

[Teacher Background Information]

## **WASC OVERVIEW**

### **for the**

# **Los Angeles County Regional Occupational Program**

The basic concepts of accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) addressed in the Focus On Learning (FOL) process focus upon student success in meeting expected student learning results (what each student should know, understand and be able to do upon exit from the school or program). They are:

- How are the students doing with respect to the expected learning results?
- Is the school doing everything possible to support high achievement of these results for all of its students?

Some of the critical elements integral to the FOL design include:

- The involvement of the ROP community in self-directed problem-solving
- The opportunity for the following:
  - Analysis of the actual program for students
  - Meaningful dialogue among stakeholder groups
  - Collaboration and shared decision-making

### **THE PROCESS**

One of the key components the self-study is predicated on is “the involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study”. Stakeholders are identified within the LA County ROP as teachers, students, parents, counselors, support staff, business and industry members, and administrators. Their involvement was accomplished through the major tasks established in the self-study process:

1. Reviewing the WASC criteria and identifying what evidence is needed to compare the program with the criteria and expected student learning results.
2. Gathering and analyzing evidence about the quality of the program with respect to the criteria and the expected student learning results.
3. Analysis and synthesis of all information and data, including findings from other groups, to determine growth needs within criteria categories.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The largest stakeholder group is the ROP teachers who are employed by our member school districts. Representation and participation of all 22 districts and

supporting educational programs (Juvenile Court, Private Post Secondary Schools, and Community Schools, Los Angeles County High School for the Arts) was accomplished through meetings held within each district. Another set of Home Groups were organized by subject area and facilitated by ROP Consultants. This resulted in thorough reviews and discussions within school districts and across subject areas. Meetings centered on gathering, reviewing, and discussing criteria questions established by WASC in determining the quality of an educational institution. Another set of committees, called *Focus Groups*, consisted of representative stakeholders from the geographic regions of the ROP to discuss the WASC criteria along with the district's findings to determine major growth areas for the Los Angeles County ROP. The *Leadership Team* oversees the entire self-study process and was made up of representatives from each stakeholder group.

The challenge of involving 455 teachers from 22 school districts was solved by keeping the teachers in their own districts and forming individual Home Groups. All teachers were invited to attend Home Group meetings and/or provide input towards the accreditation process in hard copy or via Accreditation Plus. Focus Groups targeted teacher representation from each subject area covering five regions of LACOROP.

Focus On Learning allowed the LACOROP to concentrate its energies and resources on successful student learning. This was accomplished through: 1) defining quality achievement for our students by all major stakeholders; 2) beginning an interdisciplinary dialogue based on evidence and analysis of student learning, and; 3) developing and implementing a resulting action plan. The representation and participation of teachers from our member districts and programs was vital to a successful self-study process.

#### VALIDATION & OUTCOMES

The 18-month self-study process resulted in the identification of major growth areas that were formatted into an Action Plan. A team of educational professionals, not affiliated with the LACOROP, spent a significant amount of time reading the self-study and studying the resulting Action Plan. The official visitation was held in March 2006. The visit consisted of the team spending three and one half days visiting the twenty-two districts, the high schools and classrooms, interviewing stakeholders and examining evidence gathered in support the self-study and action plan.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE ACTION PLAN

After the visit, the *Leadership Team* will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan. Updates will continue to be communicated to teachers via the *Focus on Learning (FOL) Newsletter* that is distributed to educational stakeholders every four months. Annual reports are presented at the ROP retreat, held every July, and published in the FOL Newsletter.