school systems begin to understand the value of an ACS WASC partnership. As an example, the state of Hawaii will have all of its public schools ACS WASC-accredited by 2018. Guam is also working towards a similar goal.

All of this leads me to a primary ACS WASC goal. That is, to help schools create a culture of collaboration and shared insights using ACS WASC tools. The past several months I have been meeting with public and private school leadership teams. This work is helping leadership teams explore moving beyond district silos to collaborate between elementary, middle, and high schools for school accreditation and to bridge communication gaps, in an effort to increase the focus on student achievement. In my work with leadership teams, I share information across school systems, ranging from how schools are using site visits to sharing where each school is in the accreditation cycle. Providing more support for individual schools is a primary goal of these meetings, particularly as we at ACS WASC learn of new ways schools have implemented the ACS WASC accreditation process. One clever idea, shared by the superintendent of the San Mateo Union High School District, is that when a school completes its self-study, it also creates an executive summary to share with its school board and community — this summary is used to keep the focus for ongoing improvements.

That is our goal: That ACS WASC tools are used to promote cultures of collaboration and shared insights. As we continue to adapt our *Focus on Learning* process for the wide variety of schools we serve, we want to have one action plan that fits in with the public, religious, or private school guidelines. By sharing our success stories and challenges, we can all learn from each other, making the ACS WASC tools even more helpful in ensuring equity and fairness to all students in all schools.



## Connecting the Dots: ACS WASC Focus on Learning Accreditation Cycle of Quality

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



As a child, many of us created a picture by drawing lines to connect numbered dots. “Connecting the dots” is an idiom that emphasizes the relationship between different experiences. The ACS WASC *Focus on Learning (FOL)* Accreditation Cycle of Quality provides a basic change framework of assessing, planning, implementing and reassessing:

### WHAT?

- What is the ideal based upon?
  - Vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes
  - Academic standards
  - ACS WASC criteria and indicators
- Who are the students?
- What are their current and future learning needs?
- How do we ensure that they are college and career ready in a global society?

### SO WHAT?

- What currently exists?
- How effective is it?

### NOW WHAT?

- What are we doing and how do we need to modify it?
- What should be in the schoolwide action plan?
- How will we evaluate the impact made on student learning?

In our commitment and actions to improve the achievement of students and prepare them for college and careers in the 21st century, the concept of coherence or connecting the dots is critical. *Integration, connectedness, alignment, and articulation* are words that may come to mind as synonymous. The critical question to be raised is: How can the accreditation process be a viable structure for all the external demands, yet support a school in developing its internal capacity for maximizing the potential of all students served? The answer lies in the use of the ongoing ACS WASC *FOL* accreditation process that goes beyond semantics to what really makes a difference while assisting a school in the alignment to external accountability expectations.

Consider the following scenario at “Success High School.”

### A Tuesday Evening in Early August

“Thanks for all your help this summer, Mr. Morton. You were a great coach for the baseball team. I look forward to the new school year and hopefully, I will be in your class. My friends really liked your class last year.”

“Let’s hope your schedule works out as you’ve planned, Wayne. I really enjoyed coaching the team.”

As Ed Morton left the pizza parlor, he had a great feeling of satisfaction; he appreciated Wayne’s remarks. When he was driving home, his thoughts wandered to the upcoming school year. Having taught for more than 25 years, he knew working with students like Wayne reinforced his decision to stay in teaching. However, as he continued to think about the new school year, he became somewhat disillusioned. In a recent email to all faculty, the principal had emphasized that this was the fifth year of the accreditation cycle and everyone would be involved in an in-depth evaluation of the school with an ACS WASC visit the following year. Ed had been in the district a long time but recently had transferred schools, so this was his first self-study at Success High School. He reflected: “Would this be like the last time? Meetings! Writing! Yet another distraction from working with students in his classroom!”

His thoughts raced ahead as he instinctively slowed the car for a stop light. Surrounding the intensive red of the traffic light was the glare of neon signs, which in his mind appeared to be flashing educational instructional terms: *backward design, differentiated instruction, common core, formative assessments, professional learning communities, college and career readiness, blended learning, common assessments, writing rubrics, data-driven decision making, and curriculum-embedded assessments*. There had been so many changes at Success High School in the past few years — at times it was overwhelming. Why couldn’t he just teach and concentrate on students? What did he want the students



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to know? How would both he and the students know this? If the students were not successful, what should be done? If they were, what should the next steps be? After all, he chose to be a teacher because he likes working with students. He understands what promotes effective learning. He has kept current through his reading and professional activities. Oh, the pros and cons of being a teacher — another year!

### Several Weeks Later: A Faculty Meeting

Susan Perez, school self-study coordinator, and Joseph Pratt, principal, were presenting the overview for the upcoming self-study process, *Focus on Learning*. Ed thought, “We have done this before at my other schools. Another report to write just like the last time, except this time we will use Google Drive. Why are we worried about it? The visit is not for 18 months.” However, as Susan continued, her words began to catch Ed’s attention. The entire staff, administration, parents, students, and district leadership would be working together in the accreditation process through schoolwide Focus Groups and the existing professional learning communities and departments. They would review what currently exists based on the multiple types of student data that they were already using within the PLCs, especially in relation to the recently updated schoolwide learner outcomes and newly implemented Common Core State Standards. They would concentrate all their energies on determining how the students are doing in relation to all the various initiatives already implemented and align these initiatives with external expectations, such as the strategic goals of the district.

The teachers and leadership would be discussing the quality and growth over time of what students are doing and producing as they continually used the walkthroughs, protocols for examining student work, student interviews, and the ongoing review of formative and summative assessment data. The goal of *Focus on Learning* is to concentrate energies on professional strategies and activities that would unite everyone in critical analysis of the effectiveness of what they are currently doing — The “So What?” question. They would be performing self-directed analysis and problem-solving and making shared decisions about next steps.

The principal continued with the presentation. He shared that this process would reinforce the school’s existing collaborative culture. The *FOL* process would strengthen common understanding and commitment through the active involvement of all stakeholders. It would help align, systematize, standardize, integrate, and streamline current practices and protocols. Above all, conversations and the evidence of analysis would support ongoing increased student achievement and school improvement. The resulting schoolwide action plan would be implemented and monitored as the school’s identified needs along with the broader strategic goals of the district are addressed.

Then Joseph and Susan pointed out that during the intervening years the faculty did not review the schoolwide action plan in great depth. Susan emphasized that *Focus on Learning* is a 24/7 process and now would be integral to the work they were doing throughout the school, strengthening their analysis of multiple types of subject area and schoolwide and district data.

Ed became totally absorbed in what he was hearing and viewing. The *Focus on Learning* accreditation process would be different this time, not just “show and tell”. As he watched the presentation, he perused his copy of the ACS WASC criteria and thought about his professional experiences; he understood the integration within the criteria of what promotes effective learning between teacher and student, schoolwide and systemwide. He noted concepts such as (1) shared high expectations for all students held by the leadership and staff; (2) clear overall student-focused educational goals aligned with high-quality academic standards, instruction, and assessment; (3) the collaboration of instructional staff within a highly professional culture that focuses on continuous improvement; (4) skilled leadership and coaching; (5) a schoolwide performance assessment system that encompasses the use of multiple sources of interpreted student achievement data; (6) the use of a variety of instructional approaches; (7) a safe and orderly environment; (8) a shared sense of responsibility for all students and the ability to personalize learning; (9) the creation of a flexible support system to ensure student learning; and (10) the involvement of parents and the community. The slide that brought the presentation to a



close reinforced Susan’s and Joseph’s comments: WASC meant, “We Are Student-Centered.”

Ed thought to himself, “We actually are going to be involved in a process that supports my belief that focusing on students and their learning is why we’re in education. What we will be doing is what we want to do as student learning advocates. This will connect all the various ideas and initiatives that we have been implementing but ensure there are the links and the alignment to focus on student achievement. How did I not see this last time when my other schools conducted their self-studies?”

When the presentation was finished, they asked for comments or questions from their colleagues. “Count me in!” Ed said excitedly, “This truly is the process to connect the dots and manage the changes we’ve been implementing — I see it as the foundation of our culture of learning and assessment to support high-learning expectations for EVERY student all the time. WE as a school are our own schoolwide professional learning community, WE analyze and take action where WE see the need for growth — everything focusing on successful student learning, not just for the self-study but constantly guided by our action plan aligned to district goals. WE actually will go beyond a report and mere semantics!”

The ACS WASC *Focus on Learning* process centers on connecting the dots based on key parameters to increase student achievement. In a recent article, Michael Fullan and Lyn Sharratt asked teachers and administrators why educators should put faces on the data. The ACS WASC *FOL* process empowers a school to use multiple types of data to assess practices, programs, and support mechanisms for their effectiveness in meeting the needs of every student and teacher. Overall, the ACS WASC *FOL* process facilitates the work of administrative and teacher leadership in creating ownership, involvement, meaningful dialogue, and collaborative actions; it is the foundation of an environment for sustainable improvement.

We know that meaningful dialogue is inherent in the ongoing *Focus on Learning* process. In a 2013 article in *The New Yorker*, Atul Gawande wrote an article entitled “Slow Ideas;” he found that an important reason some medical innovations occur is because people are talking and spreading ideas related to

a critical problem. He pointed out that a social process must occur in order to change a culture. This dialogue that is so important to examine, link, and cause action is inherent in the *FOL* process and promotes high morale as it involves everyone in reviewing who we are and our effectiveness in supporting student learning; the *FOL* process supports coherence and continuity, collegiality, and creativity as we identify challenges and next steps. What is our vision for students? What will be different one year, two years, and three years from now? As Nel Noddings noted in a recent article, “A school....is a place in which educators break down curriculum boundaries to work collaboratively, planning and teaching with creativity and with the steady purpose of producing better adults.”

In closing, a quote from Lyn Sharratt and Michael Fullan in their book, *Putting Faces on the Data: What Great Leaders Do*, reinforces the power of the *Focus on Learning* accreditation cycle of quality. “By focusing on connecting all the dots between students and data, educators can accomplish the ultimate goal of helping them learn.”

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## ACS WASC Accreditation: The Pathway to School Improvement

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



Sometimes I hear from school principals and ACS WASC coordinators about how glad they are when they are finished with the school's self study. Yet, almost in the same breath they also talk about how the rigorous process was so important and valuable because it required input from all stakeholders, including community members, students, staff and

administration. I also hear about enlightening discussions and encouraging remarks from individuals, such as: "Oh, now I understand why we have that policy in place," "It seems now we are working on all cylinders instead of the administration having to come up with all the ideas," and "We are all working together now to help educate the students at our school."

Creative, collaborative problem-solving and decision-making with all stakeholders in mind are concepts that come out of these opportunities to give input into the five areas of the ACS WASC *Focus on Learning* process. These areas are:

1. **Governance:** How do we operate as a school, and how does each member of the staff give input?
2. **Curriculum:** What do we teach and how do we make decisions regarding curriculum? If an online curriculum is in place, how was it vetted, is it relevant to our students, and does it support our student expectations and outcomes?
3. **Instruction:** How do we teach the curriculum? Is there one way all teachers use to work with all students, or is there a variety of techniques such as the use of large or small groups, lessons that are teacher directed, online courses, and/or blended learning groups — all designed to engage all student populations?
4. **Assessment:** How do we know that students are learning? What tools do we use to monitor the progress of all student populations including special groups? Are there assessments that are subjective and objective, formative

or summative? Do we use benchmarks to monitor progress? What decisions are made within the learning environment once assessment information is collected and analyzed?

5. **Student Culture:** What is the personality of the school? What activities and opportunities do we offer to students at each grade level and as a whole school? What makes our school unique, and how it is connected with the Schoolwide Learner Outcomes? How are parents and community members involved?

As schools finish the self-study process and use the information to update their action plan, they say the effort was well worth it. Now they are focused and have a roadmap in place to keep them on track on their journey to continually improve their school.





# ACS WASC Membership, Accreditation Actions, and Committee Statistics, 2013–2014

## ACS WASC Membership, 2013-2014

The school membership of the Accrediting Commission continued to grow during the 2013–2014 school year. Currently, approximately 172 new applicant schools are preparing for their initial accreditation visit with ACS WASC.

EVALUATION AREA	# OF SCHOOLS 2011–2012	# OF SCHOOLS 2012–2013	# OF SCHOOLS 2013–2014
California	3,753	3,795	3,873
Hawaii	206	202	264
Out of State	27	33	58
Pacific Islands			
American Samoa	10	10	10
Federated States of Micronesia	2	2	1
Guam	35	36	36
Northern Marianas	2	1	1
Marshall Islands	3	5	5
Palau	1	1	1
Africa	1	1	3
Asia	218	217	230
Europe	—	1	1
India			1
Mexico	1	1	1
Middle East	—	19	33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,260</b>	<b>4,325</b>	<b>4,518</b>

## Accreditation Actions, 2013–2014

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 .....	682
7 year .....	40
6 year .....	181
6 year with a mid-cycle review ....	401
5 year .....	10
2 year .....	34
1 year .....	12
No term given .....	4
Accreditation withheld .....	—

### Initial Visits .....

Awarded initial accreditation.....	130
Awarded candidacy status .....	32
Denied candidacy status .....	2

## Committee Statistics, 2013–2014

The 2013–2014 school year was another active year for visiting committees. Over 2,950 volunteers, many serving on multiple visits, served on teams during this past school year. A special thanks to the committee chairs and members who served on the 1,454 teams during the school year! See page 18 for information about serving on a visiting committee.

Self-Study Visits .....	682
Initial Visits .....	164
Three-Year Term Revisits.....	127
Midterm Review Visits.....	317
Return Midterm Review Visits .....	7
Limited-Term Revisits.....	21
Probationary Visits.....	14
Progress Visits.....	12
Special Visits .....	14
International Midterm Visits.....	7
CIS Preparatory Visits.....	3
CIS 5-Year Renewal Visits .....	6
Substantive Change Visits .....	48
Corporate Review Visits.....	2
SEP Previsits.....	27
Appeal Visits .....	3
<b>Total Committees .....</b>	<b>1,454</b>



## ACS WASC Words of Wisdom

The following excerpts show a variety of ways that the ACS WASC accreditation process is being used by educators, schools, and school communities systemwide. The articles in their entirety can be found on the ACS WASC website.



The ACS WASC process is a transparent, inclusive accountability measure that helps schools and communities identify their successes while focusing honestly (sometimes painfully) on areas that need real work. Great schools and organizations learn to do this as a normal, embedded practice — so much so that it becomes the default culture. But so many schools are not there yet; the ACS WASC process is an opportunity for everyone to look in the mirror together while opening up their school to outside eyes. We should all try it more often.

The teams I’ve been on have been made up of incredible, dedicated educators who have the same sense of curiosity, service, and professionalism that inspired me to take the plunge. I count them among my growing cohort of colleagues in this wonderful profession we share.

How do I feel after four days of non-stop observation, conversation, reflection, writing, editing, and meeting new people? Tired, sore, stressed and totally, completely fired up by the students, staff, and community members I met, the energy and culture I witnessed, and the specific practices and programs at the school that my own students and staff would gobble up.



Eric Saibel, Assistant Principal  
Sir Francis Drake High School

The ACS WASC process helped my school build a template for continuous school improvement. By engaging all stakeholders and by putting student learning at the center of the accreditation process, ACS WASC helped our school meet its goals and come into our own. A significant product of the work involved helped each member of our team understand and appreciate each other’s roles and challenges. The ultimate value of the process becomes clear when it is incorporated into the fabric of school improvement, not just as an occasional and hurried accreditation process, but rather as an ongoing interwoven opportunity for educational growth and change.



Jim Munger, Head of School  
Marin Montessori School



The ACS WASC Self-Study process is a great opportunity for people to monitor their systems to see what’s working and address school improvement. There’s no doubt that the Self-Study is a time-consuming process and it takes time away from teaching, learning, and leading. But here’s the thing, school communities shouldn’t wait to monitor and reflect until their next ACS WASC Self-Study — we should be doing that every day.



From my perspective as a person who works in a district office, there seems to be an opportunity to use ACS WASC in totally new ways to help schools and districts improve. What if ACS WASC were a model of quality schooling to ensure sustained improvements in districts, rather than individual schools?

Recall the statement by the teacher leader on my recent ACS WASC visit, “We’re doing great work, but it’s frustrating that we don’t know what is working, or what is not working.” That’s a beautiful statement because it is an opening for a district leader to sit down with a school leader and listen to them, then listen some more and then offer ideas, suggestions, and coaching. If we help site leaders to create structures and tools such as checklists, objective trackers, and long-range planners, they won’t have to scramble to prepare for ACS WASC visits because they will know exactly what is working or is not working.

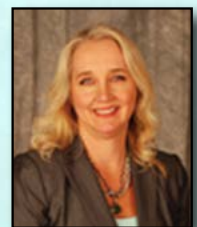


Call it action research, continual improvement, organizational learning, or an ACS WASC accreditation; what is critical is a commitment to making progress over time.

Joel Rabin, Ph.D., Executive Director, Research and Data  
Natomas Unified School District

The goal of the Orange Unified School District is to assist secondary schools in integrating plans to ensure seamless support to faculty and students in meeting goals of student learning. In utilizing the ACS WASC process, Cerro Villa Middle school was able to assimilate the tenets of the 2013 California Distinguished School process, including the two school-level Signature Practices of Technology Curriculum Infusion and Response to Intervention and Instruction (RtI2). The school staff can further enhance their process of Professional Learning Communities/Department Collaboration, Collaboration Cycle for Effective Instruction and the implementation of State Standards and emergent 21st Century Instructional strategies.

These goals of student learning reviewed and analyzed in the ACS WASC process further reinforce the District LCAP plan to combine actions within the eight areas of state priorities in the LCAP grouped under Conditions for Learning, Pupil Outcomes and Engagement. District leadership can more closely monitor and ensure that actions are being implemented through the planning cycle of ACS WASC. The district has prepared a conceptual framework of ACS WASC and LCAP that are amalgamated into one matrix to ensure that plans are aligned and progress monitoring is in place for student learning.



Gunn Marie Hansen, Ph.D., Deputy Superintendent  
Orange Unified School District



### ACS WASC Words of Wisdom — *Continued*



The Hawaii Department of Education has embarked on a journey to ensure that all of our pre-K–12 and adult education schools are in structured professional dialogue about what it will take for all students to have access to high-quality teaching and learning, positive and supportive school environments, and opportunities to programs that support college and career readiness and the engagement of families and community in the education of the children.

In order to accomplish this, the Board of Education has put into policy the implementation of the ASC WASC accreditation process for all of the 289 public elementary, middle, and high schools in Hawaii.

There are many implications for Hawaii Complex Areas (districts) which are made up of elementary and middle schools that feed up to the high school. Currently, many of these schools are engaged in pre-K–12 complex discussions to align curriculum, instruction, and assessments, monitoring and reviewing student performance data with a focus on the transition grades, grade level articulation, and school-guided visits by complex area school teams to support the implementation of programs and instructional practices through classroom visitations and feedback. The goal of the complex schools is to ensure that there is a seamless transition of all students to the next level, ready to learn, with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to succeed.



With this in mind, we would like to consider moving toward an accreditation process for a school complex which creates an interdependence and a sense of responsibility for students as they move throughout the elementary, middle, and high schools. In this way, all of the complex schools will embrace the elementary kindergarten readiness goals as well as the high school graduation and college enrollment initiatives.

Ann Mahi, Complex Area Superintendent  
Hawaii State DOE, Leeward District-3-Oahu

ACS WASC visitations bring fresh new perspectives to my day-to-day job as an athletic director. Spending four days exploring the way another school has set up its programs helps me to focus on the systems and protocols that we have in place at my home site. It’s not unusual for an ACS WASC visiting team member to jot down notes about how the school he is visiting has approached a problem. A visitation often brings into focus not just the approach we may have missed, but the problems we may have missed as well. It’s refreshing and edifying to bring home a new idea or approach to a problem that has stymied my department for some time.

ACS WASC visitations also help bring in to focus the much larger picture of a school community. Leading a department, grade level, or program inherently requires a bit of self-indulgent tunnel vision. What works well for my coaches may not be the very best thing for the whole school, but I hear from them daily, and I’m going to keep them happy. ACS WASC visitations remind me that I am also part of a much larger entity; one that requires an understanding of the big picture and a willingness to prioritize school goals over easy solutions and standard procedures. The ACS WASC visitation brings home to me the goals we all strive for: student achievement and stakeholder satisfaction. Those priorities come to the forefront when I serve on a visit and stay there when I return home, allowing me to evaluate my practices and priorities in the larger light of whole-school community. An ACS WASC visit definitely finds me returning with a broader focus and better attention to my own school goals. But, it also returns me a better member of my school and home communities. I return with a sense of excitement and purpose that is palpable.

Joseph Graack, Athletic Director  
Ernest Righetti High School





The Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District (MVLA) has used the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) tools and processes to guide its schools over the past eight years. During that time, MVLA students have improved every year on statewide assessments, with significant annual gains in closing the Latino achievement gap. Our comprehensive high schools, alternative high school, and adult school utilize their ACS WASC goals and targets to guide their continuous improvement efforts.

Some of the tenets that MVLA has instituted in its quest to provide the best possible education are:

- Alignment of site ACS WASC goals and our ACS WASC action plans with district priorities. Our board treats our ACS WASC plans as living, changing documents that best meet the needs of our students.
- Align resources to support our ACS WASC action plans. Both the district and sites use ACS WASC plans to guide resource allocation for staffing, professional development, programs, and materials.
- Align employee evaluations with the ACS WASC goals and foci.
- Create leadership structures that support ACS WASC, such as site leadership teams, course and department teams, and department coordinators.
- Use appropriate metrics to assess progress. Our board has adopted twelve metrics to use in assessing district success that are also aligned with ACS WASC goals.
- Create continuous improvement processes. The district and sites are encouraged to monitor and adjust their plans to meet the changing needs of students.
- Ensure that professional development is aligned with our ACS WASC goals. For the past several years, our professional development has focused on the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards.

The Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District uses its ACS WASC documents to guide its future and is willing to change course as needed. ACS WASC is the process we use to ensure that we provide our kids and community with the very best high school education possible.



Barry Groves, Ed.D., Superintendent  
Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District



## ACS WASC COMMISSIONERS

*(listed by the organizations they represent)*

### Officers

Valene Staley, Chairperson  
Damon Kerby, Assistant Chairperson

### Association of California School Administrators

Grant Bennett  
Richard Bray  
Martin Griffin  
Barry Groves  
Michael McCoy  
Valene Staley  
David Yoshihara

### Association of Christian Schools International

William Walner

### California Association of Independent Schools

Damon Kerby

### California Association of Private School Organizations

Marsha Serafin

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

Sophia Waugh

### California Department of Education

William Ellerbee

### California Federation of Teachers

Vacancy

### California School Boards Association

Barbara Nunes

### California Teachers Association

Lorraine Richards

### Charter Schools

Chase Davenport

### East Asia Regional Council of Schools

Vacancy

### Hawaii Association of Independent Schools

Rodney Chamberlain

### Hawaii Government Employees' Association

Carlyn Fujimoto

### Hawaii State Department of Education

Ann Mahi  
Ronn Nozoe

### Hawaii State Teachers Association

Doris Yamashiro-Tanaka

### National Lutheran School Accreditation

Joel Wahlers

### Pacific Islands

Jon Fernandez

### Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Berit von Pohle

### Postsecondary Education

John Kerr

### Public Members

Joseph Dugan  
Carl Takamura

### Western Catholic Educational Association

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.

### 2015 Commission Meetings

#### Winter

January 26–27, 2015  
San Diego, CA

#### Spring

April 27–28, 2015  
Burlingame, CA

#### Summer

June 22–23, 2015  
Burlingame, CA

## ACS WASC Commission Members

Members who left the Commission this June include: Rebecca Buettner, Davin Condon, Mary Luebben, Ann Mahi, Kathy Ralston, and Jill Zodrow. We deeply appreciate the excellent service provided by these Commissioners and wish them well in their continued service to others.



Awards given at the ACS WASC Summer 2014 Commission Meeting

L-R: Rebecca Buettner, Jill Zodrow, David Condon, Ann Mahi,  
Kathy Ralston, Mary Luebben

ACS WASC welcomes the following new Commission members: Barry Groves, Joseph Dugan, Ann Mahi (reappointed), Ronn Nozoe, Dale Phillips, Marsha Serafin, and David Yoshihara.



## International Update

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



The number of English-medium international schools that exist throughout the world is increasing dramatically. An organization that monitors international schools, ICS Research, reports that there are now more than 7,000 such schools, and that this number is twice the number of international schools that existed ten years ago.

This number is expected to double again within the next ten years. Currently, ACS WASC only markets itself in Asia, where the majority of ACS WASC-accredited international schools are located, but as the *Focus on Learning* process is increasingly recognized worldwide as an exemplary school improvement process, schools from Africa, Europe, and the Middle East have sought out ACS WASC accreditation.

The ACS WASC Commission has been prudent in assessing the opportunities to accredit increasing numbers of international schools, ensuring that ACS WASC has the capacity to serve these new schools without diminishing its ability to provide exemplary service to accredited schools in Hawaii and California. Recognizing that some international schools may not fully understand the ongoing school improvement nature of the accreditation process and may not fully meet the qualifications needed to begin the accreditation process, ACS WASC has further augmented the required documentation which schools seeking accreditation must provide. The newly revised documents also enable schools to gain a better understanding of what will be expected of them, while facilitating the ability of ACS WASC staff to understand more completely the readiness of a school to undertake the accreditation process.

The enhanced application process is consistent with the ACS WASC commitment to ensuring that the *Focus on Learning* process has a direct and positive impact on student learning. While most stateside schools have access to an abundance of student achievement data, access to and the appropriate use of data within international schools continues to be an area for growth. As is true with all ACS WASC-accredited schools, an emphasis on the regular updating of profile data and the

wise use of these data in all aspects of a school's programs is the primary means through which a school can ensure that the accreditation process is an ongoing tool for school improvement rather than a process that is undertaken every few years. In addition to the regular updating and use of profile data, the ongoing school improvement process is facilitated when schools monitor their action plan results and update the plan as appropriate.

International schools are largely independent schools unrelated to any larger organization and are often quite isolated from other similar schools. Unlike most U.S.-based schools, international schools have fewer opportunities to learn from each other and they are not required to abide by the same regulations that govern U.S.-based schools. As such, the ACS WASC *Focus on Learning* process can be especially meaningful to these schools. ACS WASC remains committed to enhancing the educational opportunities available to students enrolled in ACS WASC-accredited international schools.

Recent revisions to the international version of the *Focus on Learning* manual combined with the more comprehensive application process for international schools evidence a commitment by ACS WASC to the integrity of the accreditation process and the assurance that only schools meeting our rigorous standards are accredited. Schools seeking to undertake the process for the first time will understand fully both the potential benefits to the schools and, most importantly, to the students. The ACS WASC expectation is that accreditation is not simply an end product but rather participation in a continuous process of school improvement.



## Office Update

### Northern California Burlingame Office



L-R: Susan Lange, Judy Abbott, Alice Hauser, Frances Rivette, Sheléne Peterson, Cynthia Newton, Lisa Blaylock, Michelle Nunes, Ari Nishiki-Finley, Christine Toti, Francesca Lorenzo, Joanne Cacicedo, Albert Chan, Lino Gantan

### Southern California Temecula Office



L-R: Michelle Allen, Denise Jagoda, Emily Barton, Ginger Hovenic, Alicia Aduato

### ACS WASC Staff News



Francesca Lorenzo began working for the Burlingame ACS WASC Reception Desk in November of 2013. She has a certificate in medical assisting and spends as much time as possible playing softball with her daughter. A San Francisco Bay Area native, Francesca enjoys camping at Lake Tahoe, traveling with her family, and enjoying all the natural beauty of California.

### New ACS WASC Liaisons

ACS WASC has formally added two consultants who will support work throughout the region, both nationally and internationally.



William Huyett is an experienced ACS WASC chair and has worked closely with ACS WASC since 1999. Mr. Huyett began his career in public education in 1974. He has served as a high school vice principal, middle school principal, and high school principal. Mr. Huyett retired as superintendent from the Berkeley Unified School District in 2012.

Mr. Huyett will focus on the integration of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) expectations within the ACS WASC/CDE protocols and processes for California public schools. He will also work as a liaison on the piloting of a systemwide ACS WASC accreditation protocol in conjunction with individual school accreditation.





## New ACS WASC Liaisons – *continued*



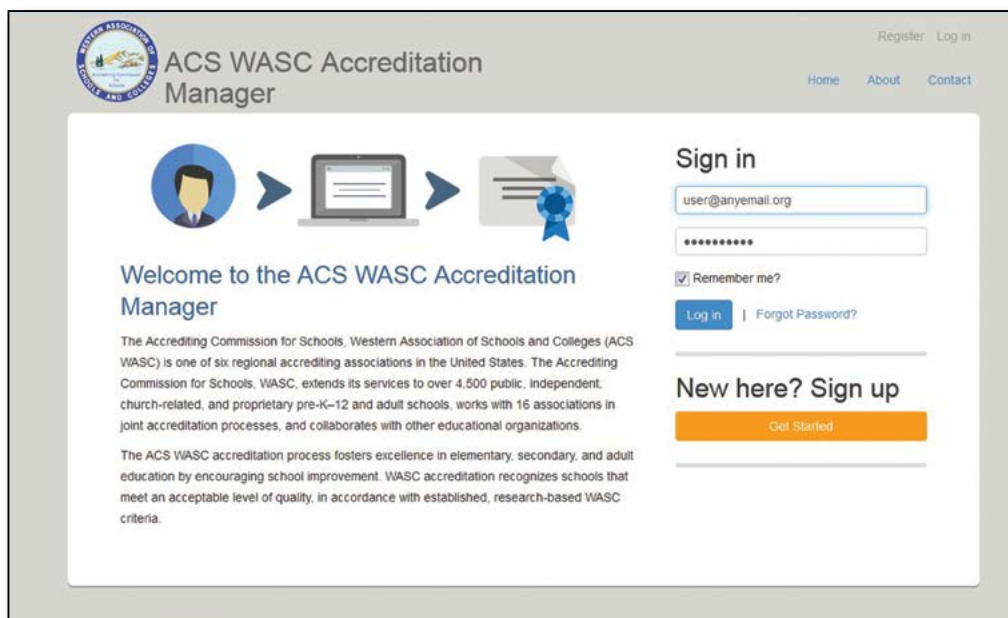
Barbara Parker has worked in international schools in Southeast Asia, Pakistan, Africa, and the Mediterranean for almost 30 years. She was formerly the director of the International School of Beihai. She recently designed and developed curriculum for several new international schools in China and the Asia-Pacific region, some of which were designed particularly for English language learners. During this time, Ms. Parker also served as a chair for several ACS WASC accreditation teams and coached schools toward initial accreditation. Ms. Parker is semi-retired from her most recent position as regional curriculum consultant for the ISS Asia-Pacific Office based in Shekou-Shenzhen, China.

Ms. Parker will join Dr. Harlan Lyso in focusing on international schools through individual assistance, training, coordination, and refinements of the protocols and processes.

## Web Portal: ACS WASC Accreditation Manager

ACS WASC schools and members can now use our new online portal to access personalized accreditation materials and information. The portal is the first step in a series of projects designed to make ACS WASC accreditation more accessible. School principals and ACS WASC members can log in to the portal to view information relevant to their schools and site visits. ACS WASC members can also update their contact information, register for training, and view their accreditation history through the portal.

The portal is designed to personalize the accreditation process and make information easy to access. ACS WASC also continues to provide relevant in-person workshops and visits to provide a holistic accreditation experience.





## Accrediting Commission for Schools

### Western Association of Schools and Colleges

# Volunteering: 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, the Pacific Islands, and East Asia, 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.

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

Accreditation is integral to a school's perpetual cycle of assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring. The 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-1-1/2 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 friends
- Provide insights and reflections as a fellow educator
- Work together to ensure the high achievement of all learners
- Demonstrate one's professional commitment to quality education
- Give back to the educational community

*"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 Member  
Riverside, CA

Please contact our office or visit the ACS WASC website: [www.acswasc.org](http://www.acswasc.org) for further information.

The ACS WASC Volunteer Member Data Sheet can be found on the ACS WASC website at [www.acswasc.org/vc\\_volunteering.htm](http://www.acswasc.org/vc_volunteering.htm)

**WASC**  
*Accrediting Commission for Schools*



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