

COMMISSIONER MANUAL

Western Catholic Educational Association

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WCEA
Western Catholic Educational Association
Catholic Schools Accrediting Commission

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Introduction

The Commissioners Manual has been developed by the Elementary and Secondary WCEA Commissions to assist commissioners in their work guiding the accreditation process within their (arch)diocese. While it attempts to reflect the current practice and policies of the WCEA, it should always be considered a work in-progress. The WCEA Commissions, like the schools with which they work, should be focused on continual improvement as new data and experience lead to modifications in procedures and processes.

On another important note is the fact that while there are so many “common threads” that are evident in all of our Catholic schools, each school bears some unique features given the particular culture of that school. As such, the Executive Director of WCEA reserves the right to make an exception to policies and processes, when, in the judgment of the local Commissioner and in conversation with the Executive Director, some change is deemed necessary in assisting the school with its improvement process. Each commissioner should become familiar with this manual and refer to it as needed. If further clarification is needed, please consult with the WCEA office.

Purposes of Accreditation

WCEA and its regional partner agencies jointly accredit schools in the states in which WCEA serves. Schools seeking accreditation follow the WCEA procedure for accreditation and are reviewed by the regional agencies according to the written agreements between these agencies and WCEA.

School accreditation is a means used by WCEA and its partner agencies for the purposes of:

1. Fostering excellence in elementary and secondary education
2. Encouraging school improvement through a process of continuous self-study evaluation and planning
3. Assuring a school and its publics that the school has educational goals that are clearly defined and appropriate; has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected
4. Appears to be substantially accomplishing the goals and can be expected to continue to do so

Accreditation provides a number of important advantages. It identifies a school:

1. As having its own unique and appropriate purposes and goals, as achieving them substantially, and as having the human, fiscal, and physical resources to continue to achieve those purposes and goals for a reasonable period of time
2. As meeting, in an acceptable manner, formally approved criteria for the operation of a quality school
3. It provides a form of recognition by an external agency that assures a school and its community that they are associated with an educational institution committed to quality and ongoing school improvement based on self-assessment and planning

CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is based in part upon the appropriateness of the school's mission, philosophy, and schoolwide learning expectations for an institution of its type and the degree to which these are being met. The other determinant is the degree to which the school meets the WCEA and partner agencies' criteria. The criteria are established as general guidelines to determine the effectiveness of the school's educational program and services.

For WCEA accreditation, the school is evaluated on the criteria jointly approved by WCEA and its partner agencies.

A school shall be evaluated on the basis of:

1. The appropriateness of its stated purpose for a school of its type in a particular setting
2. The degree to which it is accomplishing the purpose and functions outlined in its own statement of objectives which includes the analyses of schoolwide data

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3. The extent to which it has established conditions under which the continued achievement of those purposes can be reasonably expected
4. The extent to which it demonstrates a productive commitment to school improvement

In addition, to qualify for accreditation, a school must give evidence of adequately meeting WCEA and its partner agencies' criteria and must give evidence of an ongoing process for improving its educational program.

Fundamental to accreditation is the quality of the educational program and its spiritual formation experienced by the students. The relative weight of each criterion depends upon its effect on the educational program experience by the students at the school.

Process of Accreditation

The program of accreditation is rooted in process. WCEA accreditations are granted primarily on the basis of a comprehensive self-evaluation conducted by the staff with the shareholders. At the completion of the Self Study process and school report, a Visiting Committee of professional educators visits the school to validate the Self Study process in the school's report. The Visiting Committee writes a report which reflects key areas of significant accomplishments and critical goals based on the school's Self Study report and develops a statement of justification for a recommended accreditation status. The Report of Findings, the Justification Statement, and Accreditation Status are submitted to the WCEA Elementary and Secondary Commission.

In summary, for the process to be effective:

- a. The process must be internally motivated. The school must OWN the process. It cannot be ONLY a response to an external agency. The school Self Study must be the work of the entire school staff and include the appropriate involvement and collaboration of shareholders.
- b. The school leadership and staff must be committed to the process and believe in its ability to improve the school and effect needed change.
- c. A WCEA-approved protocol must be chosen as a guide for the Self Study.
- d. School improvement should be effected before, during, and after accreditation as a result of the process.
- e. The Self Study process should precede and be the foundation for school-planning efforts.
- f. An Action Plan should be developed with a focus on issues for growth.
- g. A system of accountability must be included in the Action Plan and annual reporting to the WCEA Commissioner.

WCEA LEADERSHIP

WCEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A Board of Directors are nominated by the Commissioners and approved by the Bishop President (Delegate).

WCEA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The executive officer of WCEA is the Executive Director recommended by the Board of Directors and approved by the Bishop President (Delegate). The responsibilities and functions of the Executive Director include:

- a. Maintain the WCEA administrative office
- b. Serves as Secretary of the Corporation
- c. Monitor the accreditation of member schools
- d. Facilitate the work of the WCEA Elementary and Secondary Commissions
- e. Facilitate the in-service training of WCEA Commissioners, school leadership, Visiting Committees, and Visiting Committee Chairs
- f. Coordinate processes with regional partner agencies
- g. Oversee new member arch/dioceses and new schools

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THE ROLE OF THE WCEA COMMISSION CHAIR

The primary purpose of the Chair of each Commission is to work with the WCEA administration (the Executive Director and the Associate Director, Operations) in determining the agenda for all meetings. The Chair of each Commission also conducts the Commission meetings. The term of the elected Chair is for three years.

Process for the election of the Commission Chair

At the September meeting of the last year of the current Chair's term, an election of a Vice Chair will take place. This Vice Chair will serve in that capacity for that year and then become the Chair of the Commission for the next three years beginning the following September.

At the September meeting, the Chair will ask for nominations from the floor. When all nominations have been made and the nominees have agreed to run for office, the election will take place by private ballot.

Should an unexpected vacancy occur in the Commission Chair position, nominations and elections will occur in the summer prior to the September meeting via e-mail.

WCEA COMMISSIONERS

Each member arch/diocese is represented on the WCEA Commissions by the Superintendent or his/her appointee(s). One person may serve as both Elementary and Secondary Commissioner or, depending on the circumstance of the arch/diocese, two separate Commissioners may be appointed.

A WCEA Commissioner must have the ability to articulate the importance and value of school improvement and to assist in developing effective means that lead to school improvement through the accreditation process.

In addition to the duties of Commissioners delineated in the Bylaws of WCEA, the Commissioners shall:

- a. Develop, review, and implement the criteria for evaluation used in the accreditation of member schools
- b. Review materials and take action on the recommendations of the Visiting Committees for WCEA and its partner agencies
- c. Hear appeals concerning WCEA accreditation process
- d. Support projects related to the improvement of WCEA protocol and processes
- e. Recommend policy to the Board of Directors
- f. Recommend amendments to the Bylaws to the Board of Directors
- g. Inform all accredited schools of their responsibilities to the appropriate regional accrediting agency

The Commissioner is the official arch/diocesan coordinator of WCEA accreditation within the diocese. Ordinarily, a Commissioner must be delegated full authority to coordinate the WCEA accreditation activities within the arch/diocese. Commissioners who are not Superintendents should keep their Superintendents informed about major developments related to accreditation activities.

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ACS WASC COMMISSIONERS FOR CALIFORNIA, HAWAII, AND GUAM

Four WCEA-appointed persons serve on ACS WASC. The WCEA Board of Directors selects the four members: one of whom must be a high school teacher, one a member of the Board of Directors, an Elementary Commissioner, and the fourth a Secondary Commissioner. In this capacity, they serve as a liaison between WCEA and ACS WASC and represent WCEA at all ACS WASC business meetings and at all appropriate committee meetings. Their ACS WASC term is three (3) years, renewable by the WCEA Board of Directors.

Plan for School Accreditation

INITIAL ACCREDITATION

When the local Commissioner and/or the school's office determine that a school is sufficiently developed to begin the process, the first step is to submit the WCEA Affiliation Request form to both the WCEA office and the local Commissioner. In addition, a one-time fee of \$150.00 is also submitted to the WCEA office. The second step is the completion of the one-day visit as outlined below.

PROCEDURES FOR AN INITIAL VISIT

The local Commissioner shall set up a one-day Initial Visit with the Executive Director of WCEA and the administrative team of the school. The visit will include meetings with Administration, Pastor (where applicable), Governance Board (where applicable), and Superintendent (if appropriate). The focus of the visit will be on the material provided on the WCEA Affiliation Request form. All costs associated for this visit are the school community's responsibility.

For schools that are jointly accredited by WCEA and regional agencies, the procedures for the initial visit should be coordinated with the regional agency as well.

CANDIDACY

Upon completion of the initial visit, a school is granted candidacy status for a term of **up to three years**. The purpose of this period is to allow the school community to properly prepare for a full Self Study and accreditation visit. The accreditation visit shall take place by the spring of the third year.

A school in candidacy will be allowed to use the WCEA logos so that it may apply for educational grants requiring accreditation and use for any necessary media.

PROCEDURES FOR A SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE VISIT

A Substantive Change Visit is required by WCEA when the organization of the school significantly changes from one model to another. Some examples would include:

- new governance structure
- new location or campus
- merger
- new grade-level configuration
- change in mission or objectives
- addition, change, or loss of significant programs

This is a one-day visit with a 1- to 3-person team determined by the Executive Director in consultation with the local Commissioner. All costs for this visit are the responsibility of the school community. A letter from the WCEA Executive Director affirming approval will follow after the visit.

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For schools that are jointly accredited by WCEA and regional agencies, the procedures for the Substantive Change should be coordinated with the regional agency as well.

FULL ACCREDITATION VISIT

A full accreditation visit consists of:

1. A school Self Study involving shareholders and using an approved protocol as a guide for the Self Study
2. A visit by an impartial Visiting Committee to validate the Self Study
3. A Report of Findings by the Visiting Committee (Visiting Committee Report), based upon the Self Study, given to the school and to the WCEA Elementary or Secondary Commission noting significant accomplishments and critical goals and also areas where, in the Visiting Committee's judgment, improvement is needed
4. Action by the WCEA Elementary or Secondary Commission to grant WCEA accreditation
5. Action by partnering agencies
6. Approval of WCEA accreditation action by other approved regional accreditation agencies

PROCEDURES FOR AN ACCREDITATION STATUS APPEAL

Should a school receive an Accreditation Status that it believes is not appropriate, it may appeal the judgment of the WCEA Commission in the following manner:

1. The Administration writes a letter to the local Commissioner requesting an appeal with supporting reasons and evidence for this request. The request must be made after having received the WCEA certificate of Accreditation Status and no later than September 30.
2. The local Commissioner will send the school's letter along with his/her own position on his/her support for the appeal to the Executive Director of WCEA.
3. The Executive Director of WCEA, upon approving the request, will set up a team of three members: a member of the original Visiting Committee and two Commissioners from other (arch) dioceses. The school administration will then receive a copy of the original Accreditation Status and Justification Statement from WCEA. This Visiting Committee will receive the following documents in advance of the visit:
 - a. The Visiting Committee Report of Findings (Visiting Committee Report)
 - b. The Recommended Accreditation Status
 - c. Justification Statement
 - d. A copy of the Self Study will be available upon the request of the Visiting Committee
4. The Visiting Committee shall spend one full day interviewing the administration and any other interviewees assigned by the administration and the Visiting Committee. The Visiting Committee shall prepare a written summary of the results and its recommendation for an accreditation status. This report is given to the local Commissioner. The local Commissioner submits this report to the full Commission at the following May Accreditation Meeting of the Commission. The decision of the Commission is final.
5. All costs (travel, hotel, etc.) are the responsibility of the school.
6. The Executive Director of WCEA will share the results of the Commission vote with any regional agency that co-accredits the school.

Source and Distribution of Materials

WCEA Commissioners for AdvancEd/NWAC and AdvancEd/NCA/CASI schools are not required to send any documentation or reports to the respective agencies. All notification of terms and conditions, if any, are provided to the agencies by the WCEA corporate office.

The WCEA Commissioner is the recipient of all forms from WCEA via the WCEA website or the shared Dropbox(es). Schools receive the school documents via the WCEA website or their WCEA Commissioner.

Role and Responsibilities of the WCEA Commissioner

ROLE OF THE WCEA COMMISSIONER

The Commissioner's role is twofold:

- a. To contribute to the work and leadership of the Commission
- b. To act as facilitator, resource person, and coordinator of the school improvement process in the schools within the arch/diocese

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WCEA COMMISSIONER

- a. To be familiar with the protocols, procedural manuals, documents, forms, and timelines currently in use by WCEA
- b. To plan, direct, and oversee the accreditation process in his/her arch/diocese
- c. To serve on at least one Visiting Committee as chairperson or member once a year
- d. To attend scheduled WCEA Commission meetings
- e. To serve on a Reading Team to review the Self Studies, Report of Findings, Justification Statement, and Accreditation Status of schools in arch/dioceses other than one's own and to make a recommendation of status based upon the review
- f. To participate on assigned subcommittees for the WCEA Commission
- g. To assist the WCEA Executive Director in carrying out various responsibilities of the Association; e.g. agenda items, in-services, etc.
- h. May inform the school of their status following the May Commission meetings
- i. To keep the Accreditation Status, Justification Statement, Report of Findings, and Self Study for each school for the most current accreditation cycle

RESPONSIBILITIES TO LOCAL SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

- a. To provide an orientation to the administration and leadership team of the school
 - Introduce the Self Study process
 - Assist the principal with the understanding of the Self Study design
 - Explain the general makeup of a Visiting Committee
 - In consultation with the leadership of the school, establish dates for the accreditation visit
- b. To form the Visiting Committee for each school by identifying a chairperson from outside one's own arch/diocese or region and a sufficient number of Visiting Committee members (normally from within the arch/diocese) to carry out the visit; any Chairs or Visiting Committee members must be approved **in advance** by the local WCEA Commissioner; while principals/presidents do not select Chairs or members of the Visiting Committee, it is prudent to consult with school leadership to prevent any conflict of interest
- c. The date of the initial visit will be arranged between the Chair and the principal
- d. To be an ongoing resource to the school leadership team as needed
- e. To ensure chairpersons and Visiting Committee members have attended the appropriate training

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- f. To facilitate a systematic follow-up process for the local shareholders based on the Visiting Committee Report of Findings (Visiting Committee Report) by:
 - Reviewing the annual reports/school improvement plans
 - Assisting the school administration, faculty, and Board to effectively use the Self Study, the Report of Findings, and Action Plan for ongoing school improvement
 - After the completion of accreditation, to present the school with the Justification Statement at the time of the Commissioner's choosing
- g. At the time of the school visit, the Commissioner or representative should arrange to attend one of the final meetings between the school leadership and Visiting Committee

RESPONSIBILITIES TO EACH SCHOOL TO BE VISITED

- a. To the **School Leadership Team**:
 - Provide training for the Self Study process to the principal and staff
 - Keep all drafts of the Self Study and Visiting Committee Report of Findings confidential. They may not be shared with anyone except:
 - Chair of the Visiting Committee
 - The Visiting Committee
 - The School Community
 - The local WCEA Commissioner
 - Announce the name and contact information of the Chair to the principal and WCEA and confirm with a letter to both
 - Send the name of the Visiting Committee members to the principal
 - Request a copy of the updated Action Plan by June of the year of the visit with 45 days
 - Require and receive from the school an Annual Progress Report (Elementary) or Quarterly Reports (Secondary)

for Elementary only

- Be present at the pre-visit meeting to welcome the Chair and the committee and provide a time for the Chair and committee to meet separately
- Be present at the first review of the Report of Findings (between the Visiting Committee and the school leadership) and enter into dialogue and clarification of the report
- Be present at the formal review of the Report of Findings to the entire shareholders when possible. Thank the Chair and the Committee.
- Receive from the school:
 - One (1) hard copy of the Self Study, one (1) digital copy of the Self Study
 - The **original**, one (1) copy of the Report of Findings and one (1) digital copy
 - One (1) completed copy of the "Principal's Evaluation of the Process" form
- Write a letter to the principal and staff after the visit is completed

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- b. To the **CHAIR** of a Visiting Committee:
- Seek the approval of the Chair's local WCEA Commissioner before selecting that person to serve as the Chair of a Visiting Committee
 - Share information regarding the school with the Chair (strength's, needs, etc.)
 - The Chair is to contact the school as soon as possible for an initial conversation with the principal (and possibly the Leadership Team of the school)
 - Advise the Chair to arrange the date of the pre-visit with the principal and, for Elementary, the Commissioner
 - Before the visit, ensure that the Chair has:
 - Chair In-service scheduled (each year)
 - The Visiting Committee Roster
 - The ISL or E3 Protocol, the ISL or E3 Visiting Committee Manual, either the ISL Chair Responsibilities or E3 Chair Manual
 - The Visiting Committee Report Template
 - Form for the evaluation of the Visiting Committee Members
 - Form for the evaluation of the Chair (copy to each member)
 - Justification Statement and Accreditation Status
 - Copies of letters sent to the principal and Visiting Committee members regarding trainings
 - Team information sheets (Committee Member information profile) when all are available
 - At the conclusion of the visit, ensure that the Chair:
 - sends digital copies of the Self Study, the Report of Findings (Visiting Committee Report), Accreditation Status, and Justification Statement (all must include Visiting Committee members' signatures)
 - Sends the evaluation of the Visiting Committee members to the Chair to be returned to the school's Commissioner and the Executive Director of WCEA
 - Be available before, during, and after the visit for phone consultation
 - Provide the Chair with the date of the Commission and Reading Teams' meeting in May and request that he/she be available for questions
 - Thank the Chair and send him/her the original evaluations by the Committee Members with the names removed
- c. To the Visiting Committee Members:
- Make the necessary contacts
 - Confirm the Visiting Committee Roster with a letter to each
 - Provide the dates for Visiting Committee Member training, pre-visit, and the actual visit
 - Send the Visiting Committee Member information sheet and request a return
 - Send each member a thank-you letter for serving on the Committee
 - Arch/diocesan forms, if any

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- Provide the Visiting Committee Members the evaluation of the Chair form to be returned to both the school's Commissioner and the Executive Director of WCEA

WCEA POLICY ON VISITING COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND MEMBERS

All Visiting Committee members, including Chairs, must have active background checks and current Safe Environment training in their current arch/diocese of employment. Ordinarily this is accomplished through the credentialing or licensing process in the state and any (arch)diocesan Safe Environment policies.

Occasionally, individuals who are retired from active ministry in the arch/diocese are asked to serve as Chairs. In order to ensure subsequent reporting information on these individuals, the following criteria must be met:

- At a minimum, individuals who are retired from (arch)diocesan ministry and who still want to serve as Chairs must have an active background check and Safe Environment training on file with the arch/diocese where they reside.
- The minimum standard for background checks/Safe Environment training is that required of volunteers, i.e., the arch/diocese of residence does the background check/fingerprinting/Safe Environment training identifying the individual as a volunteer. That way the arch/diocese of residence will continue to receive subsequent reporting information on the retired Chair.
- Any costs associated with background checks and/or Safe Environment training for retired individuals serving as WCEA Accreditation Visit Chairs are the responsibility of the individual or arch/diocese according to (arch)diocesan policy and procedure.

All Chairs must be sponsored by the arch/diocese in which they reside. Commissioners must follow the standard procedure of contacting the (arch)diocesan WCEA Commissioner for permission BEFORE contacting any person to serve as Chair of a Visiting Committee. This standard procedure applies to retired Chairs as well as currently-employed Chairs. Commissioners may not use 'free-lance' Chairs for Visiting Committees.

These standards are minimum standards. The arch/diocese may have more specific standards for Chairs and Visiting Committee members.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON OF A VISITING COMMITTEE

a. General Criteria:

- The special character and needs of the school should be considered in selecting the chairperson
- The chairperson should have served as a team member prior to being designated a Chair
- The Commissioner of the chairperson's diocese must be contacted prior to contacting the chairperson
- To guarantee a reasonable degree of professional objectivity, the chairperson should be free of any conflicts of interest and must be from another diocese/region; while principals/presidents do not select Chairs or members of the Visiting Committee, it is prudent to consult with school leadership to prevent any conflict of interest

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CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF A VISITING COMMITTEE

1. General Criteria:

- The team members should be free of obvious conflicts of interest that would endanger their roles as evaluators
- Committee membership should be balanced representing various aspects of the curriculum/grade levels
- Some of the members of the committee should have had prior successful WCEA accreditation experience
- Committee members should be chosen to reflect a broad geographic balance in the diocese
- All members of the Visiting Committee must have participated in Visiting Committee training
-

2. Personal and Professional Criteria

Committee members should:

- Adhere to discretion and respect for confidentiality
- Have the ability to analyze, synthesize, and maintain a generally positive attitude and approach toward problem solving and be able to make decisions
- Avoid prescriptive language
- Possess an ability to listen
- Be able to write clearly and concisely
- Be willing to work in a group process and as a team member
- Have a demonstrated capacity for sustained, hard work

GUIDELINES FOR SIZE OF VISITING COMMITTEE (INCLUDING CHAIR)

School Enrollment	Visiting Committee Size (*)
0-449	4 Members Minimum
450-749	5 Members Minimum
750-1499	6 Members Minimum
1500-2499	7 Members Minimum
2500 plus	8 Members Minimum

For schools accredited jointly with ACS WASC, the Commissioner will be consulted in the assignment of an ACS WASC Visiting Committee member, if any. ACS WASC pays for any expenses of their representative.

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WCEA JOINT ACCREDITATION PARTNERS

WCEA, AdvancEd/NWAC, and ACS WASC joint accreditation process recognizes all protocols, Visiting Committee Report of Findings (Visiting Committee Report), Self Study, Justification Statement, Accreditation Status, training materials, and procedures for the accreditation of Catholic schools.

If a region school has been previously accredited by their regional agency, the school would automatically receive candidacy status with WCEA, and the accreditation schedule follows the awarded term. Therefore their first full Self Study visit would occur in the fourth year.

If the school has not been previously accredited, WCEA will set the timeline with the local Commissioner for initial visit and ongoing accreditation activities.

WCEA Commission Accreditation Meeting

In May of each academic year, the WCEA Commissions meets to accredit the schools...

- that have completed the Self Study in the current year
- that had a visit from a WCEA Visiting Committee
- whose Report of Findings, Accreditation Status, and Justification Statements have been submitted for review by a Reading Team composed of WCEA Commissioners

The Chair for the Visiting Committees of each school will have sent to the local Commissioner digital copies of the following:

- Report of Findings (Visiting Committee Report) with signatures
- Accreditation Status with signatures
- Justification Statement with signatures
- Self Study
- Digital Library Link (Secondary)

The Commissioner uploads the digital files to the shared Reading Team Dropbox no later than **April 10th**. The detailed procedure is outlined below.

READING TEAMS

1. Each Commissioner reads the reports assigned to him/her and consults with fellow Reading Team member(s) to determine if they affirm the Accreditation Status recommended by the Visiting Committee or recommend a change of status. If the Reading Team is considering a change of Accreditation Status, it is required that the Reading Team Chair consults with the Visiting Committee Chair for clarification or to elicit agreement for the change in status recommendation.
2. Schools in which the Visiting Committee and the Reading Team recommend the same Accreditation Status will be placed on the consent agenda and will be voted upon by the Commission as a group.
3. Schools in which the Visiting Committee and the Reading Team differ on the recommended Accreditation Status will be placed on the non-consent agenda as outlined below.
4. The Reading Team Chair will complete the "Reading Team" Google Doc ttee's recommendation, the Reading Team's recommendation, and whether the schools should be placed on the consent or non-consent agenda.
5. The Reading Team Chair will complete and ISL or E3 Reading Team Recommendation form for each school. In the case of non-consent agenda schools, the form must include a rationale for the differing recommendation and the Visiting Committee Chair's response. These forms will be signed by the Reading Team at the May meeting.

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PROCEDURES FOR NON-CONSENT AGENDA SCHOOLS

For schools in which the Visiting Committee and the Reading Team differ on a recommended accreditation status, the following shall apply:

- The school is placed on the non-consent agenda to be discussed by the entire Commission
- The Reading Team Chair leads the discussion
- After the discussion, the Commission will vote on the determination of the final Accreditation Status; the Commissioner of the school abstains from the vote
- The Elementary Commission may direct the Executive Director to write appropriate letters to the various participants in the accreditation of these schools that would clarify the decision of the Commission

PROCEDURES FOR PLACING SCHOOL FILES IN THE DROPBOX

for Elementary only

By **April 10th**, the Commissioner provides via the Dropbox two PDF files. The first will contain in this order and with signed signature pages the **Accreditation Status, Justification Statement, and Report of Findings**. **The second PDF will consist only of the school's Self Study only (no appendices)**. **No paper copies will be accepted**. The file names will be coded with the WCEA School Code, the abbreviated school name, and the current year of accreditation as follows:

Examples: E999 St Joseph 2017
E999 St Joseph Self Study 2017

Exceptions of the final date of **April 10th** must be approved by the Executive Director of WCEA.

One file will be placed in the Dropbox for the assigned Reading Team, and a second copy of the both PDFs will be placed in the arch/diocesan Dropbox.

for Secondary only

By **April 10th**, the Commissioner provides via the Dropbox two PDF files and one Word document. The first PDF will contain in this order and with signed signature pages the **Accreditation Status, Justification Statement, and Visiting Committee Report**. **The second PDF will consist the school's Self Study**. The third will consist of the Digital Library instructions in Word format to enable a direct link to the school's Data Library. **No paper copies will be accepted**. The file names will be coded with the WCEA School Code, the abbreviated school name, and the current year of accreditation as follows:

Examples: S999 St Joseph 2015
S999 St Joseph Self Study 2015
S999 St Joseph DL 2015

Exceptions to the final date of May 15th must be approved by the WCEA Executive Director.

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One file will be placed in the Dropbox for the assigned Reading Team, and a second copy of the both PDFs will be placed in the arch/diocesan Dropbox.

REVISIT REPORTS

The identical procedure described above will apply to Revisit Committee Reports. They are to be placed in the Reading Team Dropbox and the arch/diocesan Dropbox. The file names will be coded with the WCEA School Code, the abbreviated school name, the word “Revisit,” and the current year of accreditation as follows:

Examples: E999 St Joseph Revisit 2017
S999 St Joseph Revisit 2017

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS/E3 QUARTERLY REPORTS

It is the responsibility of the local Commissioner to receive an Annual Progress Report on the Action Plan for each Elementary school and the E3 Quarterly Reports from the Secondary schools. Written reports that did not include a visit are reviewed by the local Commissioner. If the local Commissioner finds a concern related to the school’s progress or compliance, he/she may consult with the WCEA Executive Director for further action, including action by the Commission.

CERTIFICATES

Following the meeting, the WCEA office will forward a packet of materials to the Commissioner for distribution. The packet will include (for each school):

- A stamped, addressed envelope
- The WCEA accreditation certificate signed by the WCEA President (Bishop Designate) and the WCEA Executive Director and will require a live signature by the Commissioner upon receipt of the package
- The WCEA accreditation letter signed by the WCEA Executive Director
- A copy of the WCEA accreditation letter to the School for the arch/diocesan records

The completed packet will be sent to the Commissioners by July 1st.

INFORMING WCEA’S ACCREDITATION PARTNERS

WCEA will forward the list of accredited schools and all documentation for ACS WASC schools to ACS WASC for approval at their June meeting. WCEA will send a list of accredited schools to other accreditation partners where appropriate.

WCEA DIGITAL FILE STORAGE TIMELINE

The PDF digital file that contains the Accreditation Status, Justification Statement, Report of Findings, and Self Study for schools accredited in the given year will be retained at the WCEA offices for eight years.

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WCEA REQUIREMENTS FOR COMMISSIONER MEETING REIMBURSEMENTS REQUESTS

Commissioner requests for reimbursement are to be accompanied by a completed Reimbursement Request Form. Each reimbursement amount requested will require receipts. For airfare, the Commissioner's online receipt that shows the Commissioner's name, flight date(s), and flight cost should be provided. Mileage will be reimbursed at the current IRS rate. The accompanying documentation will include an online map that states the point of origin, point of destination, and total mileage. Either airfare or mileage requests can be submitted by mail or e-mail as long as they are accompanied by the completed Reimbursement Request form (digital copy if requesting by e-mail).

There is a maximum amount of **\$500** for any flight or mileage request for reimbursement. Any flight that would be above that limit requires written approval from the WCEA Executive Director prior to purchase to allow for reimbursement. As good stewards of the WCEA resources, the Commissioner will make reservations two months in advance. In addition, low-cost airlines, ie Southwest or Jet Blue, should be utilized whenever possible. On Southwest, Commissioners will choose the lowest fare possible, ie "the wanna get away" rate. WCEA will reimburse for the additional cost of early bird reservations on Southwest only when this lowest fare is chosen.

Reimbursement requests for travel expenditures such as airport parking, baggage, taxi, bus, Uber, etc., will also require a receipt. WCEA requests that Commissioners keep cost in mind in planning for all travel expenses. These types of requests will be sent to the WCEA office or given to the Associate Director, Operations at the meeting and be accompanied by the Reimbursement Request form.

Food and incidentals are not reimbursable items.

WCEA Grant Program

WCEA sets funds aside annually to assist socio/economically-challenged schools in meeting their expenses incurred by the Visiting Committee for their accreditation visit. The criteria for this assistance is as follows:

1. The school must have a scheduled accreditation full visit for the application school year.
2. The application packet must include the completed application and **all** of the following attachments:
 - A written and signed letter of recommendation by the School Superintendent of the arch/diocese
 - A written and signed rationale by the school's WCEA Commissioner
(If the Commissioner is the Superintendent, then only one letter is necessary.)
3. The hard copy, completed application with all attachments must be to WCEA's office on or before **January 31** of each year. No applications received after that date will be considered under any circumstances. Only completed applications with all required attachments will be considered.

If more applications are received than is possible to award, the WCEA Executive Director will appoint a three-person committee to review the applications, gather the information necessary, and make the determination of those schools that will receive the grant award. This committee will consist of one elementary Commissioner, one secondary Commissioner, and the Chair of the Board of Directors. The Executive Director will try to prevent, whenever possible, appointing a Commissioner to the committee if they have schools applying that year.

To receive the payment awarded to the school, a financial reconciliation for the expenses of the Visiting Committee must be received by the given date each year. The school provides the expenses incurred for the Visiting Committee, including hotel, flight, meals, and mileage. Copies of receipts for any expenses listed on the reconciliation will be attached to. Payment to the school is sent out within three weeks of receiving a completed reconciliation by the school.

The time line for the grant process begins a year before the school's anticipated accreditation year. An example follows:

- Applications for 2018-19 are sent to Commissioners in August of 2017 who then forward it to their schools
- January 31, 2018: Completed applications with all attachments are due in hard copy to the office no later than this date
- March 2018: The final approval of the schools receiving awards will be at the Board meeting
- April 30, 2018: Letters to all schools will be sent out by this date
- April 30, 2019: A reconciliation outlining detailed expenses, along with copies of receipts, are due to the WCEA office in a special format outlined in the award letters
- Payment will be sent out within **three weeks** of receipt of a completed financial request.

WCEA Assessment Invoices (Fees)

A request is made by the corporate office to the WCEA Commissioner in early November each year for the arch/diocese NCEA Summary Data Sheet and WCEA census information **for the current school year**. The WCEA census consists of arch/diocesan schools accredited by WCEA. Based upon the information returned to WCEA and using the Board-approved assessment structure, an assessment invoice **for the following year** is prepared and forwarded to the arch/diocese via the WCEA Commissioner for the payment of the upcoming year's accreditation services. Payment is due to WCEA annually no later than **September 30th**. (**Example:** The WCEA census provided in November 2017-18 will be used for the 2018-2019 WCEA assessment invoice due September 30, 2018.) Schools should be advised by the WCEA Commissioners not to send payment directly to WCEA. WCEA accepts payment from the arch/diocese directly and does not make a determination on any charges made to the schools from their respective Department of Catholic Schools.

Annual WCEA Schedule

JULY

- Meetings
 - ➔ No later than **July 30th**
 - Make travel arrangements for September meeting and submit invoice to WCEA for reimbursement or use travel company approved by WCEA administration. Travel arrangements are requested to be made timely so as not to incur extra charges

AUGUST

- 🌀 Preparing for accreditation
 - ➔ No later than **August 20th**
 - Receive from WCEA the Excel list of all schools, including those scheduled for upcoming accreditation
 - Submit to WCEA any changes in Commissioner and/or contact information
 - Submit any school changes, including school name, address, principal, etc. to WCEA
 - Send information to Visiting Committee Chairs in preparation for fall visits
 - Submit any suggestions for agenda items for September Commission meetings
- 🌀 WCEA Grant process
 - ➔ No later than **August 30th**
 - Forward the grant application received via email by the WCEA office to your schools going through accreditation in the year the application states

SEPTEMBER

- 🌀 Preparing for accreditation
 - ➔ No later than **September 15th**
 - Send the name of the Chair, Visiting Committee members, and scheduled visit dates to WCEA Executive Director
 - ➔ No later than **September 30th**
 - Current year Assessment Invoice is due from arch/diocese

OCTOBER THROUGH JANUARY

- 🌀 Preparing for accreditation
 - Work with schools preparing for accreditation
 - Send information to Visiting Committee Chairs in preparation for the visit
 - Continue to in-service Chairs and Visiting Committee
 - WCEA sends out via email the Reading Team school assignments
- 🌀 Finances
 - ➔ No later than **November 10th**

COMMISSIONER MANUAL

- WCEA sends out via email the request for the NCEA Data Bank Arch/Diocesan Summary Report for the current year and the census information on all schools accredited by WCEA. This information is the basis for the WCEA Assessment Invoices.
- ➔ No later than **November 20th**
 - Return the requested census information to WCEA
- ➔ No later than **December 31st**
 - Commissioner receives Assessment Invoice for the following year. This is sent early to help with school and arch/diocese budget for the next year

MARCH

- 🌀 Preparing for accreditation
 - ➔ **March 1...** between March 1 and May 15
 - Commissioners can place school Accreditation files into the shared Dropbox file to share with ACS WASC, for ACS WASC schools, and to keep for the WCEA records
 - ➔ No later than **March 31st**
 - All visits for the current accreditation cycle must be completed
 - Visiting Committee Chair sends documents to local Commissioner
- 🌀 Commissioner Meetings
 - ➔ No later than **March 15th**
 - Make travel arrangements for May meeting and submit invoice to WCEA for payment or use assigned travel agency; travel arrangements are requested to be made timely so as not to incur extra charges

APRIL

- 🌀 Preparing for accreditation
 - ➔ No later than **April 15th**
 - Visiting Committee Chair sends documents to local Commissioner
 - ➔ No later than **April 20th**
 - WCEA Commissioner prepares digital documents for May accreditation meeting and places copies in the shared Dropbox for the Reading Teams. A copy of the same school files are maintained for one accreditation cycle at WCEA. A record is also maintained at the arch/diocese.
 - WCEA Commissioner sends a Thank-You and evaluations to the Chair and Visiting Committee members
- ➔ No later than the **last week of April**
 - Reading Teams read, discuss, and decide on recommended Accreditation Status of the full-visit and revisit schools assigned to them and available to them in the shared Dropbox
 - Reading Team Chairs send the WCEA Executive Director the Visiting Committee's recommendation and their Reading Team's recommendation for all schools assigned to them

COMMISSIONER MANUAL

- WCEA maintains the ballots and provides them at the Commission vote in May

MAY

- 🌐 Preparing for accreditation
 - ➔ **First week of May**
 - Attend the Accreditation meeting
 - ➔ No later than **May 15**
 - All school accreditation PDF files are to be in shared WCEA Dropbox

JUNE

- 🌐 Preparing for accreditation
 - ➔ No later than **June 7th**
 - Receive certificate packet from WCEA office
 - Sign certificates and forward packet to each accredited school, making sure the school is open to receive it