

## **Visiting Committee Report Format**

As you write the Visiting Committee report, keep in mind that the audience is both the school and the CAIS/WASC readers.

### **I. INTRODUCTION (1 page)**

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*See sample on page four of this document.*

In writing this profile the committee may use what the school has submitted about itself as long as it includes the following: enrollment, origins, purposes, character, environment, constituency, programs and other important identifying characteristics. It is also important to include information and observations not included in the school's summary about itself, such as issues of growth and significant changes. Remember that readers of the report are introduced to the school through this profile and that it serves as a context for understanding the report. Include a copy of the school's mission statement.

### **II. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRESS REPORT (2 pages)**

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*See sample on pages 5 and 6 of this document.*

Discuss the major changes and the progress made on previous major recommendations. The focus of this section is to discover how the school uses its self-study and accreditation visits. While the school is required to respond to all major recommendations, the school is not required to implement each. A major change might be a new head of school, completion of new buildings and a major capital campaign or changes in the school's grade level configuration. (For schools that hold provisional membership in CAIS, there will be no progress report for the Visiting Committee to assess.)

### **III. COMMENTS ON THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS (1 page)**

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*See sample on page seven of this document.*

1. Determine whether the school included the five parameters in the self-study. These are:
  - a. Involvement and collaboration of the full school community in the self-study
  - b. Clarity of school purpose and goals for students
  - c. Assessment of all aspects of the school's operations, the actual student program and its impact on student personal and academic growth with respect to the standards and criteria
  - d. An Action Plan which identified needs
  - e. An accountability system for monitoring the implementation of the plan
2. Does the self-study accurately reflect the school's program for all students?
3. Does the observable evidence reflect a sampling of what all students are doing and producing with respect to the standards/criteria listed by CAIS/WASC?
4. Does the observable evidence match the school's plan?

**IV. ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF THE SCHOOL'S PROGRAM & OPERATIONS (1-2 pages for each category)**

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*See sample on page seven of this document.*

Write an introductory paragraph for each of the chapters listed below (except for Chapter XIII. Action Plan) that summarizes an analysis of what currently exists at the school; this should be based on the self-study and the Visiting Committee's findings. Then write commendations and recommendations for each chapter. The Program section can be divided by discipline if you so choose.

- Chapter I: Philosophy and Purpose
- Chapter II: Governing Body
- Chapter III: Finances
- Chapter IV: Development/Fundraising
- Chapter V: Administration, Faculty, and Staff
- Chapters VI: Students
- Chapter VII: Community of the School
- Chapter VIII: Program
- Chapter IX: Residential Life
- Chapter X: The Library, Electronic and Print Resources
- Chapter XI: School Plant
- Chapter XII: Health and Safety
- Chapter XIII: Action Plan (no introductory paragraph needed)

**V. MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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*See samples on pages eight and nine of this document.*

1. List major commendations and recommendations. **The major commendations and recommendations should also be marked with an asterisk in the chapter sections.**
2. Limit major commendations and recommendations to five to seven each.
3. **Major commendations should be limited to highly commendable strengths.** A cover letter to the school is a nice way of recognizing and thanking everyone.

Each commendation should include:

- Who is responsible for this strength
- A clear, specific strength
- The impact of the strength on the school
- Accurate, specific documentation

4. **Major recommendations should not be prescriptive and should include only major institutional priorities.** They should be strong enough to enter institutional memory and clear enough to communicate the Visiting Committee's intent to readers of the report during the ensuing six-year period.

Each recommendation should include:

- Who will facilitate addressing the area for improvement
- A clear, specific area for improvement
- The positive outcome of dealing with the area for improvement
- Accurate, specific documentation

**VI. COMMENTS ON THE ACTION PLAN CHAPTER XIII (1-2 PAGES)**

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*See sample on page 10 of this document.*

1. Comment on the plan developed by the school by asking the following questions:
  - a. Does the plan match what the school says it needs?
  - b. Will the plan improve the school and enhance student learning?
  - c. Is the plan feasible, financially and otherwise?
  - d. Is there sufficient commitment to the plan?
2. Discuss the factors that will support or impede the implementation of the plan.
3. Identify the means by which the school will self-monitor.

## **SAMPLE: Introduction**

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Grandview School, located in Westfield, California, was founded in 1910 as a boys' boarding school and serves its currently enrolled 250 boys and girls in grades nine through twelve as a boarding/day, college preparatory school. The school's mission is set forth in a comprehensive statement reflecting commitment to educating the whole person.

The school's enrollment intentionally remains at roughly 210 boarders and 40-day students and highly selective admissions policies are practiced. The current student body is approximately 51% boys and 49% girls. 80% of the boarders are from California; 16% are international students representing 16 foreign countries; 28% of the student body represents minority populations.

Grandview School offers a rigorous college preparatory program with a broad range of course offerings including as many as 15 different A.P. courses. In 1996, Grandview students sat for 334 A.P. examinations and 79% of the scores were 3 or better. Of the 66 students graduating in 1996, 100% enrolled in four-year colleges and universities with many attending some of the most highly selective institutions in the nation.

The full-time faculty is comprised of 27 men and 17 women and is balanced by age, teaching experience, and tenure at the school. All full time teachers hold college degrees and are teaching in the area of their academic preparation. In addition to course load and classroom responsibilities, teachers have advisory, residential, coaching, and extra-curricular responsibilities common to boarding school faculties. The school's classified staff is adequate in size and expertise to meet the fundamental needs of the school.

The Board of Trustees and senior administrative staff assume institutional leadership in appropriately discrete and shared ways according to well-established spheres of influence. Organizational structure seems to fulfill school needs in policy formation, decision-making, planning, and implementation. A long-range plan has been developed and is regularly monitored.

The campus overlooks the Pacific Ocean and vistas of natural beauty can be seen from all major vantage points. Facilities are attractively designed to take as full advantage as possible of the Southern California environment, and they are adequate to excellent in meeting the school's needs and priorities. The school is financially secure, and it enjoys a tradition of donor and volunteer support historically sufficient to meet its needs. Recent major fundraising campaigns to increase endowment and to undertake capital improvements, a predictable revenue stream from tuition, endowment and the annual fund, and a well-chosen faculty and staff provide the foundation for Grandview School's continued success.

## **SAMPLE: Assessment of the Progress Report**

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The CAIS/WASC Visiting Committee made eight major recommendations. It was reported in the "CAIS/WASC Third Year Progress Report" that the school was conducting organized, regular follow-up on those recommendations using existing means of school improvement (standing committees, full faculty meetings, departments) and special means such as in-service days and administrative retreats.

Since the last report Grandview School has undergone the significant change of appointing a new head. The Campaign for the Nineties was successfully concluded raising \$16.5 million on a \$15 million goal. A third significant change was the development of the school's institutional mission statement. The school seems poised to accept the opportunity that this transition provides to examine its core values and set its priorities for the direction of its future.

All of the major recommendations from the last report have been addressed to some extent and significant progress has been made on several. The following reviews each of the major recommendations from the 1991 report:

1. *That priority attention be given by the Board of Trustees, the school administration, and the faculty to the development of a current and relevant statement of philosophy and purpose, which will define the unique character of Grandview School and articulate its educational mission for today and in the future. (School Report; conferences with all school committees)*

Using a thorough and inclusive process, the school has developed a mission statement and a statement of purpose.

2. *That the resulting statement of purpose be widely disseminated to the entire school community and that it be used as a basis for formulating goals and objectives which will shape the curriculum and all other aspects of school life. (School Report; conferences with schoolwide and departmental committees)*

These statements are widely published to the schools constituencies through a variety of vehicles and methods; curricular and other programmatic goals and objectives seem consistent with the mission and purpose statements.

3. *That the Board of Trustees and entire school community address the commitment to gender equity and cultural diversity in order to establish a clearly articulated policy and necessary procedures for improving representation in both staff and student populations. (School Report; conferences with all faculty and student committees; observation)*

Although the school states its effort to address gender equity and cultural diversity, there exists no clearly articulated policy or necessary procedures for improving representation in both staff and student populations.

4. *That consideration be given in planning for facility maintenance and improvement to needs for a gymnasium, dormitory renovation and/or replacement, counseling center, optimum utilization of library space, etc. (School Report; conferences with faculty and student committees; observation)*

Considerable progress has been made on this recommendation in the form of a long-range facilities study and a capital campaign to support and implement the facilities needs and goals.

5. *That the administration make systematic and effective utilization of existing structures such as the Curriculum Committee, Faculty Committee, Student Senate, etc., in the decision-making process concerning the school's total educational program. (School Report; conferences with faculty and student committees)*

Existing structures are used in decision-making regarding the school's educational program; specifically, in the case of the merger of the Faculty Committee and the School Committee, utilization of resources is more efficient and in the case of the Student Senate efforts to extend its scope have been systematic.

6. *That the administration and staff reevaluate curriculum priorities on a continuing basis including a consideration of the place of the arts and such affective education programs as the Four Year Developmental Curriculum in the overall school program. (School Report; conferences with schoolwide and departmental committees)*

Since the last visit, the arts and human development have been defined as departments, explicitly reflecting their position within curricular priorities and evidence of specific action on this recommendation.

7. *That the administration and faculty pursue the need for in-school professional development opportunities which are interdisciplinary and involve the total staff in such training areas as learning styles, learning disabilities, multicultural awareness and sensitivity, instructional technology, academic advisement, etc. (School Report; conferences with schoolwide and departmental committees)*

Progress on this recommendation has been aggressively pursued and funded so that each of the specific elements of the recommendation has been covered: i.e., in school, interdisciplinary, and inclusive (all staff); learning styles; learning disabilities; multicultural awareness; instructional technology; and academic advising.

## **SAMPLE: Comments on the Self-Study Process**

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1. The self-study process involved all constituencies of the school community and there is ample evidence of broad collaboration in the preparation of the report.
2. The school's purpose and learning expectations are clearly delineated in the report and have been widely circulated throughout the school community and in the school's publications.
3. The assessment of the student program is thorough and self-reflective and provides a useful, complete picture of the impact on personal and academic growth.
4. The school has included an Action Plan designed to address the identified growth needs. Appropriate accountabilities are in place for implementation of the Action Plan.

## **SAMPLE: Introduction to Report Chapters**

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*Sample introduction to governing body section. Commendations and recommendations follow this introduction.*

The Board of Trustees consists of eighteen members, thirteen men and five women, and the head who is a non-voting member. There is no faculty representative. Seven board members are current parents, three are alumni parents and one is a community member.

Since the last accreditation the school has established two additional board committees, technology and financial aid. The other committees include nominating, personnel, finance and long-range planning. The board shares responsibility with the head for reviewing finances, long-range planning, employment policies and fundraising.

The board is supportive of fund-raising efforts and takes a leadership role in contributing to the school's development efforts, which currently include the capital campaign.

The board evaluates the head annually and carries out a self-evaluation biennially.

## **SAMPLE: Major Commendations and Recommendations**

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*Most reports will average five to seven major commendations. Major commendations should be limited to highly commendable strengths only. It is not necessary to commend everyone in the school!*

The Committee Commends:

1. The Head of School and Board of Trustees for their understanding of the school's mission and program, for their ongoing efforts in strategic planning and for their passionate commitment to the school that enable the school to realize its mission. *(School report, pp. 18, 20; meeting with Board of Trustees.)*
2. The faculty and administration for seeking to identify the needs of students with different learning styles and for outlining indicators for teachers so that they may help to identify these challenges, thereby enhancing the school's ability to address the specific needs of its students. *(School Report, pp. 69-73; conferences with faculty, students, admissions staff; WASC Criterion: Student Support Services.)*
3. The Board of Trustees for its commitment to a tri-annual board retreat to undertake consideration of fundamental issues shaping the school and for its dedication to the overall cyclical planning process outlined in its long range planning guidelines, resulting in useful operational goals and objectives for administration, faculty, and staff. *(School Report, p. 37; conferences with trustees, school head, administrators.)*
4. The entire Grandview School community for building and nurturing a scholarly, loving, and caring community characterized by healthy interpersonal relationships, good communication, and a concerted effort to agree upon common goals related to living and working together in a learning environment aimed at the development of the mind and character of each individual student. *(School Report pp. 75-84, mission statement.)*
5. The administration and the faculty for its commitment to providing an educational program designed to meet not only intellectual but also physical, social, and personal student needs which significantly adds to the school's sense of community and the opportunity for personal development. *(WASC Criterion: Curricular Program; student and teacher conference; School Report, pp. 149-155; School Report, pp. 67-71.)*
6. The administration and faculty for their collegial effort in the recent production of a schoolwide Action Plan to address and to improve areas of perceived weakness throughout the institution. *(School Report, p.86; conferences with administrators and teachers; meeting with Curriculum Committee.)*

## **SAMPLE: Major Commendations and Recommendations**

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*Most reports will average five to seven major recommendations*

The Committee Recommends:

1. That the Board of Trustees and the school head articulate the commitment of Grandview School to cultural diversity to be implemented by an operational plan over the next five years with schoolwide expectations expressed as objectives that are measurable and allow for an annual assessment of progress. *(Major recommendation: 1991, School Report pp. 172-74, conferences with school head, administration, teachers, staff and students.)*
2. That the administration, faculty, and appropriate staff use faculty meetings as a vehicle for open communication and discussion of educational issues and other topics of concern to teachers and staff so that a formal and regular process remain in place which facilitates centralized communication among staff, faculty, and administration and serves to ensure the delivery of a quality program of education to students. *(School Report, pp. 61, 62, 64, 65; conference with teachers.)*
3. That the Board of Trustees strengthens its efforts within the Grandview School community and investigates the local higher education community to identify and recruit diverse candidates for Board membership as it continues to develop a broader board membership. *(School Report, pp.36, 193; conference with trustee, school head, administrators and teachers.)*
4. That the counseling department continue its efforts to train teachers and staff in methods for advising and counseling students in the sometimes stressful scholarly context of the Grandview community. *(School Report p. 80; conferences with teachers and students.)*
5. That the administration and faculty undertake a thorough, systematic examination of the school program, school calendar and daily schedule to ensure the effectiveness of all in meeting evolving school objectives and priorities and in controlling levels of work and activity. *(WASC Criterion: Curricular Program; Departmental Reports; conferences with Curriculum Committee and Steering Committee.)*
6. That the administration and faculty review the institutional grading philosophy for the purpose of providing teachers and students greater clarity and of providing a staging platform for the consideration of a schoolwide statement of policies, practices, and protocols to ensure appropriate grades are awarded based on curricular objectives. *(School Report, p. 133; Departmental Reports.)*
7. That the Board of Trustees and the administration develop and implement a strategy to access the funds necessary to move Grandview School into the 21<sup>st</sup> century in all technology areas that affect teaching, learning, communication, and organizational outcomes. *(School Report, p. 97; departmental reports; conference with teachers and administrators.)*

## **SAMPLE: Comments on the Action Plan**

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1. Comment on the plan developed by the school.

The school's Action Plan reflects priorities set forth in the mission statement as well as the thinking of administrators, faculty and staff. Six areas have been identified and include the following: 1. Managing Growth; 2. Professional Development; 3. Communication; 4. Diversity; 5. Ethics Education. The areas listed present challenges to school personnel but are well worth addressing in the years to come. Collectively, they represent a proactive attempt to position the school for continued excellence in all facets of school life.

The plan is ambitious, especially in terms of the financial demands that it will place upon school constituencies. The Board of Trustees is committed to the plan and has shown a willingness and ability to financially support school initiatives.

2. Discuss the factors that will support or impede the implementation of the plan.

The resources available to the school, both financial and human, can support the specific areas of school improvement. The Board of Trustees is committed to the plan as is the faculty and staff, who have participated fully in the design of the Action Plan. This collaborative and inclusive process is particularly important to the eventual success of the program for improvement. Serious impediments to implementation of the plan are not evident.

3. Identify the means by which the school will self-monitor.

Timelines and completion dates have been identified and procedures are in place for periodic reporting of progress. The school has publicly communicated its commitment to these plans and welcomes the accountability and heightened expectations that public disclosure brings.