WASC Words International
— Spring 2020 —

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WASC COVID-19 UPDATES

“We are concerned and empathetic for those around the world who are suffering as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. We continue to work closely with the schools and members that are part of the greater ACS WASC community to provide support and understanding.”

— Barry Groves, President
Personalized Support for International Schools

WASC has been working individually with each international school regarding the next steps to ensure the health and safety of all due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Visits have been postponed until the 2020-21 school year with full knowledge that the scheduling for all types of visits is continually evolving. In addition, some of the visits will be re-extended or conducted virtually. The expectation is that postponed visiting committees will continue with the same chair and team or there will be a reassigned visiting committee chair and a reconstituted team. If you have questions regarding your school’s upcoming visit or the WASC response to COVID-19, please visit the COVID-19 Update page and the WASC Coronavirus Q&A.

You can also contact Marilyn George or one of the WASC International Consultants for individual guidance, please see the contact information at the bottom of this newsletter.

Entering the World of Virtual Visits

WASC is piloting virtual initial, mid-cycle, progress, and self-study visits. This spring, due to the current COVID-19 travel restrictions, the first blended (partially onsite, partially online) self-study visit was conducted with four team members onsite in Taiwan and the visiting committee chair coordinating and participating on the visit virtually. In order for this visit to be successful, the expectation was that the school’s internet had to be sufficient to allow for video and audio communications — both recorded and live. The overall expectations of this pilot virtual self-study visit are shared below:

- The virtual or blended visit focuses on student learning and well-being in the school’s continuous improvement process.
- Every care must be taken to ensure that the process and result will be as rigorous and thorough as an onsite self-study visit.

Through initial feedback from this pilot visit, WASC learned that if the school’s internet is reliable and the internet speed and bandwidth adequate, the visit can work very smoothly. It is also very important that there is an ongoing working relationship between the WASC visiting committee chair and the school leadership in the understanding of all aspects of the accreditation process, the use of technology for meetings and classroom visits, the need for continual communication, etc. In addition, all members of the visiting committee need to be comfortable using technology with IT support from the school or a team member.

Planning and Piloting a Virtual Initial Visit

In April, following the virtual self-study visit pilot, an international school has asked to pilot a virtual initial visit in May. The same expectations for the virtual self-study visit noted above have guided the development of this pilot virtual initial visit.

Beginning with questions to frame the thinking, educators from both WASC and the school have focused on areas such as:

- How can the integrity of an in-person visit be maintained virtually?
- How can the WASC team observe student learning in a virtual environment?
How can we conduct a virtual tour of a school to ensure that health and safety standards are met?

When the visit takes place, how do we ensure the team members don't have sleep deprivation, with team members in time zones with up a 12-hour difference?

What process do we put in place to ensure child protection when speaking with students online?

How do we ensure a continual focus on student learning and the ongoing growth of the school?

The initial visit visiting committee will be using resources from a number of sources: Focus on Learning criteria and the WASC Guiding Principles, Quality Matters Standards for online learning, etc. Through the synergy of group thinking, the pilot visit is now a go. WASC looks forward to conducting virtual visits in order to serve the needs of the region at the time.

**International School and Visiting Committee Training**

WASC regularly provides training throughout the region for the international schools and chairs and members in person through conferences such as EARCOS, ACAMIS, and at school site locations. For the next school year, if the circumstances due to the Coronavirus pandemic permit, WASC will continue to offer in-person training. However, WASC is scheduling more virtual trainings, webinars, and using chat rooms to serve the needs of schools and members for all aspects of the accreditation process. Training will now include strategies for hosting or serving on virtual accreditation visits. We will continue to work to confirm the training opportunities as the current situation evolves; you will be informed of training opportunities as they become available.

**ACCREDITATION NEWS**

**AIMS Technology System Update**

This year, we established a direct link on the ACS WASC website for international school materials: www.acswasc.org/international-accreditation-process/. You will find past editions of WASC Words International and all of the information needed for the accreditation process, including forms and templates.

By the end of July, WASC will be able to provide full functionality and access to its updated technology portal system, AIMS. Once operational, AIMS will provide schools, members, and staff a more efficient and effective technology platform. Schools will have their own school portal to review their accreditation status; find next accreditation steps; register for training; update their school profile and manage key staff; and access the appropriate accreditation protocols and materials. Visiting committees members will also be able to more efficiently update their information and navigate through accreditation material in the new member portals.

**International Task Force on Child Protection Update**

During 2014-15, an international group of leaders of various associations, including worldwide accreditation and inspection agencies, met to evaluate and improve protection for students in schools, forming the International Task Force on Child Protection (ITFCP). This
A comprehensive renewal involved modifications in the child safeguarding expectations for accreditation and inspection agencies; these included policies, procedures, practices, people, training/education and facility. At that time new accreditation standards were developed and adopted by all of the worldwide accrediting agencies with regular sharing by all during the past years through dialog and discussion via the ITFCP. However, in May 2019, the ITFCP reconvened to review overall progress and refine a five year plan to ensure continual progress and accountability is occurring worldwide. Subcommittees were formed based on these refined goals, one of which has been the Accountability Committee.

During December 2019, the ITFCP met to continue the work of the identified subcommittees based on the revised ITFCP five-year plan's goals and actions. The specific work of the Accountability Committee was to review and refine the child safeguarding expectations that evolved from the earlier work of the ITFCP that started five years ago.

In preparation for this December meeting all accreditation and other inspection agencies that had representatives on the Accountability Committee reviewed the existing ITFCP expectations and shared their current standards related to child protection in order to create a crosswalk. As the Accountability Committee studied this crosswalk, commonalities and gaps were identified for each association and emphases for improvement were suggested. Based on group consensus, several areas within the broad categories of school policies, people, and procedures were strengthened, such as adoption of an internationally accepted definition of child abuse, improved student voice in school operations, student-on-student code of conduct, and the ethical use of technology with accountability. This last area is especially apropos given the much greater use of technology in remote instruction. More information can be found on the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children website at www.icmec.org/. Particularly, there is safeguarding information during the COVID-19 crisis can be found here: www.icmec.org/child-protection-during-covid-19-response/.

Focus on Learning: Empowering Schools to Adopt An Infinite Mindset

The essential practices of an infinite mindset that Simon Sinek describes in The Infinite Game (2019) seem particularly well-suited to our current challenges in responding to the global pandemic. The ACS WASC Focus on Learning process is designed to inspire schools to adopt an infinite mindset, which includes being focused on where the school and the students are headed and being committed to taking care of one another along the way (Sinek, 2019. pg. 26). One essential practice of an infinite mindset is preparing for existential flexibility. Existential flexibility includes appreciation for the unpredictable, which allows people to make changes.

ACS WASC Focus on Learning’s guiding principles and practices are intended to become normal habits that lead to continuously improved student learning. When these principles and practices are well-established in a school, people are able to adjust to unpredictable situations while maintaining the vision and mission of the organization. Many schools are discovering that the culture of collaboration, which they had established onsite, has developed into a strong online community. The previous onsite practices of regularly examining student performance and evaluating the effectiveness of programs and lessons have enabled them to evaluate the evidence they are collecting from online instruction with confidence. Focus on Learning is a continuous improvement practice that strengthens and supports an infinite mindset, including preparing for existential flexibility. Focus on Learning is not just an event; it is a way of thinking and being.

In the Next Issues
ACS WASC publishes WASC Words International biannually. The newsletter includes accreditation news and information for our international schools. The upcoming fall newsletter will contain links to new accreditation requirements, upcoming events, and the updated training schedule for the 2020-21 school year. The spring newsletter will provide advance notice of training for the subsequent school year, a summary of upcoming WASC events, and notification of any other important changes.

**International Staff and Consultants**

International WASC staff and consultants are available to provide accreditation coaching and training in the following areas:

- Asia: Barbara Parker, based in China
- Asia, especially Southeast Asia: Stephen Messiah, based in Thailand
- Japan, Korea, and Taiwan: Alana Steward
- Africa, Europe, and Middle East: David Ottaviano, based in Italy

**David Ottaviano, Director of International Accreditation Services**

David Ottaviano joined ACS WASC in July 2017 as the director of international accreditation services. Dr. Ottaviano most recently served as the head of GEMS International School – Al Khail in Dubai. He has extensive experience in school administration and ACS WASC. His tenure as a school head includes ten years as a public school superintendent in New Jersey and 21 years as the head of private, international schools in Serbia, Italy, Japan, Romania, and the UAE. Dr. Ottaviano has served as president of IB North Asia, vice president of East Asia Region Council of International Schools (EARCOS), and chairman of Central and Eastern Schools Association (CEESA). Dr. Ottaviano received a B.A. from Grove City College in Psychology, an M.A. in School Psychology from Montclair State University, and an Ed.D. from Fairleigh Dickinson University in Educational Leadership and Psychology.

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Stephen Massiah, International Consultant

Stephen (Steve) Massiah joined ACS WASC in July 2017 as an international consultant working with schools throughout Asia. He is based out of Bangkok, Thailand. Steve comes to ACS WASC after successful positions in international schools in Doha, Qatar; Seoul, South Korea; Bangkok, Thailand; and Hong Kong. Prior to this he was a principal in Toronto, Canada; an adjunct instructor at the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto; and an interim position (secondment) with the Ontario College of Teachers.

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Barbara Parker, International Consultant

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.

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Alana Steward, International Consultant

Alana Steward joined the ACS WASC team as a part-time international consultant in July 2017. After beginning her teaching career in her native Canada, Alana has been teaching and leading in schools in various countries for the past 19 years. She has traveled extensively with her family and has worked in countries including Macau, Kyrgyzstan, Singapore, Austria, and Japan.

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