

ACS WASC

Section 2227. Recognized Accrediting Agencies

(a) The Board shall recognize accrediting agencies that meet the following requirements:

1. operate continuously for at least five years prior to applying for recognition under this section; **The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) has been operating since 1962 serving schools throughout the United States and Internationally. ACS WASC was one of the original 5 Regionals throughout the US originally covering the just the Western US and Asian Pacific Rim, but now have schools throughout the World.**
2. maintain membership in a peer organization that supports accrediting agencies in continuous improvement and alignment with best practices in school accreditation; **ACS WASC is a member of the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA) and National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPISA). ACS WASC maintains membership with 24 other national and international organizations that value the relationship and working together to support high-quality student learning and well-being through a school's continuous improvement process.**
3. use a peer review process that includes evaluation by leaders of similar school types; **The accreditation process for independent schools, designed and used by ACS WASC, involves a peer review led by leaders and peers from similar schools throughout the country.**
4. appropriately train all staff and peer reviewers who are involved in the accreditation process; **ACS WASC senior staff is composed of former teachers, administrators and educational leaders from schools throughout the United States and have extensive experience in ACS WASC's Criterion and processes. Visiting Committee members receive training and advising prior to their visit through training modules and WASC Advisors. Visiting Committee chairs work directly with WASC advisors and WASC provides On-Demand Training.**
5. accredit schools based on publicly accessible documented standards, including mission, governance, finance, program, community of the school, administration, development, admissions, personnel, general health and safety, child and student protection and well-being, facilities, student services, school culture, and residential life (as applicable); **ACS WASC maintains and has developed Criterion based on research and best practices. The current set of Criterion can be found here (within the Guide the Criterion (Standards are found): [Focus On Learning](#)**
6. perform a comprehensive onsite visit of any school seeking accreditation while such school is in session; **ACS WASC's process is as follows: the school applies for accreditation, the school is vetted through various means including a phone call/zoom where several questions are asked related to the application, once the school is approved to continue the school goes through the initial visit which includes a report. After the initial visit, the**

Visiting Committee develops a report with a recommendation. If the recommendation is accepted the Initial status is three years (fully accredited). After 2.5-3 years the school then proceeds with a Self-Study and then a visit which will begin the six year cycle. The Self-Study visit ranges from 3-3.5 days in person. Visits are all conducted during the academic year when school is in session.

7. require that schools seeking accreditation maintain a curriculum that is informed by research, document individual student progress, and have mechanisms for monitoring, assessing, and providing feedback on student progress;

Category B: Curriculum

Criterion B1. Rigorous and Relevant Standards-Based Curriculum

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All students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the schoolwide learner goals/graduate profile, academic standards, and the college and career readiness indicators in order to meet graduation requirements.

B1.1 Current Educational Research and Thinking: The school provides an effective, rigorous, relevant, and coherent curriculum based on current educational research and thinking that supports the schoolwide student goals and academic standards.

B1.2 Congruence with Schoolwide Student Goals: There is congruence among the concepts and skills taught, the schoolwide learner goals/graduate profile, academic standards, and the college and career readiness indicators.

B1.3 Academic Standards and College and Career Readiness Indicators: The school has college and career readiness indicators and academic standards for each subject area, course, and/or program that meet or exceed graduation requirements.

B1.4 Curricular Integration: There is integration between/among areas of study, academic standards, and college and career readiness indicators.

B1.5 Community Resources and Articulation and Follow-up Studies: The school engages with community partners and resources, articulates regularly with feeder schools, local colleges and universities, and technical schools.

Criterion B2. Equity and Access to Curriculum

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All students have equal access to the school's entire program and the school prioritizes opportunity and advancement for all students. Students receive assistance with a personal learning plan to meet the requirements of promotion or graduation and are prepared for the pursuit of their academic, personal, and career goals.

B2.1 Variety of Programs and Full Range of Choices: All students are able to make appropriate choices and pursue a full range of realistic college and career and/or other educational options. The school provides for career exploration, preparation for postsecondary education, and career technical options for all students.

B2.2 Access to Curriculum, Including Real World Experiences, by All Students: A rigorous, relevant, and coherent curriculum that includes real world applications is accessible to all students through all courses/programs offered. Course enrollment patterns reflect the diversity of the school's students.

B2.3 Student-Parent-Staff Collaboration: Parents, students, and staff experience a sense of belonging and value within the school community and collaborate in developing and monitoring a student's personal learning plan, including college and career and/or other educational goals.

Category C: Learning and Teaching

Criterion C1: Student Engagement in Challenging and Relevant Learning Experiences

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All students experience an equity-centered learning environment and are involved in challenging and relevant learning experiences reflecting schoolwide goals, academic standards, and college and career readiness indicators.

C1.1 Results of Student Observations and Examining Work: All students are involved in challenging and relevant work in an equity-centered learning environment.

C1.2 Student Understanding of Learning Expectations: All students understand the standards/expected performance levels for each area of study in order to demonstrate learning and college and career readiness.

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Criterion C2: Student-Centered Instruction through a Variety of Strategies and Resources

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All teachers use a variety of strategies and resources to create an equity-centered learning environment that actively engage all students in creative and critical thinking, problem solving, and application of learning.

C2.1 Teachers Facilitate Learning: Teachers use a variety of evidence-based instructional methodologies and encourage student agency within an equity-centered environment.

C2.2 Student Voice and Agency: Student voice and agency are equally applicable for all students, empowering them to be meaningfully engaged in decision making about their own learning, strategic thinking, and problem solving.

C2.3 Digital Learning and Problem Solving: Teachers use technology and digital learning tools to enhance and support student learning and help students solve real-world problems.

C2.4 Career Preparedness and Applied Learning: Teachers provide learning opportunities that extend beyond the textbook and classroom, deepen students' depth of knowledge, and prepare them for college and careers.

Category D: Assessment and Accountability

Criterion D1: Reporting and Accountability Process

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The school leadership and instructional staff use effective and equitable assessment processes to collect, disaggregate, analyze, and report schoolwide student performance data to the school staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders/educational partners. The analysis of data guides the school's programs and processes, the allocation and usage of resources, and forms the basis for the development of the schoolwide action plan aligned with the school goals.

D1.1 Professionally Acceptable Assessment Process: The school leadership and instructional staff use effective and equitable assessment processes to collect, disaggregate, analyze, and report student performance data to all stakeholders/educational partners.

D1.2 Basis for Determination of Performance Level: The school leadership and instructional staff have agreed upon the basis for students' grades, growth, and performance levels to ensure consistency across and within grade levels and content areas.

D1.3 Assessment of Program Areas: School teams use assessment results to make changes in the school program, implement professional development activities, and allocate resources demonstrating a results-driven, continuous school improvement process.

D1.4 Schoolwide Modifications Based on Assessment Results: School leadership assesses programs and expectations for students' academic growth and progress.

Criterion D2: Using Student Assessment Strategies to Monitor and Modify Learning Progress

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Teachers employ a variety of appropriate assessment strategies to evaluate student learning. Students and teachers use these findings to modify the learning/teaching practices to improve student learning

within and across grade levels and departments.

D2.1 Monitoring Student Growth: Teachers determine and monitor all students' growth and progress toward meeting the schoolwide student goals/graduate profile, academic standards, and college and career readiness expectations.

D2.2 Teacher and Student Feedback: Teachers provide timely, specific, and descriptive feedback in order to support students in achieving learning goals. Teachers use student feedback and dialogue to monitor progress and learn about the degree to which learning experiences are understood, relevant, and prepare students for college and careers.

D2.3 Demonstration of Student Achievement: Teachers use the analysis of formative and summative assessments to guide, modify, and adjust curricular and instructional approaches.

8. require that schools seeking accreditation promote an equitable, just, and inclusive community of adults and students, foster a culture of learning, and inspire students to respect and value diversity in its many forms;

Category E: School Culture and Support for Student Personal, Social-Emotional, and Academic Growth

Criterion E1: Family/Guardian and Community Involvement

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The school leadership employs a wide range of culturally sensitive and inclusive strategies to encourage family and community involvement, especially with the learning/teaching process.

E1.1 Strategies and Processes: School implements a range of culturally sensitive strategies and processes for ongoing family and community involvement in the learning and teaching process for all students.

E1.2 Inclusive Cultural Understanding: School leadership values the cultures of students and adults through the learning opportunities and materials provided to develop an inclusive cultural understanding.

E1.3 Rapport and Trust: School leadership develops rapport and trust with students, staff, families, and the community, valuing the identities of all individuals.

Criterion E2: School Culture and Environment

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The school leadership focuses on continuous school improvement by providing a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning and develops a culture that is characterized by trust, inclusivity, professionalism, and high expectations for all students.

E2.1 Policies and Resources: The policies, regulations, and resources ensure a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning for all students, including internet safety.

E2.2 Trust, Respect, and Equity: The entire school community has an atmosphere of trust, respect, and equity in support of student achievement and well-being.

E2.3 School Culture: Students experience a caring school culture that is conducive to learning, with high expectations for all and a learning environment that honors individual differences, and social emotional needs.

Criterion E3: Personal, Social-Emotional, and Academic Support

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All students receive appropriate personal, social-emotional, and academic support to help ensure student learning, college and career readiness and success. Students with special talents and/or needs have access to an equitable system of personal support service, activities, and opportunities at school and in the community.

E3.1 Support: School leadership implements personalized, academic support and alternative instructional approaches to meet student needs.

E3.2 Support Effectiveness: School leadership assesses the effectiveness of support for students'

social-emotional learning needs.

E3.3 Student Involvement: The school ensures a high level of student involvement in curricular and co-curricular activities that link to schoolwide student goals/graduate profile, academic standards, and college and career readiness.

E3.4 Student Self Advocacy: Students deepen their sense of self and make personal and community connections that are meaningful and relevant and allow students to become advocates for their own needs and supports.

9. conduct ongoing and periodic reviews as necessary throughout the accreditation cycle of the schools that it accredits and provide interim reports during the accredited school's approval period that are sufficient to meet the informational needs of the Board;

The accreditation process is a perpetual cycle of assessing, planning, implementing, monitoring, and reassessing: the process is guided and assisted by the self-study, visit, and follow-up. Annually, schools are expected to summarize the degree to which all students, including disaggregated student groups, are accomplishing the schoolwide learner goals/graduate profile, the identified major student learner needs, and academic standards.

In addition, schools review the progress on the current schoolwide action plan in relation to student achievement and make appropriate revisions. Every six years, a school conducts an in-depth self-study to examine overall progress accomplished since the last self-study and the effectiveness of its current program based on the WASC research-based criteria in relation to student achievement and school goals. This results in a written summary of findings supported by evidence and the development of an updated schoolwide action plan. The completed school report is sent to the visiting committee members for careful study no later than six weeks prior to the visit. Using the results of the visit, the school modifies and implements its action plan and so continues the cycle of improvement. Annually, the school reviews data/information/evidence of progress guided by the schoolwide action plan to identify and address the ongoing needs of students, staff, and the school. If the Commission finds that a midcycle visit and report need to take place, ACS WASC will select a team to visit the school for 1 or 2 days depending on the findings. There are circumstances that a special progress visit or report within a year needs to take place. In this circumstance a WASC advisor will assist the school and prepare for the special one-day visit with report.

10. demonstrate substantial understanding and familiarity with state laws, policies, and regulations that apply to approved independent schools in Vermont; and

ACS WASC senior leadership will oversee state laws, policies, and regulations relevant to approved independent schools in Vermont. They will engage in discussions on these matters with staff from the Agency of Education, the State Board of Education, and state legislators.

11. agree to review and share with the Agency of Education evidence of practices and compliance with state-specific requirements during the initial or interim stages of an approved independent school's accreditation period.

ACS WASC will require independent schools in Vermont to provide the following documentation as a part of its preparation for the accreditation process.

- The school's harassment, hazing, and bullying prevention policies and procedures.
- The school's Discipline Plan.
- The school's Rule 4500-compliant policy for the use of restraint and seclusion.

- The school's user's agreement with the Vermont Crime Information Center and any related criminal records requests.
- The school's Concussion Action Plan
- The school's Immunization Plan
- The school's Emergency Preparedness Plan

ACS WASC will provide the following information with the Agency of Education for every accredited independent school in Vermont.

- The accreditation action taken by the ACSWASC Commission (this includes the action taken relative to the accreditation visit and all interim reports)
- A copy of all school's accreditation visit report
- A copy of the notification letters from the Commission to the school

(b) Any accrediting agency seeking to be recognized by the Board under this section shall submit a letter and supporting evidence to the Board detailing the ways in which it meets each criterion. Each applicant shall also provide its methodology for assessing and supporting schools in meeting and advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and other nondiscriminatory practices. Upon review of each submission, the Board shall determine whether it will recognize the accrediting agency and set the length of time that such recognition will be in effect. The Board may impose additional conditions upon a recognized accrediting agency as it deems appropriate. Applicants shall be notified of a decision and any conditions of continued recognition in writing.

An accrediting agency seeking recognition by ACS WASC under this section is required to submit a formal letter along with comprehensive supporting evidence. This submission should clearly demonstrate how the agency meets each of the criteria established by ACS WASC. The letter must address the specific standards set forth by the commission, which may include aspects such as the agency's governance structure, accreditation procedures, consistency in applying standards, and the quality and effectiveness of the review processes. Supporting evidence could involve documentation such as policies, reports, or case studies that showcase the agency's ability to operate in alignment with ACS WASC's expectations. This complete package is then reviewed by the ACS WASC Commission as part of their evaluation process for potential recognition.

In addition:

WASC Equity Statement As a worldwide accrediting agency, ACS WASC is committed to equity, inclusion, and access to high-level, rigorous learning opportunities for all students. Equally important is that all children and adults be treated fairly and with respect for their humanity. Regardless of race, language proficiency, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, and/or other identities, all students at ACS WASC member institutions have a right to expect access to the opportunities and support needed for them to be successful. As an accreditor of schools, ACS WASC is in a unique role to assist member institutions in addressing current and historic disparities among student groups. Through the WASC continuous improvement process, actions must be taken to value, inspire, and support every student served by the school to ensure high quality learning and well-being of all. Continuous improvement includes an in-depth reflective, analytical self-study, insights from fellow educators, and implementing, monitoring and reassessing/modifying a Schoolwide Action Plan. Through the experience of thousands of member schools and visiting committee members, ACS WASC has observed that institutions that successfully address issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion have

several practices and strategies in common. They include: 1. An overt commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion that is demonstrated by clear mission/vision/core value statements/goals and shared broadly among governing board members, faculty, staff, students, and families. 2. A thorough and honest review of a wide range of disaggregated data results that include academic performance, language proficiency, discipline, attendance, dropout and graduation rates, involvement in co/extracurricular activities, special education classification, and access to student services. 3. A commitment to changing the practices, policies, systems, and structures that contribute to the disparities they find between student groups and measuring the impact on student learning and well-being. ACS WASC is proud of its member schools for their commitment to provide focus on learning environments and campus cultures that acknowledge, value, support, foster, and celebrate student academic and personal development. ACS WASC is an eager partner with member schools to embrace and champion equity, diversity, and inclusion in order to further improve college and career readiness and globally competent outcomes for all students.

Additional links:

[ACS WASC Bylaws](#)

[ACS WASC](#)

[ACS WASC Overview](#)

(c) The Board shall create, and the Agency of Education shall maintain, a publicly available list of currently recognized accrediting agencies that meet the criteria described in subsection (a) above. The Board may remove any agency from the list of recognized accrediting agencies at any time, after finding that it no longer meets one or more of the criteria listed above.

(d) The Board shall continue to recognize any accrediting agency that accredits an approved independent school in Vermont as of April 1, 2024 until December 1, 2024