

# Improving Student Learning School Principal's Handbook

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WCEA  
Western Catholic Educational Association  
Catholic Schools Accrediting Commission

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# Initial Planning

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## Visit Dates

The actual visit dates are determined by the Elementary Commissioner/Superintendent as the annual calendar is set by the Catholic Schools Office.

## Budgeting

Expenses for the School Improvement Process:

1. Printing of school *Self Study*
  - ✓ 1 for each Visiting Committee member
  - ✓ 1 for Catholic Schools Office
  - ✓ 1 for each Leadership Team member
  - ✓ 1 for the principal and pastor
  - ✓ Several copies for faculty and School Board
  - ✓ 1 for archives;
2. Lodging for the WCEA chairperson and Visiting Committee members, if needed, for the pre-visit and the visit;
3. Travel expenses for the WCEA chairperson and mileage for all Visiting Committee members;
4. AdvancED/NWAC, AdvancED/NCA/CASI, or WASC Committee member's travel expenses and lodging, if applicable;
5. Hospitality, including meals, drinks, snacks, favors, thank you gifts, name tags, door tags, etc. (much of this can be handled by parents' club or association);
6. Printing and office supplies for publishing the Visiting Committee's *Report of Findings*.

## Communication

1. Throughout the year of the *Self Study* preparation, communicate with parents continually about the *Self Study* and the WCEA School Improvement Process. Involve the school community in developing the School Profile and reviewing and updating the school's philosophy, Mission Statement and Schoolwide Learning Expectations (SLEs). This should be accomplished through parent and shareholder surveys, using newsletters, website, Advisory Board Meetings, PTO meetings Parent Meetings, and/or emails from the Chair/Co-Chair or Principal on the status of the work of the *Self Study*.
2. The Elementary Commissioner/Superintendent will identify the WCEA chairperson's identity by late spring. The Visiting Committee roster will be developed by late summer and mailed to the principal and chairperson in early fall.
3. Once the WCEA chairperson has been identified, communicate with him or her on a regular basis. Share the draft at least three months prior to the visit and ask for input.
4. Notify the Elementary Commissioner/Superintendent of the date for the pre-visit once established with chairperson.
5. Communicate with chairperson about school schedules and special assemblies on the visit days.
6. Be flexible in determining the Visiting Committee schedule, for the pre-visit and actual visit.
  - a. With the chairperson schedule interviews with:
    - ✓ Leadership Team
    - ✓ School Board
    - ✓ Clergy
    - ✓ Focus groups
    - ✓ Parent representatives
    - ✓ Student representatives
  - b. Set tentative times for the first and final readings of the Visiting Committee's *Report of Findings*.
  - c. Arrange working meals for Visiting Committee.
7. Discuss the preparation of evidence exhibits in Visiting Committee meeting room and classrooms.
8. Confirm computer, printing, and technology support needs for Visiting Committee.

## Pre-Visit

- ✓ The pre-visit normally occurs six weeks to one month prior to the actual school visit. The pre-visit date is arranged between the chairperson and school principal and that date is communicated to the Elementary Commissioner/Superintendent.
- ✓ Reserve meeting space for the Visiting Committee.
- ✓ Arrange for transportation for the chair to the school and back to the airport.
- ✓ The schedule for the pre-visit usually includes:
  - a. Prayer and introductions
  - b. *Presentation of the Self Study* to the Visiting Committee
  - c. Overview of visitation process
  - d. Orientation of Visiting Committee by the chairperson
  - e. Tour of school facilities for Visiting Committee
  - f. Sometimes includes lunch as well as the social gathering for faculty/staff and Visiting Committee with refreshments for after-school meeting
  - g. Note any special dietary needs (discuss with the chairperson and Visiting Committee at pre-visit).
  - h. Discuss with the chairperson preferences for parent and staff gathering (i.e. finger food, light refreshments, dinner, etc.);
  - i. Principal should be present at the beginning of the pre-visit to welcome the team and give any housekeeping details
  - j. The Elementary Commissioner/Superintendent or a representative from the CSO office, if present, will congratulate the school community on the completion of the *Self Study* and thank the Visiting Committee.
- ✓ Materials to be available for the pre-visit for each Visiting Committee member:
  - a. Copy of *Self Study*
  - b. Copy of school schedule and the teachers' daily schedules for the visit days
  - c. Diagram/map of school
  - d. Instructions for parking during visit
  - e. Name tags
  - f. A CD or flash drive
  - g. Any additional materials requested by the chairperson
- ✓ Principal will send one copy of the *Self Study* to the Catholic Schools Office.

## Evidence

*Evidence should be information that parents and students see on a regular basis. This should not be just a "show" for the Visiting Committee*

1. Post the SLEs and the Mission Statement in every classroom, in handbooks, faculty room, hallway(s), on website, and in all communications with parents and shareholders.
2. All students should have something on display; include samples of student work that demonstrate mastery of each of the SLEs and curriculum standards (color coding may be helpful).
  - ✓ Variety of writing samples
  - ✓ Projects, i.e. art, science
  - ✓ Displays
  - ✓ Collaborative activities
  - ✓ Community resources
  - ✓ Taped interviews of students/parents (video/audio)
  - ✓ Technology presentations
  - ✓ Video productions
  - ✓ Scrapbooks
  - ✓ Exhibitions
  - ✓ Demonstrations
  - ✓ Photographs
  - ✓ Performances
  - ✓ Portfolios
  - ✓ School programs
  - ✓ Use of resources other than textbook

3. Documentation of the *Self Study* Process
  - ✓ Minutes of all meetings dealing with the School Improvement Process
  - ✓ Chart paper of brainstorming discussions on the SLEs
  - ✓ Surveys (student, parent, clergy, faculty/staff)
  - ✓ Catholic Identity Assessment Survey results
  - ✓ Faculty bulletins
  - ✓ Letters to parents-especially those highlighting the *Improving Student Learning Process*
  - ✓ Curriculum In-depth Studies
4. Assessment tools
  - ✓ Historical grade level results of standardized tests
  - ✓ Teacher-generated tests
  - ✓ Textbook-generated tests
  - ✓ Norm referenced tests
  - ✓ Criterion referenced tests
  - ✓ Authentic assessments
  - ✓ Performance assessments
  - ✓ Student assessments
  - ✓ Portfolios
5. School Administration reports
  - ✓ Annual budget
  - ✓ Long-range financial plan
  - ✓ Financial procedures
  - ✓ Copy of Strategic or Long-Range Plan
  - ✓ Procedures for review and updating plan Report card/progress report samples
  - ✓ Master and daily school schedule
  - ✓ Procedures for curriculum development evaluation and revision
  - ✓ Follow-up studies of graduates/alumni
  - ✓ Financial reports (current and previous years)
6. Student special programs
  - ✓ Art Masterpiece
  - ✓ Celebrations/recognition of student successes
  - ✓ Student discipline program
  - ✓ Library
  - ✓ Remedial education
  - ✓ Service learning
  - ✓ Gifted
  - ✓ Student Council information
  - ✓ Projects and activities
  - ✓ Extracurricular offerings
  - ✓ Christian service projects
7. School Board/parent organizations
  - ✓ Constitutions and bylaws
  - ✓ Goals
  - ✓ Committee reports
  - ✓ Minutes
  - ✓ Strategic plan
  - ✓ Activities
8. Marketing/Publicity
  - ✓ School brochures
  - ✓ Marketing plan
  - ✓ Parent/family communications and newsletters
  - ✓ Parish bulletins
  - ✓ School and parish websites
  - ✓ Social media presence (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.)
  - ✓ Alumni newsletter
  - ✓ Media attention (i.e. newspaper and web articles and rankings, television spots, etc.)

## 11. External Evidence

- ✓ Procedures for faculty and staff evaluations, professional development, and Diocesan in-
- ✓ Diocesan Handbook of Policies, Procedures and Norms as well as parent, student, and faculty handbooks
- ✓ Diocesan curriculum guidelines

Additional materials that support the *Self Study* may be provided in the Visiting Committee work room. Evidence specific to a grade level should be in the individual classrooms.

## Accreditation Visitation

1. Arrange to pick up the Chair at the airport and arrange for dinner for the chair the night before if needed.
2. Provide a private conference room for committee members and the following materials:
  - a. Computers/ LCD projector /printers/laptop with mouse (networked in room if possible)
  - b. Copy machine access
  - c. Paper - white and colored
  - d. Post-it notes
  - e. Name tags
  - f. Dictionary/thesaurus
  - g. Door knob name signs
  - h. Colored markers
  - i. Paper clips
  - j. Rubber bands
  - k. Stapler/staples
  - l. Scratch pads
  - m. Erasers
  - n. Pens/pencils
  - o. Scotch tape
  - p. Highlighters
  - q. Necessary keys
  - r. Chart pad
  - s. Paper shredder
3. Have available a tech person and a volunteer to assist with copying (if Chair wishes)
4. Arrange for coverage for Leadership team each morning of the visit.

## Hospitality

1. Provide breakfast, lunch, and snacks according to the dietary restrictions and preferences collected at the pre-visit. For Visiting Committee members each day; have meals set waiting and servers out of the room by the time the team arrives. Plan that all meals are working meals and are appropriate quantity for the size of team.
2. Provide dinner, if needed, for Visiting Committee members;

## After the Visit

1. Arrange for someone other than a staff member to return the Chairperson to the airport.
2. Celebrate a job well done!
3. Principal completes an evaluation of the *Improving Student Learning Process*.
4. Reimburse the Chairperson and team members as requested.
5. Review *Action Plan* and update as necessary.
6. Determine next steps after receiving WCEA certificate.
7. Complete WCEA *Action Plans* and send to Catholic Schools Office if any changes are needed.

## Things to Remember When Getting Started

1. A *Self Study* Coordinator or Co-Coordinator (someone other than the principal) should be appointed!
2. Identify a Leadership Team to oversee the various sections of the *Self Study*.
3. Review and revise, if necessary, the school's philosophy and Mission Statement in light of your SLE's (Chapter 3B).
4. A rubric for measuring the SLEs should be in place and results communicated to parents. Upper grade students should be self-assessing the SLEs (Chapter 3E).
5. Follow directions in *Improving Student Learning* (ISL) for collecting, disaggregating, and analyzing specific data required by the Appendix A and B templates. Note the questions to be answered on some of the templates. Include IOWA and ACRE (if applicable) testing and other assessments for the past five years.
6. Complete all the Catholic Identity Assessment surveys and the other clergy, staff, parent, and student surveys. These may be completed online.
7. Each year you have reported the progress made on the Goals and Critical Issues for Growth stated in your previous *Self Study* and *Report of Findings*. These will assist you in completing the report on your *Action Plan* in Chapter 2B.
8. Include the most recent In-Depth Study. Other In-depths and Curriculum Maps can be displayed as evidence.
9. Serving on a Visiting Committee is an extremely valuable experience for faculty.
10. Start gathering evidence. Everything must relate to the SLEs and student learning. Include analysis and trend information that you learned as you studied the evidence and data. This is part of your narratives in the *Self Study*.

# Overview of Visiting Committee Member Expectations

## Checklist

### Pre-visit Preparation

1. Complete the application indicating willingness to serve on a Visiting Committee (sent by Elementary Commissioner/Superintendent).
2. Receive letter from the Elementary Commissioner/Superintendent confirming participation on a Visiting Committee.
3. Complete Visiting Committee Information Sheet and Confidentiality Form as determined by the local diocese.
4. Receive first letter from the Visiting Committee Chairperson confirming dates and times of pre-visit and visit.
5. Participate in mandatory diocesan training session for Visiting Committees.
6. Attend pre-visit meeting at school site approximately 4-6 weeks prior to actual visit.
7. Review the Key Outcomes of the *Self Study* followed by the school:
  - ✓ Assessment of the school's Catholic Identity;
  - ✓ The involvement and collaboration of all shareholders in affirming evident strengths and promoting ongoing school improvement;
  - ✓ The clarification of the school's philosophy and SLEs for all students;
  - ✓ The use of high-quality mission criteria to assess the program and its impact on student learning and spiritual development;
  - ✓ The development of an *Action Plan* that addresses identified goals to enhance student learning progress;
  - ✓ The development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring in meeting or redefining goals and strategies found in the *Action Plans*.
8. Review the WCEA Category-based Criteria, standards, suggested evidence, and appropriate curricular/educational references.
9. Receive additional communications from chairperson:
  - ✓ Assigning writing tasks.
  - ✓ Requesting, prior to the visit, the writing of questions to pursue during the visit and tentative narrative statements for assigned sections of the school *Self Study*. **The Chair should receive these according to the schedule established at the pre-visit in order to compile a tentative Visiting Committee's *Report of Findings*.**
  - ✓ Providing a schedule for visit.
10. Study the school *Self Study*.
11. After studying the school *Self Study*, complete preparation for the visit:
  - ✓ Review the Category-based Criteria with respect to the analysis of the school *Self Study*; study other pertinent materials
  - ✓ Determine matches and gaps with appropriate criteria; critique *Action Plan*.
  - ✓ Write questions regarding issues, concerns, clarifications, and evidence that should be pursued during the visit and develop tentative narratives for assigned sections of Visiting Committee's *Report of Findings*. **Send these to the visiting Committee chairperson according to the schedule established at the pre-visit.**



12. Take the following materials to the visit:
  - ✓ *Improving Student Learning* materials
  - ✓ The *Self Study*
  - ✓ All notes
13. Dress professionally (no blue jeans) and arrive on time for initial meeting and have no other commitments during the visit.

### The Visit: How Do We Know Students Are Learning? What is the Actual Program for Students?

1. Demonstrate a genuine interest in the school's welfare and a desire to be helpful and establish a rapport with staff.
2. Use the concepts of the WCEA Category-based Criteria as a baseline throughout entire visit.
3. Look at the quality of program experienced by students, evidence of successful student learning, and the degree to which the SLEs are being accomplished. Evidence of student work should be reflective of the low-achieving student, the average-achieving student, and the high-achieving student.
4. Look for evidence of an ongoing process for school improvement.
5. Let the program unfold; don't prejudge. Validate, verify, and document. Be aware of personal biases that can influence observation.
6. Structure the gathering of evidence (i.e. class/program observations, interviews, examination of student work and other information, dialogue with subject area support groups) so that needed information is gained.
7. Assure teachers that classroom visits are not evaluative but are planned to observe the general instructional atmosphere and climate of the school.
8. Frame open-ended questions to all school committee members and individuals to elicit information without reflecting a value judgment.
9. Allow adequate time for responses and give appropriate feedback to questions.
10. Concentrate on being a good listener. Be aware of nonverbal feedback.
11. Meet and lead discussion with school Self Study Committees, which are assigned areas of writing responsibility. Allow adequate time for other Visiting Committee members to explore their concerns and for school staff members to highlight issues important to them. Visiting Committee members help all concerned to recognize the needs of the school and develop a desire to improve the instructional program.

NOTE: Time is limited so don't overemphasize particular concerns. The goal is to clarify information already in the *Self Study* and to secure information not yet provided.

12. Don't allow groups or individuals to distract you from the main task and schedule.
13. Work cooperatively with all other Visiting Committee members as findings are discussed and decisions made.
14. Write quality responses according to the suggested guidelines. Make sure they reflect the important concepts of the Category-based Criteria so that they may serve as guidelines for an effective educational curricular program.
15. Go beyond the *Self Study* and provide regular feedback to the Leadership Team and other staff members regarding findings as a result of the visit.

16. Meet with the Leadership Team to present and thoroughly discuss the synthesis of the concepts of the Category-based Criteria, the *Self Study*, and the findings during the visit as reflected in the draft *Report of Findings*.
17. Meet with other Visiting Committee members to investigate any issues or questions raised during the Leadership Team meeting.
18. Make necessary *Report of Findings* modifications and bring to closure.
19. Individually review each WCEA Category-based Criteria and overall findings. Make decisions regarding the quality of the school's educational program with respect to the categories of criteria and the other factors impacting the Status of Accreditation.
20. Participate in the Visiting Committee discussion on the Justification Statement, Recommendation for Accreditation Status and Status of Accreditation.
21. Complete a chairperson evaluation form.
22. Participate in the presentation of the *Report of Findings* to the entire staff. Don't imply or discuss the recommended Status of Accreditation.
23. Support and encourage the school in its ongoing follow-up.

# The Visiting Committee Member Training

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*A Visiting Committee member plays an important role in the entire school accreditation process.*

## Philosophical Premises for Committee Membership

- A. As a professional educator in a Catholic school, an accreditation Visiting Committee member must approach the accreditation visit as a professional and avoid any comparison to one's own school or any other Catholic school. Of paramount importance is the fact that the Visiting Committee member must approach the school being visited through "its eyes" with an appreciation that this is where the school is at this time in history. This allows the member to take a more objective view.
- B. As a professional educator, the Visiting Committee member reviews the accomplishments of the school and the goals and strategies identified by the school through the school *Self Study*, focus group interviews, classroom observations, and a review of the evidence provided by the school. This approach allows a more balanced decision for a Recommendation for Accreditation Status that both supports the school and provides assistance to the school in recognizing its needed growth areas.
- C. The professional Visiting Committee member follows the guidelines for a school visit and does not give attention to any one from the school community who may wish to express a personal bias or complaint against the school. The Visiting Committee member should report any such attempt to the chairperson.

## General Responsibilities of a Visiting Committee Member

- A. A Visiting Committee member must learn the culture of the school being visited as quickly as possible. This assists the Visiting Committee member to grasp the reality of the school at this particular time in its history.
- B. The Visiting Committee member must become familiar with the total accreditation process: the *Self Study*, expectations of the school, the role of the Visiting Committee and its chairperson, the *Report of Findings* format, and any directives from the Superintendent/Commissioner of the diocese within which the school is located.
- C. The Visiting Committee member must attend an assigned training. This training, besides being a careful review of the rubrics of conducting a school visit, will give all those in attendance a helpful "here's how we do it" by sharing questions and information among the participants during the training.
- D. The Visiting Committee member must be able to give the time necessary for the preparatory work and the full three-day visit. Each school community being visited deserves the best review of the school that the Visiting Committee can provide.
- E. The Visiting Committee member is a professional. Professional dress is expected and cell phone use during the visit must be private and not done during meetings, observations or conversations.

## Appendices (following)

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## Appendix A

### OBSERVING STUDENT LEARNING PROTOCOL FORM

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time (from) \_\_\_\_\_ (to) \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Observer \_\_\_\_\_

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clean</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Student work displayed</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Layout adequate for work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Board used by teacher</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Overhead used by students</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Computer used by teacher</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Computers used by students</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Room in good order</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prayer space</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Objectives or agenda on board</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> SLEs visible</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Students actively engaged</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Discussions by students</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Students on task</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Minimum of teacher talk</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Student movement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher circulating</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher talking with students</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Students responding to teacher</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate student-student talk</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Individual teacher - student help</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Students writing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Student oral presentations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Activities related to student interest</li> <li>Other _____</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Print-rich environment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bible</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Library resources</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Novels/plays/poetry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maps/globes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Science lab materials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> CD Rom/DVD on computer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher computer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Student computers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Audio/visual equipment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Athletic equipment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Textbooks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</li> </ul>
VARIED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES	MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES	MISCELLANEOUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Authentic problems/questions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving activities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Open-ended questions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Performance activity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Direct instruction</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Independent work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Graphic organizers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Starter/sponge activities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative learning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Higher order thinking evident</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Small group work/activities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Whole group work/activities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Appeals to verbal learners</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Appeals to math/logical learners</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Appeals to spatial/visual learners</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Appeals to musical learners</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Appeals to interpersonal learners</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Appeals to intrapersonal learners</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Appeals to kinesthetic learners</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Appeals to natural learners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Genuine praise given</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher calls students by name</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher promotes self-esteem</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Connections made with career/college</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Interdisciplinary connections</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Connections with Catholic teaching</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</li> </ul>

Observer asked student what class was doing. Response was:

## Appendix B

### Evidence Data

Grade	Religion	Language Arts	Social Studies	Math	Science	Technology	Comments	Code	Look For:
K								A	Books on tape
K								B	Calculators
1								C	Computer Lab
1								D	Cooperative group work
2								E	Diagram
2								F	Differentiated instructions
3								G	Direct instruction
3								H	Discussion
4								I	Dramatization
4								J	Educational games
5								K	Experiments
5								L	Feedback to student
6								M	Homework
6								N	Independent work
7								O	Journal writing
7								P	Listening skills
8								Q	Manipulatives
8								R	Overhead presentation
								S	Portfolios
								T	Posters
								U	PowerPoint presentation
								V	Projects
								W	Public speaking
								X	Rubrics
								Y	Self-evaluation
								Z	Student observation
								AA	Teacher observation
								BB	Test
								CC	Video
								DD	Writing assignments

Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_



## SAMPLE VISIT SCHEDULE WCEA Accreditation Visit Month, Dates, Year

### Day One

- 7:15 visiting Committee gathers for prayer and orientation
- 7:30 Visiting Committee and Leadership Team meet
- 8:00 School Assembly: Welcome and introduction of Visiting Committee  
*(NOTE: Normally, grades begin to gather at 7:45)*
- 8:30 - Classroom Observation begins
- 9:30 - 10:00 Recess for grades K-4 at various times
- 9:40 - 10:00 Ten-minute recesses for grades 5-8
- 12:00 Visiting Committee lunch
- 11:05 - 12:30 Lunch times for K-8
- 2:00 Meeting with pastor
- 3:00 Dismissal
- 3:15 Visiting Committee meets with school faculty and staff (broken into two groups)
- 5:45 Dinner for Visiting Committee
- 7:00 Meeting with School Board, PTO and other parent representatives.

### Day Two

- 7:15 Visiting Committee meets
- 7:30 Visiting Committee meets with Leadership Team
- 7:45 Committee continues classroom observations and working on *Report of Findings*
- 10:30 Visiting Committee meets with the Student Council
- 12:00 Working lunch
- 12:30 Visiting Committee continues
- 3:00 Visiting Committee work sessions
- 6:00 Dinner
- 7:15 - 9:00 Possible work session

### Day Three

- 7:15 Visiting Committee arrives
- 7:30 Visiting Committee meets with Leadership Team
- 8:00 Complete drafts and some last-minute visits.

- 9:00 Draft of Visiting Committee's *Report of Findings* given to Leadership Team
- 10:00 Visiting Committee meets with Leadership Team and pastor for response
- 12:00 Working lunch
- 1:00 Continue finalizing *Report of Findings*, Justification Statement, and Accreditation Status
- 3:00 School dismissal
- 3:15 *Report of Findings* summary to faculty, staff, and shareholders



## Appendix D: Sample letter to the School

Diocesan Information or Logo

Date

Greetings (Principal and Staff)

You will be renewing your accreditation during the \_\_\_\_\_ school year using the 2012 edition of *Improving Student Learning*. The yearly Progress Report, In-Depth Studies, Curriculum Maps, the Catholic Identity Standards, Appendix A templates for the School Profile, and various charts will be used to analyze assessments and improve student learning. You have already begun preparation for the \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of School) *Self Study* through these processes.

The templates for the *Self Study* and other forms and templates are on the Western Catholic Education Association website: [www.westwcea.org/documents/elementary-documents/](http://www.westwcea.org/documents/elementary-documents/)

I can order copies of the 2014 *Improving Student Learning*, or you may want to use the WCEA website and download the *Self Study* items. Let me know which you would prefer.

I am presuming that you would like a spring \_\_\_\_\_ visit. A two-and-a-half hour staff training to present the *Improving Student Learning* protocol can take place in May/June of this year or August/ September of the next school year. It would be best to plan this on a minimum day.

I look forward to working with you and your faculty to ensure that your *Self Study* reflects the many outstanding features of your school.

Many blessings on your work,

(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Commissioner/Superintendent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Title)

\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No      Order ISL 2014 books for the staff

May / June / August / September staff training (circle month)

Suggested date/s for Improving Student Learning faculty and staff training:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E: Sample Communications to School and Parish Community

### Parish Communications

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- The pastor might allow the principal to speak at the end of Sunday Masses about the accreditation process.
- The school's Mission Statement should be included in all letters and bulletin articles.

### Sample Bulletin Announcements

Accreditation is a process of ongoing school improvement. Our ultimate goal is the highest student achievement for our students, and we want to always be on the road to improvement. As the school prepares for our Accreditation year (school is accredited by the WCEA), we want to share the process with you as we proceed. Our school students recite the Mission Statement on a daily basis:

*The mission of School Name is to teach, practice, and promote Christian values and to pursue excellence in education while living our Catholic faith in today's world.*

*Bulletin Announcement for Oct 19-20, 2013*



#### SCHOOL ACCREDITATION UPDATE

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School is always seeking the best and most effective ways to educate children for the 21st century, infusing this education with a strong and vital Catholic identity, while supporting parents in their role as the primary educators of their children. Every six years we have the opportunity for a very specific Self Study process leading to the re-accreditation of the school. During the 2013-2014 school year, the school will involve all of its shareholders - faculty, staff, parents, students, and parishioners - in this process using a specific protocol outlined by the Western Catholic Educational Association (WCEA). In the fall of 2014, a Visiting Committee from WCEA will review our Self Study document, including our Action Plan, for ongoing improvement, and will determine our accreditation status for the next six years. Throughout the year, we will be keeping you informed about this Self Study and Accreditation process. We welcome your support, your feedback, and your prayers for the success of this process. For more details on this week's update, please visit the glass-cased bulletin board in front of the school or our school website at [www.olphaz.com/school](http://www.olphaz.com/school).

*Bulletin Announcement for Oct 26-27, 2013*

#### SCHOOL ACCREDITATION UPDATE

Our journey toward re-accreditation continues. We are finalizing our timeline for the WCEA accreditation visit scheduled for November 4-6, 2014. Committees have begun working diligently on various aspects of the *Improving Student Learning* Self Study process. They are putting discussion questions out to various groups of shareholders to gather the information and data needed to assess our strengths and identify our areas for growth. In the coming weeks, various surveys will also help us to gather the data needed to assess our overall school program. A primary focus of this process is the assessment of our Catholic Identity as a school and how effective we are at infusing this Catholic Identity into our entire curriculum and school culture so as to



enhance the high achievement of all students. Catholic Identity is defined as “the distinctive religious dimension found in Catholic schools which emphasizes message, community, service and worship centered in Eucharist as found in the Catholic tradition.”

For more details on this week’s update, please visit the glass-cased bulletin board in front of the school or our school website at [www.olphaz.com/school](http://www.olphaz.com/school).

*Bulletin Announcement for Nov 2-3, 2013*

## SCHOOL ACCREDITATION UPDATE

All of the shareholders in our school – parents, staff, students, and parishioners – have important perspectives to share that will provide the data necessary to accurately and effectively evaluate our school’s progress in providing a Catholic educational environment that supports the high achievement of all students. To gather this data, we will be conducting surveys with parents, staff, students, the pastor, the School Board, and others. Watch for these surveys to be available in the coming weeks. Your participation in these accreditation surveys will help us greatly in our Self Study process.

In addition to assessing our school’s Catholic identity, our Self Study also examines the Schoolwide Learning Expectations (SLEs). These are the learning outcomes that students should know, understand, value, and be able to exhibit by graduation. These SLEs represent the focus of our entire school community.

For more details on this week’s update and our SLE’s, please visit the glass-cased bulletin board in front of the school or our school website at [www.olphaz.com/school](http://www.olphaz.com/school).

## Parent Letters and Newsletter Updates

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This is the year of our second accreditation visit. A Visiting Committee of six will visit in January to validate who we are as a school community. The faculty and staff have spent many hours evaluating our programs through data collection and analysis. During this process, we have identified our strengths and areas to focus on for professional development and resources over the next few years. During their visit, the committee will see that our students are quickly becoming life-long learners, active Catholics, self-aware individuals, effective communicators, and responsible citizens. The mission of School Name as a caring community dedicated to academic excellence and serving others is a reality every day on this campus.

School Name is accredited by Western Catholic Educational Association *and* North Central Association. Not every school or district can or does complete the accreditation process. In addition to assessing the Catholic identity of the school (specific to the WCEA protocol), the process involves looking at multiple measures: test scores, student satisfaction, parent satisfaction, graduation rates, and acceptance rates at Catholic High Schools (or into honor programs in other high schools). Staff education level, experience, willingness to participate in ongoing professional development, assessment of students and the curriculum, teaching methods and resource management are also part of to the evaluation that determines the next steps for the school and leads to a successful accreditation visit. We are looking forward to finishing the *Self Study* document this fall and hosting the Visiting Committee in January. School Name is a fantastic school with great teachers, students, parents, and support, and we will be proud to show it off.

## Parent Letter: The Week Before the Visit

On Wednesday, January 19, we welcome our Visiting Committee for the three-day visit portion of our accreditation process. We will introduce them to the student body at a special morning assembly for morning announcements. Prior to their arrival, they spent time reading and re-reading our *Self Study*. Throughout the day, the ten-person Visiting Committee will visit classes and meet with students and our pastor. In the evenings, they will meet with parents from the Advisory Board, Finance Committee, PTO, Dads' Club and Moms' Club. Thursday and Friday they will continue with visits as they write their report, which will be completed on Friday. The School Leadership Team will review the report, along with our pastor and the Superintendent. It will be presented to the faculty and staff Friday afternoon. The final copy of the report will arrive within a few weeks, and we will be honored to post it for the school community to review. You can read more about the Accreditation Process by following the Link to Western Catholic Accreditation Association (WCEA) <http://www.westwcea.org/> and AdvancEd <http://www.advanc-ed.org>

A really big thank-you goes to all the faculty and staff for the 15 months of hard work in preparing the *Self Study* and for preparing for the upcoming visit. Our *Self Study* Coordinator kept us all on track with deadlines and meetings, even in the midst of the Performing Arts Program and Christmas Program.

When was the last time you reviewed the Schoolwide Learning Expectations (SLEs) with your student(s)? Now is a great time! Our students strive to be active faith followers of Christ, critical thinkers, self-disciplined learners, and effective communicators! Ask them about our Mission Statement - they recite it daily.

We are working on being Active Faith Followers of Christ. We want to live our lives as a Catholic not only on campus, but off-campus as well. Have you asked your child how they have been an Active Faith Follower of Christ? This is our first Schoolwide Learning Expectation (SLE). They should be practicing their faith, not only on campus, but off-campus as well. Have a talk with them. This week the pastor talked to some of our students about the Guardian Angels - they guard all of us!

## Parent Newsletter Updates

### SCHOOL ACCREDITATION UPDATE

*"We love OLPH and all it has to offer our children. It prepared our other kids who have moved on to Catholic high school, who are thriving both academically and spiritually. We look forward to more years ahead at OLPH."*

The results of our parent survey are in, and we are grateful for the many families who participated. As we have begun reviewing this valuable input to our school *Self Study* process, we are finding that the highest reason parents send their children to our school is for Catholic values, with Catholic Faith formation and academic excellence as close seconds.

Other results point to a positive school environment with 97% expressing that the morale of students in our school is good, and 98% who feel that their children are safe here. Respondents felt that the school's communication with parents is exceptional with 97% reading the weekly school newsletter and 94% feeling well-informed of the school activities.

More highlights from the parent survey can be found in the Accreditation Update section on the school website or the bulletin board in front of the school.

## SCHOOL ACCREDITATION UPDATE

The results of the student survey are in. Thank you to all of our students who have shared their perspective with us. What you think matters to us and helps us to improve our school. Here is a look at what our students have said that they love about Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School:

*"The playground." - OLPH Kindergarten student*

*"I love that it is a Catholic school." - OLPH 2nd grade student*

*"I like this school because I feel safe and it makes me feel good about myself. This school is good for strengthening my faith and makes me smart." - OLPH 5th grade student*

*"I love my school because I feel it's where I belong. All of my teachers are strong role models and I trust them completely. OLPH has helped me become the person I am today." - OLPH 7th grade student*

## SCHOOL ACCREDITATION UPDATE

We continue to draw insight from our student survey results as part of our year-long Self Study. Students have indicated in the survey that they feel very safe at our school. They feel that the school staff cares about them, with 98% of students reporting that they are treated with respect by their teachers and 99% feeling respected by the principal.

Students responded positively to questions asking them if the school helps them to learn about their Catholic faith and if their teachers in their faith development. Seventy-two percent of students in grades 4-8 agree that they understand how to apply what they learn in school to real life situations. This is a positive sign for us as we continue to work toward providing challenging and engaging lessons that help prepare students for both academic and real world success.

## SCHOOL ACCREDITATION UPDATE

As we close our celebration of Catholic Schools Week, we are ever grateful for the privilege of serving our parish community through the ministry of Catholic education. A rigorous academic curriculum infused with the solid, life-affirming values of our Catholic culture and spirituality is at the heart of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School. Our *Self Study* this year is helping us to strengthen our school and renew our commitment to serving our students and families "from the heart of God." Thank you to all who are contributing to this process toward our re-accreditation!

*The education of children and young people is such an important task in forming them as free and responsible human beings. It affirms their dignity as an inalienable gift that flows from our original creation as children made in the image and likeness of God. And because education truly forms human beings, it is especially the duty and responsibility of the Church, who is called to serve mankind from the heart of God and in such a way that no other institution can. - Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio (Pope Francis)*

## SCHOOL ACCREDITATION UPDATE

Our school relies on the professional expertise of all of our staff members working together to fulfill our school mission. The current staff includes 18 grade level teachers, 6 specials teachers, 2 resource teachers, 12 teacher aides, 4 office staff, a guidance counselor and a health office coordinator, all under the leadership of our school principal and assistant principal.

In the recent staff survey for our *Self Study*, 100% of the staff indicated that Catholic faith is clearly a priority among the administration and staff, and that the classrooms have a pleasant, welcoming, Catholic environment.

Student safety in and outside the classroom was also shown to be a high priority for 100% of the staff. In the area of job effectiveness, 100% of staff rated the school as effective in providing them with the support as well as the materials and equipment that they need to do their jobs effectively.

In addition to affirming these areas of strength, the staff survey has also given us important information on areas for continued growth and improvement. We are so grateful for such a dedicated school staff!

## SCHOOL ACCREDITATION UPDATE

Our school faculty has been working diligently these past few months, studying the various aspects of our school and writing the chapters of our *Self Study* document, *Improving Student Learning: A Self Study Process for Catholic Elementary Schools*.

We are currently on schedule. First drafts have been submitted and are currently under review by the accreditation Leadership Team. Following first round revisions, these drafts will be submitted to Mary Beth Mueller, Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Phoenix, for further review and suggestions. The plan is for the final document to be completed by early June. Please continue to hold the school community in your prayers as we undergo this important process for our school improvement and accreditation.

## PARENT SURVEY UPDATE

As you are aware, we are in the process of writing our *Self Study* in preparation for our accreditation visit in November 2014. Your input, as shareholders, is very important to us so we wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for responding to our recent survey and to share an overview of what you expressed. Results indicate that our parents have a very high general satisfaction with the school in terms of Catholic identity, academics, school staff and administration, and the morale and safety of the students.

Catholic faith formation, Catholic values, and academic excellence rank highest as your reasons for sending your children to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School. When asked what you like best about the school, an overwhelming majority of parents completing the survey commented on how much you value the strong sense of community in our school. Thank you for appreciating all that we do for your children.

## ACCREDITATION UPDATE

One aspect of our school improvement is an in-depth study of one particular area of the curriculum. As part of our *Self Study* this year, we have chosen math as the focus of our in-depth study. By examining our K-8 math curriculum and analyzing our students' assessment data, we are able to evaluate the effectiveness of our program and to identify areas for continued improvement.

Much has changed in our math program in the six years since our last accreditation. Our school implemented the new Elementary Mathematics Curriculum Standards K-8 of the Diocese of Phoenix last year, which was one year ahead of the required date. A full time math resource teacher, the Math in Focus curriculum, the Xtra Math program, and DIBELS screenings are among the additions we have made to our math program in recent years.

Current data is showing that these additions, along with changes in our instructional methodology, have improved our students' learning and achievement in math. We will continue to implement new ways of using data to differentiate and drive our math instruction for increased student learning.

## ACCREDITATION UPDATE

As we continue to process the *Self Study* survey results, we have found that various parent groups, including members of the Parent Advisory Board, indicate that the school has a strong partnership with the parish and is a vital component of parish life. They report deep involvement in fostering the religious and spiritual dimensions of the school community. Other shareholders reported that the result of religious instruction can be witnessed by stepping onto our school campus, encountering children and staff living our motto of *Knowledge, Love, and Service*. We are indeed grateful to be part of a vibrant parish community that supports the religious and spiritual development of our children.

## ACCREDITATION UPDATE

All of our *Self Study* activity is being gathered and recorded in an extensive document, *Improving Student Learning*, that will be a focal point for the visiting accreditation team in November, and our guide for the ongoing school improvement process following that visit. This document ensures that we are comprehensive in our assessment of the school. We are currently completing "Chapter Two - Context of the School". As one aspect of this chapter, we have studied the current trends in our School Profile, including the local demographic data for Scottsdale. We want to be fully aware of the effect that these trends could potentially have on our school.

We are also assessing how the goals and recommendations from our last accreditation visit have helped us to improve the achievement of our students. We are leaving no aspect of the school unexamined as we continuously strive to improve our school, meet the needs of our students, and ensure the high achievement of all.

## ACCREDITATION UPDATE

Our *Self Study* work continues as we have completed Chapter 3 and submitted it to the Diocese for review. We are now beginning the work on "Chapter 4 - Action Plan", in which we will use the data and analysis from our study to determine goals that will further enhance student learning. Goals will be focused on student faith formation as well as student academic growth, and will include specific strategies for implementation. One of the goals will come directly from our In-Depth Study of our school math program. This Action Plan will be an important guiding document for us over the next six years as we continue to focus on improving student learning.

## Appendix F



# CONFIDENTIAL: Principal's Evaluation of the School's Accreditation Visit

*In the interest of continuing improvement, WCEA requests your opinion of your school's accreditation visit and would welcome any suggestions or comments that might be helpful.*

*Please be sure to forward this to the visited school's WCEA Commissioner.*

### PRINCIPAL INFORMATION

School Name	School Code
Your Name	Visit Dates

### RATINGS

	1 = Poor	2 = Fair	3 = Satisfactory	4 = Good	5 = Excellent
Work of the Chairperson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Comments</i>					
Chair's communication with the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Comments</i>					
Chair's Preliminary one-day visit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Comments</i>					
Visiting Committee as a whole	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Comments</i>					
Meetings of the Leadership Team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Comments</i>					
Meetings of the Focus Groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Comments</i>					

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION YOU WISH TO SHARE

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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### PRINCIPAL'S SIGNATURE

<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	Date <hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>
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# Improving Student Learning for Catholic Schools

WCEA Annual Progress Report for 20\_\_\_\_  
School Code \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School, City:	
Month/year of last accreditation visit:	
Term of accreditation received:	
School year of next visit/revisit:	

**1. Write your Action Plan goal below.**

If this goal has been added since the original revised Action Plan after your accreditation visit, indicate source of the new goal (e.g., Critical Goal from the *Self Study*, the goal from In-Depth, curriculum mapping, etc.). Write a short summary for each Action Plan goal describing what has been accomplished this school year. Identify the assessment used to evaluate the impact on student learning.

Action Plan Goal	Source of New Goal	Summary	Assessment of Impact on Student Learning
1.			
2.			
3.			