

Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

Why WASC?

- Certification to the public that the school is a trustworthy institution of learning
- Validates the integrity of a school's program and student transcripts
- Fosters improvement of the school's programs and operations to support student learning
- Assures a school community that the school's purposes are appropriate and being accomplished through a viable educational program
- A way to manage change through regular assessment, planning, implementing, monitoring and reassessment
- Assists a school/district in establishing its priority areas for improvement as a result of the perpetual accreditation cycle that includes
 - School self-assessment of the current educational program for students
 - Insight and perspective from the visiting committee
 - Regular school staff assessment of progress through the intervening years between full self-studies.

The WASC process

- Self-Study
- Visit
- Follow-up

The interrelationship between ESLRs and academic standards

- ESLRs: Expected Schoolwide Learning Results
 - What should all students know and be able to do upon exit from the school?
 - What does it mean to be an educated person?
 - What is the most effective preparation of students for their future?
 - The ESLRs should address the identified critical academic needs of the students.
- Academic Standards
 - Define what students should know and be able to do in each curricular area, the level at which students are expected to demonstrate this knowledge, and grade-level expectation for performance.

WASC criteria

1. Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership and Staff, and Resources
2. Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum
3. Standards-based Student Learning: Instruction
4. Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability
5. School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

The importance of using data

- The self-study revolves around an in-depth gathering of data and information that will enable a school to take a careful and penetrating look at the following:
 - the identified critical academic needs
 - the related expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes)
 - the academic standards
 - what is and isn't working based on the WASC/CDE criteria
- Examples of strategies which will be used for this review include the:
 - Examination of student work
 - Observation of students working
 - Interviewing of the students about what they are learning
 - Review of group test data
 - Analysis of feedback from parents, graduates and community

The importance of the ongoing improvement process for successful student learning

Through the completion of the self-study the school will have accomplished:

1. The involvement and collaboration of all staff and other shareholders to support student achievement
2. The clarification and measurement of what all students know, understand, and be able to do through ESLRs and academic standards
3. The gathering and analyzing of data about students and student achievement
4. The assessment of the entire school program and its impact on student learning in relation to ESLRs, academic standards, and WASC/CDE criteria
5. The alignment of a long-range action plan to the school's areas of need; the development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the plan

The self-study process

- Leadership Team
- Home Groups (subject area teams)
 - Within Home Groups, participants will analyze student data and achievement in relation to the academic standards, the ESLRs and quality of the school program based on the WASC/CDE criteria.
 - The Home Groups will share their results within the Schoolwide Focus Groups.
- Focus Groups (interdisciplinary groups of shareholders)
 - Within the Focus Group, participants will analyze student results to decide what is most important to change in order to quickly and substantively improve student learning.
 - The work of each Focus Group is organized around one of the five categories of criteria with emphasis upon the identified student learning needs and related schoolwide learner outcomes.
 - Each Focus Group must answer the question:
 - What are the implications of the student learning results for this Focus Group?
 - Each Focus Group begins with the analysis of student learning and then the analysis of the criteria to determine what needs to be done in this area in order to promote student learning.

Nature and purpose of the WASC visiting committee

- A visiting committee composed of fellow educators spends 3 ½ days at the school (April 10-13, 2011)
- The purpose is to provide an outside perspective from educators who are thoroughly familiar with the criteria used by the school.
- The visiting committee will meet with Focus Groups and with the Home Groups about the self-study findings, and review evidence and student work.
- The visiting committee will also meet with the Leadership Team/Focus Groups to collaboratively compare finding.
- The resulting discussion and written results assist the school in refining the schoolwide action plan.

WASC accreditation term and determination

- The term of accreditation is based in part upon:
 - the appropriateness of the school's stated purpose
 - goals and objectives for an institution of its type and the degree to which these are being met
 - the degree to which the school meets the WASC criteria and other accreditation term factors that are established as general guidelines to determine the effectiveness of a school's educational program and services
- The Commission also takes into consideration the following:
 - the degree to which the school addressed recommendations of the last visiting committee;
 - the school's use of appropriate student outcome measures to demonstrate evidence of student learning and success;
 - the degree of involvement of all members of the school community in development of the self-study;
 - and the capacity of the school to implement a schoolwide action plan resulting in ongoing improvement.
- The cycle of self-study, visit and follow-up is normally repeated every six years, a full term. However, schools may receive other terms that include one, two, or three years or denial.

Source: http://www.acswasc.org/about_overview.htm