

Focus on Learning: WASC/CDE Process Guide for Library Media Programs

The WASC accreditation process is a powerful stimulus for schools to re-examine or define their goals and objectives. It is an opportunity to look introspectively at the instructional program of the school and to write descriptions that emphasize both accomplishments and the need for change.

Reporting on the library media program in the WASC assessment document can become an opportunity for leadership and program promotion as library media personnel become informed and active participants in the local self-study program. Their task is to define a quality library media program that is integral to local curriculum development and implementation. These materials are designed to assist in the accomplishment of this task.

The title of the current document for accreditation of high schools is Focus on Learning. Its aim is to foster program improvement. It is based in a process that involves the entire school staff in identifying Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs). Its organizational design is focused in three types of groups or teams: Leadership Team, Focus Groups, and Home or Discipline/Stakeholder Groups.

This brochure is intended to guide library media teachers, administrators, and others as they use the Focus on Learning document to interpret, assess, and develop the library media program.

Tips:

- Copies of Focus on Learning should be available in the library media center.
- Read the entire document carefully.
- Highlight items that are impacted by or have potential impact for the library media program.
- Highlight phrases and items relevant to the library media program (e.g., resources, technology, critical thinking, problem solving, lifelong learning). Each of these highlighted items should be addressed in the self study.
- Statements about the library media center need to be included throughout the report and will be more powerful than a separate library report.

I. Leadership Team

The Leadership Team includes chairs and other important representatives from all schoolwide focus groups. It is essential that the library media teacher participate on the Leadership Team.

II. Focus Groups

Schoolwide focus groups include representatives from most, if not all, home groups. Every staff member serves on a focus group, including all library media staff. The library media teacher should consider participating in more than one focus group. Focus groups will address the following six criteria categories:

- A. Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership and Staff, and Resources
- B. Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum
- C. Standards-based Student Learning: Instruction
- D. Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability
- E. School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

Some focus groups may address more than one criteria category, depending on size of school staff, number of criteria in each category, number of relevant ESLRs for each category, or number of members in the focus group.

Rationale and perspective for a potential role for LMTs are provided for each focus group below.

A. Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership and Staff, and Resources

The schoolwide mission statement should include reference to the importance of information literacy and problem solving. Sample statements might read:

- “Ensure that students and teachers are effective users of ideas and information.”
- “The purpose of school is to help students learn to use their minds well.”

A statement of the library’s mission and vision should include:

- “Library media center as central to the nurture of learning.”

Library media teacher should be involved in leadership and decision-making.

Qualified library media staff facilitates achievement of academic standards and the ESLRs.

B. Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum

C. Standards-based Student Learning: Instruction

The role of the library media teacher in helping to deliver standards-based curriculum and instruction is essential and obvious. Refer to FOL criteria for these focus groups. Because the involvement of the library media teacher in helping to deliver standards-based curriculum and instruction is so essential, the school should provide numerous examples of how this occurs. Examples might include:

- The library media teacher presents strategies for analyzing a topic from multiple perspectives when using a variety of print and electronic resources.
- The library media center supports students on all curricular paths.
- The library media center provides support for achievement of expected schoolwide learning results for all students.
- Students routinely use a variety of library resources for learning and engage in learning experiences beyond the textbook and the classroom.
- Students integrate a wide range of resources into their learning in order to strengthen real world problem solving. They conduct in-depth library research and use databases, on-line networks, and primary source documents to access information beyond the classroom.

D. Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability

The research process is relevant to performance-based assessment:

- The research process is a performance.
- Both the process and the product of research can be assessed.
- The research process is applicable for either portfolio or authentic assessment models.
- The researcher, the classroom teacher, and the library media teacher should all be involved in the assessment.

Resources, services, activities, and programs of the library media center should be designed to support a variety of assessment strategies.

Assessment of academic standards and ESLRs should drive library media program modification and development.

Assess library media program support for the following student competencies:

- Student as gatherer of information,

- Student as user/consumer of information,
- Student as producer of information.

C. School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

The library is a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning.

The library media staff and the library media program provide basic and essential support for students' personal and academic growth.

III. Home Groups

The following groups are identified:

- A. Discipline Specific Committees include all certificated personnel in a designated subject area.
- B. Support Staff Groups are identified as those “that contribute to the success of all students.” This includes library media staff.
- C. Students and Parents are represented as Home Groups.

IV. Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs)

ESLRs are what students should know, be able to do and understand by graduation. ESLRs are more specific than the mission statement; one must be able to show evidence for each ESLR. Library staff should ensure that library-focused ESLRs are included. Sample statements:

- “Students will be able to access, evaluate, and use information from a variety of resources to meet personal and curricular needs.”
- “Students will develop skills necessary to function in our constantly changing technological society.”
- Students will be lifelong learners who access, analyze and apply information to solve problems.

V. Standards

National school library standards are described in *Information Power*. California standards are in the CSLA document *Standards and Guidelines for Strong School Libraries*. These standards can be used for the library media program in the discussion of school-wide standards. The first three are as follows:

- The student who is information literate accesses information efficiently and effectively.
- The student who is information literate evaluates information critically and competently.
- The student who is information literate uses information accurately and creatively.

VI. Rubrics

The rubrics describe varying levels of performance for meeting the concepts of each of the schoolwide criteria. Items relevant to the library media program are embedded throughout the rubrics for each criterion.

It is therefore advisable to provide separate written statements to each focus group highlighting/emphasizing how the library media program addresses the criteria in the area of focus. **All groups will welcome your input.** This is an opportunity to ensure that the quality of the library media program is represented in the final report/document/self study report in a quantitative manner. Read all rubrics carefully.

VII. Criteria Guide Questions for discussion and evidence analysis

To be used for discussion and evidence analysis by all Home and Focus Groups.

A. Criteria Guide Questions for Home Groups or Curricular Disciplines

In addition to the Questions for Support Services, it is essential to review the discussion questions for each criterion and assist each home group in recognizing the role of the library media program as departments consider or focus on questions for their curricular area.

B. Criteria Guide Questions for Support Services

Questions identified for support services are relevant and essential for focusing on the library media program as a key element in supporting the achievement of academic standards and the ESLRs for all students.

C. Criteria Guide Questions for Students and Parents

Suggest that your school consider adding questions for students and parents to include items more specific to the library media center. The questions suggested in FOL for student interviews are very relevant to the library media center, and students will be asked these questions by the visiting committee team. See also FOL for parent and student survey suggestions to discuss.

VIII. Evidence

Invite at least one member of the visiting team to come to the library media center to see evidence of students in action. Products of students' learning through library media resources and programs should be in evidence in all classrooms and in the library. Evidence must be obvious and accessible. Observable evidence includes:

- what students are doing and producing
- student interviews and observations
- hard data and information
- other interviews, observations, etc.

IX. Action Plan

The action plan addresses the major areas for growth identified by the self study. The action plan should emphasize the development of evaluation strategies to assess achievement of the ESLRs and academic standards for all students.

X. Resources

Review FOL key terminology for definitions of terms. Review FOL lists of resources; it is highly recommended that these resources be acquired and made accessible to staff in the library media center.

Selected for the Library Media Program

The text on the following pages consists of excerpts from *Focus on Learning: Joint WASC/CDE Process Guide for Accreditation, 2003-2004 Edition (Updated Fall 2004 for 2005-2006 Schools)*, selected by the writing committee for their relevance to the library media program. Page references are omitted because the page numbers and exact wording for FOL change slightly in each edition. However, the page headings used here should lead to the section in FOL from which this text is excerpted.



Process Data

In addition to demographic and outcome data, collecting and analyzing process data strengthens the Focus on Learning process. The chart below outlines the kinds of process data that can be collected and later analyzed in home (stakeholder) and focus groups.

Collaboration and Trust

- encouraging open communication
- sharing decision-making
- supporting cooperation
- supporting teachers

Instruction

- evidence of sound instructional strategies
- evidence of challenging, relevant instruction
- integration of vocational and academic content
- consistency and articulation across grade levels, courses and subject matter.
- amount of time allotted to specified instructional practices
- linkage of classroom learning to experiences outside the classroom
- support for teacher collaboration

Instructional Resources

(textbooks, supplemental books, technology, manipulatives, materials, equipment, supplies, etc.)

- quantity
- quality
- accessibility for all students
- appropriateness

Resources

- instructional resources (see above)
- allocation of financial resources
- use and adequacy of facilities
- staffing



Interviews with Students

The following questions can be asked of students as a way of understanding what best supports their learning:

- What kinds of projects do you do?
- For a particular project, what were the stages you went through to develop your final product?
- In what ways does this project show your understanding of important concepts?
- What kinds of problems do you solve?
- How often do you solve difficult but interesting problems for which there are often many possible answers?
- How often do you do research in the library and elsewhere with other students?
- Are the resources, such as books and other materials at your school adequate for your research projects and other activities?
- How often do you talk about what you have just read with a group of students in your class?
- What kinds of homework do you have?
- What ways can you suggest to better show how and what you know?
- What does this school do to help you “make connections” among the various subject areas?

Additional Questions:

How could the school library media center best be improved?

- (a) More books
- (b) More technology
- (c) Better working environment
- (d) More adult help
- (e) More instruction in how to use the library media center

Are the human resources, such as library media teachers, library media technicians, etc., adequate to meet your learning needs?

Note: These same questions can be modified for use with parents.



Rubrics

Although a rubric section has been omitted from Focus On Learning, 2003-2004 Edition (Updated Fall 2004 for 2005-2006 Schools), the following statements are quoted directly from past rubrics in the FOL document and were selected for their relevance to library media programs.

A. Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership and Staff, and Resources

- The instructional goals established for each subject area, course, and program are clearly related to achievement of the rigorous academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results for all students.
- The school's leadership consists of administrators, faculty, students, staff, and community members who work together to shape and promote the culture of the school; celebrate excellence, improvement, and learning; and make sound decisions and resource allocations to ensure the established expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards are achieved.
- The school has a comprehensive system for communicating with parents and community members.
- Adequate funds are effectively utilized to support staff through staff development, availability of learning materials, support, personnel (teacher's aides and tutors), technical assistance, planning and collaboration time, and technology.
- The school's physical plant supports and enhances the learning environment. It is well maintained, functional and attractive, and supports the special needs of all students. There is space which adequately supports all classes in addition to areas on campus for students and staff to go for collaboration and research.
- There is an adequate supply of current textbooks, other resource materials and reference materials for every classroom. This library is well supplied with up-to-date materials and technology. There is a plan in place to stay current and update essential technology.
- The school leadership is actively working to keep the library up-to-date in both materials and technology.

B. Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum

- The curriculum emphasizes learning about subjects in depth, connecting new learning across disciplines.



C. Standards-based Student Learning: Instruction

- Instructional staff works collaboratively with community resources to continuously improve the curriculum and actively involve students in learning that is relevant and rigorous.
- Throughout the school instructional strategies are used that require active involvement of the learner and help students develop an array of techniques to organize, access, and apply knowledge. Inquiry is the norm at all levels and in all subjects.
- 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.
- Technology is an integral tool in the learning process for all students. The use of technology is planned specifically to help students achieve the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results.
- Technology is available to help students improve their skills, apply knowledge, develop hypotheses, explore topics, and work on projects.
- Students experience approaches that involve inquiry, formulating and solving problems, teamwork, reflecting on and communicating about their work, and revising work in progress.

D. Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability

- Teachers incorporate assessment tasks into instruction in order to stimulate thinking and learning, including students' ability to analyze, organize, plan, interpret, explain, synthesize, evaluate, and communicate important experiences or ideas. Teachers use the most appropriate of a variety of assessments to analyze each student's learning.

E. School culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth:

- The culture of the school is characterized by trust, professionalism, and high expectations for all students.
- Existing resources and support activities are focused on helping all students to achieve the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results. Various forms of technology (e.g., computers and other media) help to provide access to the curriculum and support for all students. Extensive and up-to-date library services and resources are available throughout an extended day and are integrated and articulated with the curriculum, academic standards and expected schoolwide learning results.



Evidence

The following examples of evidence to support the FOL criteria are direct quotes from the FOL document. They are selected because they describe projects and observations that are based in/or outcomes of the library media program.

A. Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership and Staff and Resources.

- The extent to which the governing board delegates implementation of policies to the professional staff.
- Descriptions of collaboration across the school.
- The extent to which the staff is supported by time, personnel, material and fiscal resources.
- Availability of materials, space, and equipment to support student learning.
- The extent to which staff members have taken advantage of professional development options available.
- Procedures for maintaining the physical facilities, acquiring and maintaining adequate instructional materials, and hiring and nurturing a well-qualified staff.
- Number of staff members and level of professional expertise.
- Availability of materials, space, and equipment to support student learning.
- The school plan which describes how resources will be utilized.
- How resources are being coordinated to support all students and accomplishing the academic standards and the ESLRs.
- How district resources are being applied to students accomplishing the academic standards and the ESLRs.

B. Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum

- The extent all students have access to the school's entire program.
- How student work and student engagement in learning demonstrates the implementation of the curriculum.



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- The process to which there is integration among disciplines and articulation between departments.

C. Standards-based Student Learning: Instruction

- Observation of students working and student work that illustrates the extent to which all students are involved in learning to assist them in achieving the academic content standards and the ESLRs (examples of students working include: oral presentations, individual and group work, discussions, investigations and experiments, performances; examples of student work include: essays, reports, project products, journals, portfolios, open-ended responses, tests)
- Student work which illustrates the extent to which technology is used to assist students in achieving the academic standards and the ESLRs
- Student work which illustrates the extent to which current teaching practices provide all students with the tools to gather and create knowledge and with opportunities to use those tools to research, inquire, gather, discover and invent knowledge on their own, and communicate
- Student work that provides evidence that students are, over time, becoming more adept at gathering information and presenting it in written, oral and multimedia format
- Student work that reflects the materials and resources beyond the textbook available to students, such as:
 - utilization and availability of library/multimedia resources and services
 - availability of opportunities to access databases, original source documents and computer information networks
 - experiences, activities and resources which link students to the real world
- Extent to which school's educational program maintains the flexibility to accommodate changes in student interests and areas of career exploration.

D. Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability

- Examples of how professional development activities and topics have been determined by schoolwide assessment results.
- Examples of how the site, district and board decisions on allocation of resources are influenced by schoolwide assessment results.



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- The extent to which assessment is used to improve instruction for students.
 - Student work demonstrating the degree to which assessment allows students to apply knowledge and skills to complete real-life performance based tasks.
 - Examples of how the site, district and board decisions on allocation of resources are influenced by schoolwide assessment results.

E. School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

- The existing policies and use of resources ensure a safe, clean and orderly place that nurtures learning.
- The degree to which caring and high expectations for all students is demonstrated on a daily basis.
- The support mechanisms which the school has established to assure access to and success within an integrated, standards-based curriculum for all students.
- Instructional resources available through library /media services and facilities.
- Strategies which promote a more personalized approach to learning.
- Alternative instructional options which allow access to and progress in the rigorous core curriculum.

Background Reading

Readers of this brochure should be familiar with the following publications:

Check it out! California Department of Education, 1998. Call 916/445-1260 to order.

Focus on Learning: Joint WASC/CDE Process Guide. 2003 Edition. Available from Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Schools, 533 Airport Blvd., Suite 200, Burlingame, CA 94050. Call 650-696-1060, or check the website at <http://www.acswasc.org>.

Good Ideas! Annual newsletter published by the California School Library Association. Call 916-447-2684 to request copies, or check the website at www.schoollibrary.org.

Information Power, Building Partnerships for Learning. American Library Association and Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1998. Call 800/545-2433 or order online at www.alastore.ala.org

Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning. American Library Association and Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1998. Call 800/545-2433 or order online at www.alastore.ala.org.

Standards and Guidelines for Strong School Libraries. California School Library Association, 2004. (call 916-447-2684) or check the website @ <http://www.csla.net>

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