

Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

Dodson Middle School is going through the WASC accreditation process. In order to better understand WASC, below are some key points about the program's philosophy, importance of accreditation, and steps in the process.

ACS WASC Philosophy

The philosophy of the Accrediting Commission for Schools centers upon three beliefs: (1) a school's goal is successful student learning; (2) each school has a clear purpose and schoolwide student goals; and (3) a school engages in external and internal evaluations as part of continued school improvement to support student learning.

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

Why Accreditation?

- Assures a school community that the school's purposes are appropriate and being accomplished through a viable education program — a trustworthy institution for student learning
- Validates the integrity of the school's program and transcripts
- Facilitates transfer of credits to other English-speaking schools — critical for college/university acceptance worldwide
- Fosters the ongoing improvement of the school's programs and operations to support student learning
- Provides valuable insight from fellow educators visiting the school
- Benefits schools that choose joint accreditation or other collaborative processes, e.g., ACS WASC/CDE.

ACS WASC Accreditation Process

Initial Visit Process

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

Self-Study Process/Full Visit

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

Follow-Up Process

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