

Suggested Structure of First Focus/Home Group Meeting

Introductions – Welcome Newcomers, Parents, Students (5 min.)

Overview of Accreditation Process – An honest look at ourselves as a school. (10 min.)

- Group Structure
- Year-long Study, Timeline
- Committee visit
- Ongoing Review

Description of Focus Group Task(s) (5 min.)

1. Analysis of student data and achievement
2. Determination of growth needs (what needs attention?)
3. Written document on findings

WASC Criteria

Read particular criteria for your group. (5 min.)

(For this part of the meeting, larger groups may break into small groups of 3 to 5 to allow participation by all.)

Have individuals paraphrase paragraphs sentences to develop a group sense of the meaning. (10 min.)

Discussion Question: What data might we need to examine our school with respect to these criteria statements. (10 min.)

Have small groups report to total group. (5 min.)

What next – how do we gather the data – What would be the best way to organize home groups for data collection (10 min. or as time allows)

Fill out meeting report and email back to self-study coordinator (gclark@connectingwaters.org) within 5 working days. Report should have 1) Summary of plans made, 2) data needs decided on, 3) Problems or questions that came up around the accreditation process, 4) Suggestions to the leadership committee.

Packet of appropriate paperwork

- What is the the Accreditation Process?

- WASC Criteria

- Expected Outcomes of Self-Study

- Overview - Accreditation - Self Study - Focus on Learning

- ESLRs – Charter Docs (will be sent before meeting)

- Initial Student Community Profile Data

- (<http://www.connectingwaters.org/SARC2004.htm>)

- Timeline (not included at this time)

Please respect all participants and finish up in 60 minutes.

Have some fun and enjoy yourselves out there.

“The one serious conviction that a man should have is that nothing is to be taken too seriously. “-
Nicholas Butler (1862 - 1947)

What is the WASC Accreditation Process?

Background:

- The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is one of six regional associations that accredit public and private schools, colleges, and universities in the United States.
- In March of 2003, Connecting Waters Charter School underwent the initial visitation by WASC. During this visit, the WASC team made four recommendations for school improvement and approved our school's application for candidacy status.
- As a candidate for WASC accreditation, Connecting Waters Charter School was given until June of 2006 to prepare for a visit where a WASC visitation team will review our school as a whole.
- During this visit, the committee will review the school's "self-study". They will assess our school based on the WASC criteria. They will recommend a term of accreditation to the Accrediting commission.
- This self-study has already begun and will finalize in the spring of 2005 when the visiting committee arrives to review our school.

What is the WASC Focus on Learning (FOL) accreditation process:

In simple terms, this process asks the whole school:

- Who are you? Who do you say you are (i.e. what is your mission, your vision of yourself)?
- How are you doing? Are you accomplishing what you set out to do?
- After seeing how well you are doing, how will you change to better accomplish your mission?

The included documents and other WASC literature go into much greater detail about what the process is, how it can be organized, and how all members of the school community (AKA, stakeholders) can be included. This process and the document that is produced through it is also referred to as the self-study.

What this means for Connecting Waters Charter School:

Becoming a fully accredited school benefits our school in many ways:

- This accreditation demonstrates that our school has met (or exceeded) the expectations set forth by WASC and CDE.
- It also ensures that all other universities and high schools will accept our students' academic credits.
- Most importantly, this accreditation sets our school up to continue the self-study process on an ongoing basis. .

We can see the accreditation process as a very positive thing for our school. It is not so much that an outside agency is judging us, but more like we have a consulting service helping us to really see ourselves and to improve our school and its service to the students. Let's get the most out of this process. It will help us to know that we are doing the very best that we can!

Whatever you do in this effort helps us all and insures the schools continues success. Thank you for your contribution to this process.

Gary Clark, Self Study Coordinator

Sherri Nelson, School Director

WASC/CDE Focus on Learning Schoolwide Criteria

A. Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum and Instruction

1. All students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results. Through standards-based learning (i.e., what is taught and how it is taught), the expected schoolwide learning results are accomplished.
2. All students have access to the school's entire program and assistance with a personal learning plan to prepare them for the pursuit of their academic, personal and school-to-career goals.
3. Upon completion of the high school program, students will be able to meet all the requirements of graduation.
4. To achieve the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results, all students are involved in challenging learning experiences. All teachers utilize a variety of strategies and resources, including technology and experiences beyond the textbook and the classroom that actively engage students, emphasize higher order thinking skills and help them succeed at high levels.

B. Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability

5. Teachers employ a variety of strategies to evaluate student learning. Students and teachers use assessment results to enhance the educational progress of every student.
6. The school, district, and community regularly review student progress toward achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results and report to the parents and other stakeholders of the community.
7. The assessment of student achievement in relation to the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results drives the school's program development and resource allocation and use (i.e., the human, material, physical, and financial resources are sufficient and utilized effectively to support students in accomplishing the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results)

C. Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

8. All students receive appropriate support to help ensure academic success.
9. Students have access to a system of personal support services, activities and opportunities at the school and within the community.

D. Culture

10. The school is a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning. The culture of the school is characterized by trust, professionalism, and high expectations for all students, and a focus on continuous school improvement.

E. Leadership and Staff

11. Based on student achievement data, the school leadership and staff make decisions and initiate activities that focus on all students achieving the expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards.
12. A qualified staff facilitates achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results through a system of preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development.
13. Leadership and staff are involved in ongoing professional development that focuses on identified student learning needs.
14. The school leadership employs a wide range of strategies to encourage parental and community involvement.

F. Vision and Purpose

15. The school has a clearly stated vision or purpose based on student needs, and current educational research and the belief that all students can achieve at high levels. Supported by the governing board and the central administration, the school's purpose is defined further by expected schoolwide learning results (The expected schoolwide learning results stress attainment of the academic standards.)

Expected Outcomes of Self-Study

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

- 1) The involvement and collaboration of all staff and other stakeholders to support student achievement,
 - 2) The clarification and measurement of what all students should know, understand, and be able to do (through expected schoolwide learning results 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 expected schoolwide learning results, 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.
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Overview - Accreditation - Self Study - Focus on Learning

Rationale

1. How are the students achieving?
2. Is the school doing everything possible to support high achievement for all its students?

School Improvement Cycle

This results in a written summary of findings supported by evidence and the development of an updated schoolwide action plan for the next 3-5 years.

Importance of School's Vision Expected Learning Results (Schoolwide Student Goals)

The collective vision on the part of the school's stakeholders for all students:

What should 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?

This vision provides the school's foundation for establishing expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards which drive the instructional program and the support operations of the school.

Importance of School's Academic Standards

Academic content and performance 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 expectations for performance. They are measurable indicators.

Criteria

The criteria are research-based guidelines for school improvement that focus on student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results and academic content standards. A school will examine all aspects of its program against these six categories.

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

Importance of Data Analysis

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
the academic standards
what is and isn't working based on the WASC/CDE criteria

Expected Outcomes of Self Study

The leadership team will facilitate the engagement of all the school staff and other stakeholders in a self-study through subject area, support, parent, and student home groups and interdisciplinary focus groups. Through the completion of the self-study the school will have accomplished:

1. The involvement and collaboration of all staff and other stakeholders to support student achievement
2. The clarification and measurement of what all students should know, understand, and be able to do through expected schoolwide learning results (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 expected schoolwide learning results, 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 Focus on Learning Process

The Focus on Learning process is the work of the school community organized into three types of groups:

1. Leadership team
2. Home groups (stakeholder groups organized by roles/responsibilities)
3. Focus groups (interdisciplinary groups of stakeholders)

Home groups 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.

Focus groups will analyze student results to decide what is most important to change in order to quickly and substantively improve student learning results. The work of each focus group is organized around one or more eslrs and the six categories of criteria.

Visit

After careful study of the School Report, a visiting committee composed of fellow educators spends three and one-half days at the school.

In collaboration the visiting committee and the leadership team/schoolwide focus groups compare findings. The resulting discussion and written results assist the school in refining the schoolwide action plan with respect to the eslrs and the WASC/CDE criteria.

Follow-up

The governing board and district are involved in the ongoing improvement process and ensure that the follow up process is integral to district planning and goal setting.

Recommendation of Accreditation Terms:

A term of Accreditation for Six Years: a term of six years with a written Progress Report to the School's governing board on the critical areas or major recommendations listed in the Visiting committee Report. Upon review and formal acceptance by the board, the report will be filed with the WASC office

A term of Accreditation for Six years with a Review: a term of six years with a complete Progress Report on critical areas or major recommendations and a one-year, on site review by a two-member committee to be completed not later than the third year of the six year term.

A term of Accreditation for Three years: a term of three years with a Progress Report on critical areas of improvement and action plans, and two day visit as a requisite to continued accreditation.

A term of Accreditation for One or Two years: a term of one or two years with a complete Progress Report and revisit to serve as a warning that unless prompt attention is given to the critical areas or major recommendations, accreditation may be denied.

Denial of Accreditation: Denial of accreditation based on conditions detailed in the Visiting Committee Report.

Model Self Study Process

The tasks of the self- study focus on evaluating the school against the criteria and assessing the degree to which all students are achieving the expected schoolwide learning results (eslrs):

Task 1: Develop student and community profiles.

Responsible Committees: Student/Community Profile Committee, Student and Community/Parent Groups

Task 2: Clarify the school's purpose and the eslrs.

Responsible Committee: Leadership Team

Task 3: Summarize progress since previous full self-study,

Responsible Committee: Leadership Team

Task 4: Review the criteria and identify what evidence is needed to compare the school program with the criteria and the eslrs.

Responsible Committee: Schoolwide Focus Groups

Task 5: Gather and analyze evidence about the quality of the school program with respect to the criteria and the eslrs.

Responsible Committee: Home Groups*

Task 6: Analyze and synthesize all information and data, including findings of all home groups, to determine strengths and growth needs within criteria categories.

Responsible Committee: Schoolwide Focus Groups

Task 7: Create a comprehensive action plan that will drive achievement of the eslrs.

Responsible Committee: Leadership Team

Task 8: Ensure schoolwide consensus on the action plan and the specific action steps to support the plan.

Responsible Committee: Leadership Team, Home Groups*

Task 9: Establish an ongoing follow-up process to monitor implementation and accomplishment of the schoolwide action plan.

Responsible Committee: Leadership Team,*Subject Area/Program Groups, Support Staff Groups, Community/Parent Groups, Student Groups