School Improvement at Singapore American School  
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Since spring of 2007, Singapore American School has been involved in a comprehensive self-study process to upgrade several areas of educational operations, to identify and reinforce areas of strength and to determine areas for growth and continuous improvement. This self-study process has been in conjunction with Singapore American School’s upcoming accreditation review with the Western Association of School and Colleges (WASC).

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges serves as the regional school accreditation agency for the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools (EARCOS), as well as schools in California, Hawaii, and the Pacific. Although accreditation is not required, SAS pursues the school accreditation process for the following reasons:

1. The school accreditation process provides opportunity for an entire school community to rigorously examine the overall quality of its educational programs through specific criteria and areas of inquiry;
2. SAS welcomes an external review process to confirm and/or add additional recommendations to its own self-study findings;
3. SAS is committed to continuous improvement;
4. School accreditation through WASC serves as a recognized and legitimate source for “consumer confidence” in the quality of a school’s programs and opportunities for students.

On April 7-10, a 10-member team of educators from Southeast Asia and California will conduct extensive interviews with various groups of people, as well as pursue classroom observations of teaching and learning throughout all divisions. The focus of the accreditation team’s work will be to check for the validity of Singapore American School’s own self-study process and findings, and to provide any additional recommendations or insights to further advance the overall quality of education at Singapore American School. The WASC Visiting Team will also make a recommendation on term of accreditation renewal for SAS, which can range from zero to six years. The WASC Office in California and a panel of reviewers make final determination on term of accreditation, and this is generally announced in June. Annual updates on progress are submitted to WASC for ongoing review.

**Outcomes of the SAS WASC Self-Study**

**Process**
In the spring of 2007, all parents, faculty and middle school and high school students were provided the opportunity to respond to a school climate survey that contained the criteria questions recognized by WASC. These extensive feedback responses served as community-wide feedback on status of programs and approaches for team reviews.
Ninety teams involving 500+ faculty, support staff, administrators, parents, students and board members have been directly involved in the WASC Self-Study process for 2007-2008. Team responses to WASC criteria questions required review of various sources of evidence, which led to data analysis and identification of areas of strength and areas for growth.

This process has offered different team perspectives on the needs, interests, and values of the SAS community, which has provided opportunity to identify important themes and motifs for division and school wide attention. This has allowed the school to move to a series of agreements and understandings on significant areas for further growth and development within and across divisions.

The SAS WASC Self-Study has accomplished the parameters required by WASC:

a. The involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study.

b. The clarification of the school’s purpose and the expected school-wide learning results.

c. The assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria and the expected school-wide learning results.

d. The development of a school-wide action plan that integrates subject area/program and support plans to address identified growth needs.

e. The development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the action plan.

SAS Report

Specific areas of strength and areas for growth have been identified on classroom and school-wide levels, which provide clear areas for celebration and further development. Two books have been assembled to accurately represent the various findings. Book One is the school’s main report, which synthesizes and summarizes division and school-wide findings. Book One provides relevant and insightful information in the following areas:

- WASC process and involvement
- School and community profile
- School’s purpose and expected school-wide learning results
- Organization for student learning
- Curriculum and instruction
- Student personal and academic growth
- Resource management
- School-wide action plan
- Appendix of school information and data

Book Two provides documentation of all team findings (90 teams representing all division level subject areas, service areas, stakeholder groups, and centralized area departments) related to Areas of Strength and Areas for Growth.
Focus on Learning

Under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Brent Mutsch, a 36-member team of students, parents, faculty, staff, administrators and broad members convened for two full days in November of 2007 to develop and confirm Singapore American School’s “Focus on Learning”. Through this process, the Mission was revised, the Vision was developed, and other parts of the Focus on Learning were reaffirmed.

Vision: “The Singapore American School inspires a passion for learning, encourages emotional and intellectual vitality, and empowers students with the confidence and courage to contribute to the global community and to achieve their dreams”.

Vital Few: Academic Rigor, Professional Excellence, and Extraordinary Care for the Welfare of Each Child are three operational imperatives that guide the Singapore American School’s efforts and resources in achieving excellence as a world class leader in education.

Desired Student Learning Outcomes: The school’s curriculum and the Desired Student Learning Outcomes (i.e., Exemplary Character with Ability to Work Independently and Collaboratively, Critical and Creative Thinkers, Engaged and Responsible Citizens, Effective Communicators) serve as the direction and substance for the school’s academic programs.

Core Values: The Institute of Global Ethics has identified five values (i.e., Compassion, Honesty, Fairness, Responsibility, Respect) as recognized core values of cultures throughout the world. These values are the basis for Singapore American School’s approach to Character Education and serve as the foundation for all relationships among students, staff, faculty, administrators, and parents.

Mission: “The Singapore American School is committed to providing each student an exemplary American educational experience with an international perspective.”

SAS Strategic Plans

Because of the long-range and systemic planning of an exemplary school that is committed to focused continuous improvement, five-year strategic Plans have been developed in the following areas:

- Mission and Vision
- Student Learning
- Finance
- Development/Advancement
- Communications
- Alumni Relations
- Human Resources
- Technology
- Board Governance
- Woodlands Campus
- Expansion
The intent of these Strategic Plans is to provide direction and coherence for the various functions of the school. Division Leadership Teams have reviewed the main points of the Strategic Plan related to Student Learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, assessment), and have offered their suggestions on important areas of support and follow-up that will be essential to the success of this plan. Other parts of the plan will also be reviewed by various stakeholders for important areas of support and follow-up.

The Board has reviewed the WASC Report, which includes the Strategic Plan, and has unanimously voted to support the report with commendation. Following the WASC Visiting Team’s feedback (on April 10, 2008) regarding the SAS WASC Self-Study Report, administration and the Board will determine appropriate plans for school-wide structures and follow-up support. Annual review and refinement of the Strategic Plans will be pursued to best respond to the needs and life of the school. Based on the Strategic Plans, annual goals will be established.

Six Main Areas for Follow-Up Based on the SAS WASC Self-Study:

1. Develop a school community (i.e., students, faculty, staff, administrators, parents, Board) that understands the direction and vision of the school, and is unified and collaborative in its focus and support for student learning as it relates to academic excellence, as well as for the social, emotional, and physical well-being of the student.
2. Clarify the use and assessment of cross-curricular expectations in subject areas (i.e., Desired Student Learning Outcomes, Core Values, Information Literacy Standards, Technology Standards, Communication Skills – writing, presenting).
3. Determine the types of data that will be used to show:
   - Continuous improvement on division and school levels,
   - Progress of the school’s Strategic Plan,
   - Benchmarking with other exemplary schools in the world.
4. Enhance high standards of consistent classroom practice within curriculum unit development, instruction, assessment, and resources to ensure that each student is “appropriately challenged” (differentiated instruction).
5. Clarify the student expectations, assessments, and data that will be commonly used in subject areas (horizontally and vertically) to show student progress.
6. Establish organizational direction and coherence as they relate to the various functions of the school (i.e., Mission and Vision, Student Learning, Finance, Development/Advancement, Communications, Alumni Relations, Human Resources, Technology, Board Governance, Woodlands Campus, Expansion) to support student learning.

Student Learning Objective of Strategic Plan

The Student Learning objective of the five-year Strategic Plan embeds the Six Critical Areas for Follow-Up into the future development of the school. The Student Learning objective also provides support for the following:

1. Maintain the six-year curriculum cycle of renewal (moved from five-year cycle to six-year cycle in 2006) with development of school curriculum and classroom units/assessments, and adoption of meaningful classroom resources.
2. 2008-2009, study how global issues are supported through the curricular and extra-curricular programs of the school, and make recommendations on any areas for possible improvement.

3. 2008-2009, explore possibilities of an external learning audit to establish focused principles and guidance for high levels of learning for all students.

4. Further enhance collaborative learning within teams, divisions, and throughout the school with a focus on student learning and results.

5. Develop a five-year phase-in plan for purposeful integration of technology for teaching and learning.

**Book One of SAS WASC Self-Study Report**

The main report of the SAS self-study, which includes the five-year Strategic Plan, has been posted on the SAS website. We make this report available to our entire school community in the spirit of transparency and collaboration. Thanks are extended to the 500+ faculty, staff, parents, students, board members, and administrators who directly contributed to the 2007-2008 school improvement process for Singapore American School. Thanks are also extended to all our extraordinary faculty, staff, parents, students, board members and administrators who generously give of their time, expertise, and support to help SAS continue to grow as an exciting and purposeful place for student learning.

As SAS continues to celebrate areas of strength and pursue areas for further growth, the words of John H. Schaar seem particularly appropriate:

“The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination.”