



Washington County School Division
“Working to Provide Virginia’s Best Education”
“Success for Every Child”

DISTRICT ACCREDITATION GUIDED SELF-STUDY

Prepared for Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Council on Accreditation and School Improvement
Quality Assurance Review
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SECTION 1: Overview of the District's Preparation and Organization to Conduct the Guided Self-Study

The Washington County School Division has a long history of association with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). In the mid 1960's the division became one of the first rural systems in Virginia to have all of its schools accredited by SACS. With the merging of the elementary commission and the secondary commission into Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACSCASI), the school division was able to move into district accreditation in the spring of 2004.

The foundation for continuous improvement in Washington County is the Six Year Plan, or as it is now called, "The Comprehensive Plan." This plan is required by the Virginia Department of Education and has been expanded at the local level to cover the accreditation needs of local, state, regional, and federal organizations. Our present plan, 2002-2008, was developed during the 2001-2002 school year with input from all of the stakeholders of the school system. The plan is reviewed annually and adjustments are made to keep it current and relevant. Building principals present an oral and written report on the progress their school has made in accomplishing the goals and objectives of the plan. A committee of central office instructional personnel reviews their report, writes an analysis of progress, and makes suggestions for future improvement where applicable. Three notable changes have been the inclusion of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) regulations, the ten SACSCASI standards for district accreditation, and revisions made by the Division Wide Improvement Team. An annual report of progress on the plan is given to the school board in the fall of the year when building principals are required to submit oral and written progress reports to the central office on their progress toward the plan. An evaluation of their progress by a committee of central office instructional personnel is given as part of the feedback process.

In the spring of 2004 a division wide school improvement team was established with each school having at least one representative. Members were also chosen to represent the administrators from the various building levels as well as the central office. The county PTSA has a permanent representative on the committee.

The committee meets quarterly and is charged with the overall total school improvement process for the county. The members of the committee are appointed for a three year term and this allows one-third of the committee to be replaced each year and always provides for new ideas while keeping two-thirds of the committee for stability. The committee has recently completed the following tasks: revised the Comprehensive Plan (formerly Six Year Plan of Improvement), defined the core values established by the division, created a system for internal visits and reviews of our schools and provided leadership for the Quality Assurance Review by defining how the school system meets each SACSCASI standard.

The superintendent's management team and the division's improvement team have worked on the district accreditation standards and have responded with an effective process for meeting SACSCASI division standards. It is the unanimous opinion of the group that the Washington County School Division meets or exceeds all standards.

The process of district accreditation has provided the vehicle for vast school improvement. All of our plans are now more focused, progress reports are given annually, and schools still have the flexibility to adjust their improvement plans to meet the changing needs of each school. Our progress in all areas is listed on our web page which can be found at www.wcs.k12.va.us. We believe that the sharing of these results has made us a more open school division and we have become a school system instead of a system of schools.

The superintendent of schools meets each Monday with the staff of the central office to review the work to be accomplished each week. The purpose of the meeting is to provide focus and direction for the division and to make sure that the lines of communication are open and available to all. In addition there are a large number of advisory groups that meet and deliver input for the school division. These include teacher, student, staff, career and technical, gifted, industry and parent committees.

Like all school systems, the Washington County School Division faces constantly – changing challenges. We will review the recommendations of the Quality Assurance Team and make plans for continuous improvement.

SECTION 2: Analysis of Accreditation Standards

Standard 1 – Beliefs and Mission

A quality system develops and communicates a vision, beliefs, and mission that provide a focus for the quality of the work of the students and the quality of the work of the system and schools.

The Washington County School Division will be a dynamic community of learners where:

- Faculty and staff are empowered through respect, training, leadership and resources to provide an excellent educational program
- Faculty and staff communicate high expectations and respect to every student
- Students are engaged through a rich curriculum to acquire the skills and the love of learning
- All students obtain the skills of citizenship by playing and working together in an atmosphere that respects both diversity and cooperation
- A partnership with parents and the greater community extends to all citizens a greater appreciation of the value of an excellent education
- Students exit with academic skills at or above grade level and an graduation are prepared to succeed in post-secondary education and/or employment

The Washington County School Division 2005-2006 Goals:

- Work towards being fully accredited
- Continue to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
- Provide at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels learning opportunities exceeding SOL requirements
- Place PDAs in the hands of elementary teachers
- Develop a three year plan for the distribution and replacement of instructional technology equipment
- Implement successfully the Washington County benchmark testing process
- Improve English/Language Arts scores for sub-groups of the No Child Left Behind Act
- Consolidate, evaluate and prioritize our intervention services for at risk students
- Expand the awareness of anti-bullying programs in Washington County
- Accelerate preparations to host a regional accrediting team in the fall of 2006
- Begin Phase II of the curriculum audit
- Offer classes to promote differentiation of instruction for those who teach students with disabilities
- Provide additional resources to students with disabilities to increase the pass rate in math and English
- Increase dual credit opportunities and industry certification for career and technical students
- Increase the awareness of all graduates of the post secondary educational and occupational opportunities
- Increase on-line testing at the middle school level
- Implement on-line testing at the elementary level

At the end of each school year, a list of accomplishments achieved is developed from the goals established for that year:

- Met state requirements in SOL testing
- Worked towards enabling all 3rd grade students to read “on grade level”
- Improved learning in mathematics through the use of “algebra readiness”
- Awarded two scholarships to graduates to become high school math teachers
- Provided financial assistance to help teachers receive a masters degree in mathematics
- Adopted new textbooks for mathematics (K-12), foreign language (6-12) and English literature (6-12)
- Expanded the summer opportunities for gifted students
- Worked with colleges/universities to bring more master level programs in “core subject” areas to our county
- Implemented a process of issuing personal digital assistants to all teachers
- Increased and offered career and technical classes at multiple locations
- Expanded technology services for teachers and students by hiring additional technology teachers
- Created a division-wide plan of accreditation to help schools improve on an annual basis
- Implemented a Washington County Community Scholars program in the middle schools
- Provided instruction to curb bullying at the middle level
- Helped teachers analyze data to increase student learning
- Increased inclusion of special needs students in regular education classrooms
- Increased support for special needs students leaving high schools
- Helped parents to better understand the state and division testing program
- Received state and national recognition of our career and technical programs
- Adopted and initiated a strategic plan that included improvement of schools

The Washington County School Division has a very comprehensive profile that is published on our division’s website www.wcs.k12.va.us/profile.

The division’s dedication to our vision, mission, and beliefs has ensured that we are working to provide Virginia’s best education. Our SOL scores and our continued compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act reflect our commitment to providing the best practices to all our stakeholders.

The Washington County School Division’s Improvement Committee reviews our vision, mission and beliefs annually and revises them when appropriate.

SECTION 2: Analysis of Accreditation Standards (continued)

Standard 2 – Governance and Leadership

A quality system provides for and promotes stability in the leadership, governance and organizational structure which includes a focus in developing and maintaining a vision; an emphasis on improving student learning; and support for innovative efforts that produce desired results.

Governance

The Virginia General Assembly, acting under the Constitution of Virginia, has the responsibility of providing a system of free public education and directs the establishment of local school boards to operate, maintain, and supervise local schools. The Washington County School Board is a corporate body composed of seven members representing the seven Magisterial Districts of the county. These members are elected by the public to a four-year term of office on a staggered basis so that the board always has experienced leadership in place. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman are elected annually by the board members at the board's organizational meeting during January of each year. Upon the recommendation of the superintendent, a clerk of the board is appointed.

Section A of the Washington County School Board Policy Manual outlines the foundation and basic commitments of the school board including the philosophy and operational goals.

Section B of the Washington County School Board Policy Manual establishes the governance and operations of the school division. Defined in this section are the legal status of the board, their powers and duties, qualifications, conflict of interest, meetings, officers, clerk, board and advisory committees, attorney, rules of order, closed meetings, public participation, policy development and dissemination, board-staff communications, in-service and compensation.

Section C defines the general administration of the school division including the employment of the superintendent, the administrative organizational plan and the administration of the school division in the absence of policy.

The fiscal management, support services, facilities development, personnel, instruction, students, school community relations and education agency relationships are detailed in Sections D-L.

During the 2005-06 school year a process was begun by the superintendent to update the policy manual by bringing it in line with the recommendations of the State School Board Association. The board is adopting a series of policies during the first semester of the 2005-06 school year and that process is expected to continue until the manual is updated.

The School Board takes great pride in the effort that is extended to get involvement from all stakeholders in the development of policies and operations of the school system. Parent advisory committees have been established for Special Education, Gifted Education as well as a Business Advisory Committee for Career and Technical Education. Under the leadership of the

superintendent additional advisory committees meet on a regular basis for parents, students, minority students, staff and teachers. Booster organizations, Parent Teacher Associations and volunteer groups are valuable assets of the school division. In addition, each school principal is required to have an advisory board of parents and students. The school board, meeting twice monthly, always reserves an agenda item for public comment and goes to great efforts to solicit public input.

The superintendent of schools meets monthly with principals and central office staff. In addition to the business items that are on the agenda, “visioning” is always the first item. This is a technique used by the superintendent to get his leadership team to constantly be thinking about new and better ways to do things. Sometimes this is a general discussion on topics relevant to the system and sometimes it involves reading and discussion of recently published books that contain elements that we may want to replicate within our school system. This visioning system is also used by the school board as they move our school system toward “working to be Virginia’s best.”

The Virginia School Board Association provides an ongoing training session for all board members. Members of the Washington County School Board annually attend about six different educational opportunities throughout the year. Several members of the board have been recognized at the state level for their involvement in training.

Leadership

Washington County employs an attorney who serves several local governmental agencies including the Washington County School Division. When requested, he issues opinions on our compliance with mandates required by the Virginia General Assembly, the Congressional Legislation as outlined in the No Child Left Behind act, and requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Several types of insurance and liability protection are maintained by the Washington County School Division. Local private insurance agencies provide property and casualty, transportation, and general liability protection. Workers compensation is provided through a state accredited governing association.

The Washington County School Division has aligned its administrative structure to meet the needs and requirements of the local school governing body. Responsible for allocating and aligning the human, instructional, financial and physical resources of the school division, this structure includes a superintendent, assistant superintendent, human resource manager, director of academic operations, director of business and finance and director of facilities and logistics. Data and feedback are used to monitor the use of these resources in view of their support of the division’s vision, mission, beliefs and students’ performance.

SECTION 2: Analysis of Accreditation Standards (continued)

Standard 3 – Curriculum

A quality system offers a research-based curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning that is subject to review and revision at regular intervals.

Students in the Washington County School Division are expected to meet and exceed the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). This is ensured through each teacher's use of many available resources such as; the Standards of Learning, Curriculum Frameworks, Enhanced Scope and Sequence, Test Blueprints, Released Tests, Project Graduation, ePAT, and Online Tutorials.

The Washington County School Division provides professional development workshops and in-service opportunities in order to make certain that curriculum is aligned with standards and paced to cover material in a timely manner prior to benchmark, exam, and SOL testing dates. Time for collaboration is provided to allow vertical sharing of information and subject specific information through in-service and staff development.

Pacing guides were most recently revised in 2004-2005. Six to nine months after a new textbook is adopted, revision of the corresponding pacing guides occurs.

The Washington County School Division makes certain all students are taught and different learning styles are taken into account. The county follows guidelines for meeting all county, state and federal standards. Individual Education Plans (IEP), Other Health-Impaired plans (504), No Child Left Behind standards, and Gifted and Talented Education policies are prepared to insure that all accommodations are used to meet individual needs.

Student performance data is disaggregated by sub-groups and special provisions are made to accommodate each area of strength and weakness. All Washington County programs are fully funded either by the county or by actively seeking outside support through grants. The Reading First, 21st Century, the Early Intervention Reading Initiative, and the Virginia Pre-school Initiative are examples of grant-funded programs at work in the county to meet the needs of all students. Remediation services are offered at each school in various forms which include before, during, and after-school opportunities. Teachers, Bonner Scholars, Educational Talent Search staff members, and Family Preservation specialists all provide tutoring services to meet the needs of at-risk students.

In order to make sure Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is being met, all county special education teachers meet in large and small groups on multiple occasions throughout the school year. They try to ensure that pacing guides and curriculum frameworks are used appropriately and that all available resources and accommodations are being used at all schools. Teachers are constantly diversifying and adapting material to meet the needs of all students in academic settings.

The Washington County School Division has made the division-wide commitment to provide inclusion in classrooms and have provided many opportunities for training, collaboration and

conferences. The number of students receiving instruction utilizing an inclusion model has increased from no schools participation in inclusion during the 2000-2001 school year to thirteen county schools participating in inclusion during the current school year. The county has also added an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to assist county-wide. This person is stationed at Watauga Elementary School where most of the students who qualify for this service attend.

Teacher-coordinators develop and carry out the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program for qualifying students at each individual school. Also, over the last two years, Washington County Schools has hired two central-office level Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) coordinators to maintain consistency from school to school with regards to this service.

The Washington County School Division utilizes state provided and mandated curriculum support materials. All teachers function with the understanding that the textbook is only a small piece of the instructional program; therefore, teachers must use other resources to supplement the textbooks. Curriculum guidelines developed by the Virginia State Department of Education must be further supplemented by individual teachers at the county level. Benchmark tests, differentiated lesson plans, released-test items, pacing guides, and united-streaming videos are just a few of the examples of support materials available for use.

The Washington County School Division promotes the active involvement of students in the learning process in a variety of ways. First, technology is used effectively by both students and teachers. Smartboards, projectors, palm pilots, flash drives, wireless computer labs with printers, and many other technological advances allow students and teachers to be actively involved. Many schools in the county produce student-led news programs which use available technology to disperse information in an exciting way.

Distance-learning and dual-enrollment opportunities exist in high school classrooms and allow high school students to receive college credit for certain classes. A Governor's School program challenges students in math and science. Vocational summer programs enrich students' choices with regards to vocational training.

The Junior Washington County Community Scholars, Washington County Community Scholars, and Learn and Serve programs encourage students to be active in community service. Student Advisory committees and Student Cooperative Associations are active at all schools, and student representatives are involved in service on a variety of committees at the county level.

Washington County students are actively involved in the education process through Mental Math Bees, Spelling Bees, Academic Bowls, various interdisciplinary units, cooperative-learning activities and many other higher-level thinking assignments.

The Washington County School Division consistently assesses, evaluates, and modifies instruction to best serve students. STAR, Accelerated Reader, Accelerated Math, PALS, Stanford 10, Pre-K PALS, benchmark testing, exams, No Child Left Behind, and SOL scores are just a few of the examples of data assessment that are used by our system. Based on scores, remediation or acceleration is provided as indicated.

The Washington County School Division is dedicated to providing opportunities for a balanced educational experience. Students attend organized recess or physical education classes regularly with Academic Physical Fitness awards presented yearly. A variety of clubs are available at every level for student involvement throughout the school year. Character education programs are also maintained at all levels.

Exploratory programs allow students to experience a wide range of classes, and bullying prevention programs train students to recognize and respond to the tactics of a bully. Students participate in Drug Abuse Resistance Education and Life Skills classes at various times throughout their school careers. Family Life instruction is provided annually. A complete guidance program serves students, parents, faculty, and staff in addition to preparing students for future career choices. A well-developed fine arts program enriches the overall educational experience of all Washington County students with art, music, and foreign language classes offered.

SECTION 2: Analysis of Accreditation Standards (continued)

Standard 4 – Instructional Design

A quality system develops and employs instructional strategies and activities in support of student achievement of the expectations for learning defined by the curriculum.

The Washington County School Division follows the mandates of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). Data disaggregation is a vital element in these programs and a necessary component in accurately assessing student strengths and needs. Data analysis is ongoing (STAR reading, PALS, Kindergarten Readiness Tests, SOL released test items, NCS mentor, and internally developed benchmark testing). As a result of these analyses, teachers, principals, specialists, department heads, team leaders, and other instructional leaders can collaborate and determine how every student is progressing in achieving expected outcomes. Students are then placed either in settings for in-school and after-school programs for re-teaching or extensions, depending upon the individual need of each student, or given maintenance activities to reinforce the mastery of skills. Data analysis provides the information needed to revise curricula and pacing guides and to identify professional development needs.

All instructional design throughout the district has its foundations in research-based best practices. The Washington County School Division has a Comprehensive Plan of Improvement, which is annually evaluated by a committee made up of representatives from all the schools. Each school designs an individual plan, which is developed by a committee made up of all the stakeholders in each school. Individual schools are evaluated each year on the completion of targeted goals and the use of data to plan for the next year's goals and focus areas. Curriculum guides and pacing guides are continually being evaluated and revised based on student performance to ensure that current research on "best practices" in teaching and learning is studied by teachers and applied by them in actual classroom performance. The Washington County School Division employees are encouraged to seek out professional development opportunities across the state, region and nation. Professional development is a combination of countywide planned and presented workshops (using our own staff as the best resources) and in-house professional development in each school based on the data analysis generated needs assessments.

The Washington County School Division attempts to protect instructional time in order to support student learning. The Virginia Code Manual serves as a guideline for establishing class time. Principals and teachers are encouraged to adhere to class schedules, maintain time-on-task, and to minimize interruptions during the school day.

The Washington County School Division has a comprehensive design for instruction, in which students are intellectually stimulated, given opportunities to think critically, and have avenues for utilization of skills in real-world contexts. The primary curriculum functions to guide instruction while the Standards of Learning focuses on performance objectives. Core curriculum courses are designed to meet the needs of students at all levels. Differentiation of instruction is done to meet the needs of the diverse learner. Exploratory and elective courses are available to support and

challenge middle and high school students. Gifted and talented students, at all levels, have individual educational plans which are designed to assist the student in achieving at high levels. Middle schools are departmentalized and offer a variety of programming through teaming, extended academics and interdisciplinary theme activities. The elementary and middle schools promote hands-on learning as much as possible. The high schools offer an extensive program for all students. Some students may elect to take dual enrollment classes from the local community college. Others may enroll in classes offered at the career and technical schools. The Washington County School Division is proud of the number of remediation programs it offers. The Positive Alternatives to School Suspension (PASS) program offers an alternative to out-of-school suspension. All of these measures assist the division in insuring that the students grow into capable and productive adults.

The school media center serves as an essential link that connects students and teachers with the information resources needed. Financial resources are allocated to ensure that the libraries have not only books and other printed materials to support students' and teachers' learning but also state of the art technologies supportive of the curriculum. Each school has assigned to it an Instructional Technology Resource Teacher who offers assistance in the classroom and provides professional development to the staff. Every high school is linked to Southwest Virginia Educational Technology Network (SVETN) which provides courses fiber optically and online. All teachers must have a technology endorsement. The school division has a technology and computer replacement plan.

SECTION 2: Analysis of Accreditation Standards (continued)

Standard 5 – Assessment, Measurement and Effective Results

A quality system uses effective and continuous performance management systems for assessing, aligning, and improving student learning and operation performance, including organizational and instructional effectiveness, at all levels and the areas of the system.

The Washington County School Division employs an effective management system for assessing, aligning, and improving student learning. Written into the Continuous Plan of Improvement, the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL), and the National Council Standards are performance expectations and key indicators for student learning. Washington County has aligned these expectations with the division's curriculum to ensure instructional effectiveness at all levels and areas of the system. Guidelines set forth by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act are followed by the school system. Data collected annually is analyzed and reviewed collectively and at the school level to determine areas of accountability.

By using standards, benchmarks, and grade level expectations, the school division implements a comprehensive system for assessing student progress. Curriculum development committees continuously meet to analyze and improve assessment indicators. The division continuously places emphasis on differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all learners as well as researched-based instructional methods and programs for effectiveness. In addition, the division uses a comprehensive system for assessing student progress, and the quality of that system has improved as a result of the Standards of Learning (SOL) requirements and those of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act. Because of these state and national assessment programs, teachers, administrators, parents, and students are focusing on specific outcomes and analyzing data to make decisions for group instruction as well as individually targeted instruction. Data not only includes grades and division-level benchmark tests but also Advanced Placement Tests, SAT and ACT test results, dual enrollment courses, and students' grades. At the elementary level assessment results such as Phonological Awareness Literary Screening (PALS) and Accelerated Reader give teachers and students help in setting learning goals and establishing pacing guides for instruction.

A commitment to continuous improvement is a priority of the division. Principals are responsible for leading their faculties in the analysis of data for decision making. The principal presents data and action plans annually to the superintendent. Data is presented to the community and stakeholders through a variety of methods. Individual school data is presented in the form of a school profile and is available for each school on the division website. The school division maintains an up-to-date web page with active links to individual school performance data as well as information about the school division's performance. Brochures which contain information and data for accreditation status and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are produced annually and made available to all stakeholders. Also annually, all stakeholders receive a survey to provide feedback to the school division. Data is shared with school and division-level staff for improving and validating practices.

SECTION 2: Analysis of Accreditation Standards (continued)

Standard 6 – Resources: Financial and Human Resources

A quality system has qualified staff that is supported by the financial and physical resources necessary to fulfill the vision, mission, and goals of the system.

Financial Resources

The Washington County School Division financial records are audited each year for the year ending June 30 by an independent certified public accounting firm. The report of the independent auditors and the related Comprehensive Annual Financial Report are maintained on site and available to the public. The Washington County School Division maintains its account structure as established by the Code of Virginia, which requires that the school division has a modern system of accounting for all funds. The Washington County School Division reports its financial statements externally based upon the modified-accrual basis of accounting, as required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board.

The Washington County School Division operates on a fiscal year ending June 30. Prior to each July 1 (or the beginning of the new fiscal year) the School Board adopts an annual budget that is appropriated by the county by categories. The operating budget lists by line-item state, federal and local revenue items as well as each expenditure item. The budgeting process assures the School Board, as well as the county government, that sufficient revenues will be collected annually to meet current and upcoming years' budgeted expenditures. Actual revenues and expenditures are reviewed on a semi-monthly basis to ensure that the Washington County School Division is operating within its current budget and that collected revenues will be sufficient to cover current year expenditures.

All debt of the Washington County School Division is secured by the county government. The debt consists entirely of literary loans from the Commonwealth of Virginia or bonds issued and regulated by the Treasury Department of the Commonwealth of Virginia. A debt service schedule is maintained for all debt which details interest and principal payments due each year. Each year's payments are budgeted in the corresponding year's budgeted expenditures.

Monthly balance sheets are maintained by the finance department and reviewed by finance staff for accuracy. The balance sheet accurately reflects the Washington County School Division's financial position as of each balance sheet date.

During the budgeting process, which begins in January, the administration seeks to allocate funds to support our mission of "Working to Provide Virginia's Best Education." Anticipated expenditures are reviewed by school personnel to ensure that each school's educational needs can be met, and that a plan for future allocation of funds exists.

Human Resources

Senior administrators at the central office all have advanced degrees in their fields and meet or exceed the administration and supervision legal requirements for Virginia. The superintendent has a PhD; the assistant superintendent, director of academic operations, and supervisor of elementary education have Ed.D's in educational leadership and policy studies. The supervisors of high school and of middle school education have master's degrees, and the assistant supervisor for career and technical education has an Ed.S and a Master's. In addition, the director of facilities & logistics has an Ed.D and three Master's degrees. All principals and assistant principals have at least Master's degrees and Principal or Administration and Supervision licenses. In addition, by the 2006-2007 school year, all classroom teachers and aides will meet the requirements for "Highly Qualified" status under Federal No Child Left Behind and Virginia state guidelines.

The Washington County School Division develops and maintains a remuneration plan for all employees that is reviewed and revised annually. This current year, The Washington County School Division embarked on a five year plan to significantly improve the salary scales of teachers to make them among the most competitive in Southwest Virginia. We also performed a meticulous search of employee records to ensure appropriate prior experience credit was given to auxiliary personnel and made salary corrections where needed. The Human Resources Department annually analyzes salary scales for all employee classifications to ensure competitiveness. Likewise, employee benefits are among the most attractive in Virginia.

Staffing of all positions is examined regularly by the assistant superintendent and the human resources manager. Instructional positions are based on enrollment data for classes and established teacher-student ratios. Adjustments are made throughout the year when necessitated by special circumstances or increases in enrollments. Staffing is sufficient to accomplish the mission and goals of the school district.

All employees, both professional and auxiliary, are evaluated annually based on school board policies and regulations. Administrator and teacher evaluations are in accordance with the Virginia Department of Education's "Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers, Administrators, and Superintendents." Structured improvement plans are developed for those employees who do not meet expected standards of performance. Each employee's evaluation is strictly confidential and designed to be a guide for achieving professional performance.

SECTION 2: Analysis of Accreditation Standards (continued)

Standard 7 – Student Services

A quality system identifies and has a network of services that support the development and well-being, including the health and safety, of each student.

The Washington County School Division provides support for the various needs of all students ensuring that we are aligned with the vision statement of our county and the individual schools.

All schools have in place an emergency plan for various situations. Practice drills, such as fire, tornado, and lock down are implemented throughout the year.

In order to coordinate communication efforts with the stakeholders, each school has various tools including use of website, E-mail, newsletters, agenda book, PTA meetings and conferences. Monthly school board meetings are held and are open to the public.

Each school is responsible for maintaining secure, accurate and complete student records in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations.

Each school has a guidance counselor who will be available for meeting the individual and personal needs of the students.

The county provides transportation and nursing services to all students, including students with special needs.

Each school is responsible for implementing, throughout the year, service oriented activities such as financial support and tangible items for community needs. Each school has access to a school resource officer who is employed by the Washington County Sheriff's Department to maintain a safe and secure facility and to promote lawful conduct. Our county also supports good citizenship through the implementation of the Character Counts program and numerous advisory boards. Advisory boards exist at all levels and include representation from students, teachers, staff, parents, and other stakeholders.

Upon enrollment, students and their parents receive a copy of the school calendar which includes written guidelines for student conduct and attendance. These guidelines are also available on the Internet and are implemented daily at our schools.

SECTION 2: Analysis of Accreditation Standards (continued)

Standard 8 – Stakeholder Communication and Relationships

A quality system develops and supports organizational patterns or structures that promote effective communications and relationships between and among the schools, stakeholders and system.

The Washington County School Division provides staff members with information they need through its monthly publication of the Uniting the Division e-mail based newsletter along with a multitude of school division and school board information on the Washington County Schools comprehensive web page. Board documents are distributed to all schools and system departments after each school board meeting, and all stakeholders are informed of these actions through the division's technology capabilities. The newly formed human resources department provides all forms of employment related information for all staff members.

The school division values staff morale very highly. Efforts by the school board and central office such as New Teacher Orientation, Teacher of the Year awards, and the opening day picnics and celebrations coincide with the yearly goals of the individual schools to maintain healthy school climates and positive morale among staff and stakeholders. Teachers and administrators being visible at school events send a positive message to parents and students. PTA and booster groups work with the system's schools to give additional support with positive communications between the system and the stakeholders through meetings, programs and newsletters.

A variety of methods and instruments are used to maintain appropriate communication and relationships between staff members and stakeholders. SASI and Phone-Master are used to create phone messages in order to inform staff and parents of upcoming events and activities. Also, the division and individual schools utilize both websites and E-mail services to communicate information to staff, students, parents, and the community at large to keep them abreast of school operations, schedules, activities, programs and events. Also, standard practices such as calendars, newsletters, student folders, report cards, student handbooks and agendas continue to be utilized by the county and individual schools to inform students and parents of school guidelines and regulations.

The Washington County School Division works very closely with community agencies and health care providers to keep positive and effective lines of communication open. Each high school houses a School Resource Officer (SRO) and a Student Assistance Program (SAP) counselor. The division employs school nurses for each school and has access to a dentist. Furthermore, various schools host career and health fairs in order to bring students and their parents closer to the numerous businesses and agencies that support the local schools. Access to these agencies helps to ensure that positive communication between the schools and their stakeholders is maintained.

Student records and documents are maintained by the individual schools and follow local, state and federal guidelines. These records and any correspondence defining students'

accomplishments are consistent with professional standards monitored by the division office. Teachers and staff members are trained in both record keeping and data analysis.

The Washington County School Division provides a comprehensive professional development program for all of its staff members in order to support the overall goals and action plans set forth by the school board and the Virginia Department of Education. Staff development is planned by the division office with input from staff members each year in the form of surveys and collaboration meetings in order to improve their skills and overall performance without sanctioning or practicing bias or prejudice.

SECTION 2: Analysis of Accreditation Standards (continued)

Standard 9 – Physical Facilities

A quality system has the necessary resources to provide the facilities, sites and equipment for the educational programs and services to be fully implemented throughout the system and individual schools.

The Washington County School Division provides facilities, sites, and equipment to ensure that students have clean, safe, pleasant and appropriate learning environments for all programs. Using a model of strategic planning, allocating human resources for research and development, acting on the belief that instructional programming precedes construction design, and relying on the outstanding collaboration and communication among School Board, Board of Supervisors, and school-district staff members, the school division identifies and provides the resources necessary to maintain quality public education.

The core belief that “meaningful, responsible change and innovation are critical to continuous improvement” drives the system to use both short and long-term planning to predict needed changes and to make those changes in a timely manner. Examples of the successful application of this process of continuous improvement include Phase I of the Washington County School Division’s building plan. Commitment to continuous improvement reveals itself boldly in the fact that astute financial planning made it possible for the school division to pay cash for girls’ softball lighting at each high school in Washington County.

The Washington County School Division maintains compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, standards, and regulations as evidenced by many processes including annual safety and facility inspections from local government agencies, adherence to purchasing and procurement laws, strict auditing of financial records, legal counsel’s continual review of processes and materials, pre-qualification of general contractors, annual legislative updates to employees, and professional development on legal issues provided for administrators. The administrative staff responsible for maintenance and construction of facilities receives training and necessary information to ensure their knowledge of local, state and federal laws, standards, and regulations.

The Washington County School Division employs a full-time custodial and maintenance staff to ensure that the system sites, facilities, and equipment are maintained to provide a healthy and safe environment for all occupants. Inspections in each school are required periodically to be done by the principal and head custodian. Areas inspected include fire escapes, emergency exits, playgrounds, playground equipment and any other areas critical to the safety of students and staff. Fire extinguishers are inspected annually. Hazardous chemicals are labeled and stored according to state and federal law and/or regulations. Effective monitoring processes ensure healthy and safe environments in all the physical facilities. The annual processes of developing and implementing the Washington County School Division’s budget and Capital Improvement Plan include plans for maintaining and improving the school district’s sites, facilities, and equipment.

SECTION 2: Analysis of Accreditation Standards (continued)

Standard 10 – Continuous Process of Educational Improvement

A quality system establishes, implements and monitors a continuous process of educational improvement clearly focused on student performance.

The Washington County School Division is firmly committed to the development of a continuous process of educational improvement which focuses on student performance. To fulfill this commitment, the division has established and implemented numerous improvement initiatives. It has also identified procedures for monitoring these efforts.

One of the system's initiatives is the development of a strategic plan. The division's Six Year Plan of Improvement, or Comprehensive Plan, includes objectives, strategies, and indicators for curriculum and instruction, data assessment and evaluation, operations and facilities, public relations and community involvement, security and safety, and student activities. As the plan was developed, emphasis was given to aligning it with the system's vision, mission, and core values.

In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, the school system has developed a profile which provides a description of various facets of the system. Included in the profile is information on such areas as the system's history, academics, special services, support services, community resources and partnerships, budget and financial resources, facilities, communications, and demographics. The profile also contains data concerning the results of improvement efforts. This data, such as the results of the district-wide benchmark testing program, is analyzed to identify future improvement efforts.

Another improvement strategy focuses on ensuring that every school in the system has established improvement goals. Utilizing processes developed by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement, individual schools have formulated School Improvement Plans. Student performance records, survey results, and the latest educational research have been utilized in the development of the plans. They contain goals; action steps, including a timeline; estimated resources and persons responsible; and means for evaluation. Both the school and school system assess the school's efforts in achieving the goals.

As another improvement initiative, the system monitors each school's compliance with accreditation standards. These standards include requirements of SACSCASI, the Virginia Department of Education, and the Standards of Quality. Information utilized in this monitoring process includes data from the Virginia School Report Card, Standards of Learning assessment, benchmark testing, Adequate Yearly Progress assessment, the school lunch program, gifted and special needs programs, and student transportation.

The school system maintains continuity and collaboration among the elementary, middle, and secondary schools in its improvement efforts. Each level shares a common vision and clearly defined goals and priorities. High expectations are maintained for all students and division personnel. Elementary, middle, and secondary administrators meet regularly to discuss various

instructional issues. Each year, administrators participate in a summer institute to collaborate and discuss goals and objectives. Disaggregated data is used for vertical planning purposes.

To further illustrate its commitment to educational improvement, the division provides opportunities for personnel to participate in professional development that is designed to increase subject-matter knowledge and maximize student learning. Test data is disaggregated, and teachers are surveyed annually to determine needs for instructional goals and objectives. Professional development opportunities are planned based upon these findings. Subsequently, scientifically-based educational programs and practices are implemented at every level.

The school division has placed a strong emphasis on the involvement of stakeholder groups in its improvement initiatives. Central office personnel, teachers, parents, community members, and students serve on committees, participate in advisory groups, and complete surveys as improvement efforts are developed and implemented. The division also makes a strong effort to convey the results of its improvement efforts to stakeholders. Information is communicated through advisory group, PTA, booster club, and committee meetings and the local media. On the school system web site, information is available on the division's improvement efforts. Individual school web sites contain the Annual Report, Standards of Learning data, and School Improvement Plan.

Clearly, the Washington County School Division is strongly committed to a continuous process of educational improvement focusing on student performance. Through maintaining these efforts and developing additional ones, the system will continue "Working to Provide Virginia's Best Education."

SECTION 3: Summary Description of the School System and its School Improvement Planning Process

The Washington County School Division provides a safe, supportive and engaging learning environment, which challenges all students to achieve their own maximum potential. In partnership with the family and community, the Washington County School Division strives to ensure that each student acquires basic academic skills and receives a diverse array of educational opportunities that promotes healthy social, physical, and intellectual growth.

The Washington County School Divisions' journey from "good to great" is supported by human, material, and financial resources all focused on a shared vision. That vision may be best stated in the system's motto: "Working to Provide Virginia's Best Education." Students, staff, parents, and community travel that path in a mutually supportive and collaborative manner using proven processes and clear and concise data.

The blueprint for improvement in the Washington County School Division is the Comprehensive Plan. The plan is a living document, with processes established to make the plan responsive to changing student needs. Each facet of the plan is supported by research-based strategies and effective schools' "best practices." One of the most important practices is that of dispersed leadership. That leadership is evidenced by the structures set in place to develop the plan. As described in Section 1, each school has its own school improvement team. The team is composed of school personnel, students, and parents. The school improvement teams analyze data including SOL scores, grade distribution, parent, student, and staff satisfaction surveys. They then reach a consensus on specific areas to be addressed in the school plan. The improvement teams develop goals, objectives, and strategies to achieve those objectives. Input into the school plan also comes from other school leaders such as team leaders and department chairs.

The individual school's improvement teams provide input into the allocation of school resources to best meet the objectives of the school plan. In addition, the school plan is focused on achieving the objectives detailed in the school division's strategic plan.

Key to the success of the Washington County School Division is an in-depth analysis of school data. Not only does the data drive the school plan, but staff members also use it as they plan their instruction. The data analyzed includes SOL test scores; PALS test results, school division benchmark assessments and classroom assessments. With the current focus on subgroups identified under No Child Left Behind legislation, the schools are able to implement remedial programs to close achievement gaps.

SECTION 4: Methods Employed to Provide Quality Assurance

The Washington County School Division is committed to providing quality assurance of its school improvement process. A district accreditation quality assurance procedure was developed which specifies details of an assurance process. The Comprehensive Plan, provides guidance to the district in the implementation of a process for continuous improvement while meeting the compliance standards for the Washington County Accountability Program, No Child Left Behind act, and SACSCASI. Each school principal and the school improvement team shall be responsible for preparing an annual plan, posting the plan on the school's website, and preparing an annual report of progress which is presented to central office sub-committees, annually, after test results are reported by the Virginia Department of Education. Internal facilitators, the Washington County School Division Improvement Team, will implement the use of a standardized checklist when monitoring classroom instruction in order to gather and share data with administrators, school team members, and district teams for use in decision making regarding school improvement, increased student achievement, and optimizing the teaching and learning process.

The Washington County School Division will be visited by internal monitoring teams in the fall of 2006. This experience in the district will be received by peer review team members and school stakeholders. Schools are to be prepared and will receive guidance and assistance throughout the process. Results of the visits, as well as commendations, recommendations and compliance with standards are to be shared with schools, the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, and the director of academic operations. After the initial visit, visits will occur every four years.

The Washington County School Division follows the guidelines set forth by the Virginia Department of Education in providing ongoing evaluation of all certified employees. The evaluation plan is the process for evaluating all employees. All professional staff (teachers and administrators) are evaluated each year for the first three years in a position. Once successful performance has been attained for those initial years, evaluation then proceeds annually. All teachers must enroll in and complete a course every five years. Each school is provided staff development funds, and reimbursement for course tuition is available through the School Board Office. In addition, a summer in-service is provided before each school year. Administrators also have on-going leadership programming through administrative staff development in which they are mandated to participate.

Additionally, each teacher in Washington County must participate in the Washington County Mentor Assistance and Assessment Program.