MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

COMMISSION ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS

REPORT OF THE
REFLECTIONS ON STANDARDS OF QUALITY VISITATION TEAM

American Community School
Beirut, Lebanon
April 25 – 28, 2004

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INTRODUCTION

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools is a non-governmental, nonprofit, peer-administered organization of diverse educational institutions committed to the highest quality education for students. Its purpose is to ensure the continuous improvement of its member schools through effective leadership, self-study, peer evaluation, accreditation, exemplary programs, and supportive services. For more than 75 years, the Association has provided leadership in school improvement for its member schools in six states in the United States, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, the subcontinent of Asia, and Africa.

*Reflections on Standards of Quality (Reflections)* is a unique accreditation process that uses a reflective process of self examination and long range planning as vehicles for school improvement and growth. The process, developed by the Commission on Secondary Schools (CSS), Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, provides linkages between individual learning areas, the accreditation standards applied to all schools, and future needs of the school. *Reflections* engages the school in a comprehensive examination and evaluation of every aspect of the school, including the community it serves, the institution’s underlying philosophical underpinnings, each area of the curriculum, and a variety of resources such as finances and facilities. The twelve MSA standards demonstrate the critical role that inputs such as curriculum, instruction, assessment, school culture, facilities, and student services play in creating the conditions necessary to promote improved student performance and organizational improvement.

The evaluation program which schools must undergo is a threefold process: the self-study which is conducted by the local professional staff with input from representative stakeholders of the community, the visit by the Commission’s evaluation team to validate the self-study, and the follow-up program carried out by the school in response to the findings of its own self-study as well as the recommendations of the visiting evaluation team.

The nine members of the Visitation Team to American Community School at Beirut used the three and one-half day visit to review written documents regarding the school, its objectives, and their development. The Team interacted with as many of the school’s stakeholders as possible regarding their knowledge, understanding and support for the plan and to gain greater insight to the school’s ability to meet Middle States standards. The groups interviewed included self-study committees and committee chairs, selected teachers, administration, a randomly selected group of students, parents, guidance counselors, library staff, department heads, curriculum supervisors, supervisor of buildings and grounds, and support staff.

Careful planning and good organization for the Team visit made the activities of the Team both efficient and effective. In the short space of time allotted for the visit, the Team was able to gain a sense of the commitment of faculty and students to effective education and the feeling of caring and enjoyment that students, faculty, administration, and staff share.
The MSA Visiting Team began its review of the American Community School at Beirut’s (ACS) Reflection on Standards of Quality self-study on Sunday, April 25th 2004. The nine member team was well prepared for the four day visit and worked collaboratively and cooperatively to ensure that ACS received a well-written report.

On April 24th, the Team chair met with the Team secretary and reviewed her responsibilities. Clear guidelines were given regarding the Team chair’s expectations and time was spent developing a positive relationship, which was paramount to the success of the Team.

The Team met from 11 A.M – 2 PM for an orientation meeting on Sunday, April 25th. Four of the nine Team members were on their first Team visit. The Team chair outlined the MSA protocol associated with the team visit and provided a sample report based on the ACS self-study, which emphasized the format by which all other reports should be written.

Team members began their meetings with the school’s self-study committees from 3pm-6pm.

On Monday, April 26th and Tuesday, April 27th Team members visited classrooms, met with committee members and met with other Team members to review their findings. In the evenings, Chairs assigned to different MSA Standards Reports and Learning Areas reported back to the entire Team a summary of their report and the commendations and recommendations associated with the specific area of the ACS self-study. Links between committee reports were made and highlighted for future reference in regards to the Team’s discussion associated with the school’s ‘Improvement Plan’.

On Wednesday, April 28th Team members discussed ACS’ ‘Improvement Plan’ in light of their findings and decided on the category of Accreditation, which they would recommend to MSA. At 3:30 PM the Team Chair reported, in an oral format, a summary of the Team’s findings to the ACS community. The Team concluded that it had a full and rich experience of the school leading to the following report and assessment.

The following report is the visiting Team’s efforts to provide ACS and MSA with a summary of their findings and the commendations and recommendations, which will, hopefully, support ACS’ drive towards excellence.

This report of the findings of the Visitation Team will be forwarded to the Commission on Secondary Schools, which will make a decision on the accreditation of American Community School.
SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

The American Community School in Beirut has a longstanding history in Lebanon that will culminate in a Centennial celebration in 2005. It has survived through adaptability by being responsive not only to its initial founding population of American families of the AUB faculty and the Presbyterian mission of the Middle East but to changing needs after two World Wars and the Lebanese Civil War. The school continues to serve children of American families (these do not include American Embassy children) but has also opened its doors to Lebanese children and now also attracts students from a more global community. During the last five years, there has been an increase from 37 to 51 nationalities (a 10.4% increase).

The school has maintained a student population that hovers around 1000 since 1998 and has earned a reputation of being the best of which they are very proud. This reputation is supported by the fact that at the high school level they offer three strong academic programs which include the IB diploma and the Lebanese Baccalaureate. They have shown leadership in the community through many first and innovative programs. For example:

- It was the first school to be fully accredited by a US regional accrediting association.
- It was the first school to be officially authorized by IBO to offer IB diploma.
- It has a history of success in both Lebanese government exams and IB exams.
- It has been responsive to students with special needs.
- It has a high parental involvement. (Parental involvement required by Lebanese Law.)
- It is the first school to make community service (100 hours) a requirement for high school graduation.

ACS is to be commended for the leadership it has shown in the community.

ACS is in its fourth year of implementing the Living Values Educational Program (LVEP) which integrates social life skills into its existing programs. The school principals report that a beneficial side effect of this program has been a documented drop of 40% in their referrals of students to the office for discipline reasons. The open ended items of the parent survey support parent perception that “good attempts have been made to bring more discipline and accountability”. Many parents comment favorably in a variety of ways on the values being instilled in their students and the benefits of learning in a multinational environment. ACS itself reflects a humanitarian approach in its Financial Aids program that presently benefits forty-seven families in the school community.

The American Community School in Beirut has evolved to serving a broader community and a commitment to preparing students for the global community. As such it is challenged to meet diverse and complex student needs. It strives to maintain a positive image in the community through information sessions, a monthly newsletter, cultivation of media coverage, a yearly calendar that features a multicultural art theme of students’ work from all age groups and
through the students themselves and their involvement in community service activities. Opinion surveys reflect that all constituents of the community perceive ACS as an excellent school. A variety of external tests demonstrate stable and consistent results at slightly to well above national norms in Language Arts and Mathematics.

However, there is stated dissonance in balancing the needs of the Lebanese Baccalaureate students in fulfilling the Lebanese Baccalaureate requirements with the other academic programs. This is reflected in staff, parent and student surveys. ACS is attempting to gain IB recognition as an equivalent program to the Lebanese Baccalaureate by the Lebanese Government but until such a decision is made. In general, the school maintains responsible and positive associations with the local, state and national governments.

ACS is perceived by students, parents and staff to be a positive learning environment and the education programs are considered of high quality. Parents comment, in particular, that they feel welcomed and involved in the school. Teachers feel positive in having a major role in curriculum development. Surveys do reveal that there is a perception that school funds are not always allocated fairly to school programs. It is recommended that the school budget be explained and made more transparent to the stakeholders. One of the lowest items on the student survey was their perception of not having their opinions considered when important school decisions are made. ACS does have Student Councils in place and it is recommended that these bodies be used as a vehicle for involving students in school decision making matters as appropriate.

In conclusion, ACS has demonstrated educational leadership in the Lebanese and International Community and has earned a reputation of offering strong academic programs while preparing young people to become contributing members of a global community.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS for its adaptability over almost a hundred years of existence.
2. ACS for the leadership it has shown in the community.
3. ACS for its humanitarian approach in its Financial Aids program that presently benefits forty-seven families in the school community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS administration ensure equity in their support of all school programs and, in particular, ensure that no language group feels marginalized.
2. ACS administration engage IBO in its efforts to secure IB Diploma recognition for Lebanese Baccalaureate students in Lebanon.
3. ACS administration consider explaining the school budget process to all stakeholders to allow for a more transparent management of funds.
4. Student Councils be used as a vehicle for involving students in decision making in school matters as appropriate.
STANDARDS OF
THE MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the many details and activities in the school’s self-study. At American Community School at Beirut, faculty and departmental representatives worked with Dr. George Damon – Headmaster- and Mrs. Manahel Kobeissy – Academic Dean - to supervise all aspects of the self-study. All teachers and administrators in the school were assigned to appropriate subcommittees whose job it was to determine the quality of all programs, services, activities and facilities available for students.

There are a total of twelve (12) accreditation standards that must be met in order for a school to become or remain an accredited member of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. These standards serve as important indicators of quality and guidelines for organizational improvement to MSA’s diverse membership and aid in school improvement planning and future development.

Recommendations found in this and the next section are supplied with a spirit of collegial interest, and are not meant to be construed as criticisms of individuals within the school. All comments are to be viewed as suggestions from critical friends, designed to help the school in its improvement processes.

As part of the maintenance process of accreditation, the school will be expected to respond to all recommendations found in this and the next section on Learning Areas. While it is valid for a school to reject a recommendation for implementation, the school should be prepared to provide logical and well-reasoned arguments why the recommendation is not appropriate for the school.

The description of each standard is provided, along with a statement as to whether the Visitation Team believes the school meets or does not meet the standard. This information will be used by the Commission on Secondary Schools in determining the continued accreditation of American Community School at Beirut.
Philosophy, Mission, Beliefs, and/or Objectives

**Standard:** The institution has clearly written statements of philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives that convey the general and specific purposes of the educational programs and that express expectations for quality. Stakeholders, including staff, parents, and governing body members, understand, accept, and give input into the development of the organization’s philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. These documents are appropriate for the groups served and are reviewed periodically.

The Philosophy, Mission, Beliefs, and/or Objectives standard are met.

American Community School at Beirut’s Mission and Philosophy, originally written in 1992, has been reviewed twice. In February 1999, the Board of Trustees adopted the present Mission statement with an elaborate interpretation, entitled “Primary School Goals”, drafted by the administration team. In March 2003, a new committee was formed to review the Mission and Philosophy statements. All school constituencies were invited to participate.

The new Mission Statement clarifies the purpose of the school and underlines its philosophy, which is child-centered and humanist in approach and focuses on an American style education. However, its philosophy statement indicates that ACS is an international school. ACS will want to revisit its ‘identity’ as an American or international school.

ACS’ student population is predominantly Lebanese nationals, but also dual nationals (Lebanese and another nationality) and international students. The Mission and Philosophy statements ensure a commitment to “American style education” the interpretation of which is highly valued by all school constituencies although the title still generates a great deal of debate. In their interpretation of an ‘American style education’ ACS states: “…that the learning process is as important as the content. Emphasis is placed on active and interactive learning. Students are treated as individuals and are encouraged to express their opinions freely and responsibly. Co-curricular and extra curricular activities are an integral part of the program. Parents are expected to be active participants in the process of their children’s education.”

Offering the Lebanese and International Baccalaureate programs responds to the needs of a significant student population at ACS. The aim is to ensure that all students in all programs benefit from the rich array of curricular and extracurricular offerings.

The governing board clarified that there was no intention to make major changes to the original Mission Statement but encouraged revisions to help clarify the message. The philosophy statement was a very long and abstract document, which the committee replaced with a much more concise, clear and workable version. To arrive at this document, a questionnaire entitled “Assessing your Educational Philosophy” was distributed to all faculty and staff, a sample of students and a small sample of parents. The questionnaire was an educational philosophy self-assessment tool. Results from the questionnaire were discussed by committee members and tabulated in a very simple format displaying the highest-ranking educational philosophies:
Humanism and Constructivism. Consequently, the philosophy and belief statements were written in light of this result.

The Mission Statement, with the primary school goals, last adopted by the board in 1999 was also circulated to all faculty and staff before the committee started its meetings. Comments from faculty and staff were shared and discussed before introducing the new Mission Statement.

The committee met with the Board of Trustees in June 2003 to share the proposed new Mission Statement and Philosophy Statement. The Mission statement strongly emphasizes “standards of integrity”, “qualities of respect for self and others”, “desire to serve the community” and “acting with honor and purpose”. The discussion was limited since members of the board needed time to review the documents. A month later, the board approved the new documents with a couple of minor changes.

At the beginning of the 2003-2004 academic year, a school wide meeting was held where all faculty and staff participated in a working session with the aim of ensuring everyone read and understood both statements. Participants were also given the opportunity to critically analyze the documents. The intention was to ensure that the school’s Mission came to life in the day-to-day practices of every teacher, staff member, administrator and student. Debate amongst some constituents is ongoing regarding ACS’ ability to achieve their goals and live their written philosophy, which targets excellence while offering all three programs. It is generally understood by the practitioners that the Mission Statement addresses the needs of a diverse group of students and therefore, an interpretation that clarifies and defines each term and a philosophy/beliefs statement that is based on feedback from a large sample of faculty, staff, and parents have been developed. Some faculty and support staff appear to understand and support the new Mission Statement and the Philosophy Statement however, more work by the administration is needed to meet their objective of ensuring that the Mission and Philosophy of the school govern the daily practices and interactions of all constituents.

The school admissions team spends a considerable amount of time with individual students prior to acceptance but real orientation into the school and emphasis on the school’s mission and what ACS values most comes after acceptance. A plan should be developed to ensure parents are thoroughly acquainted with the ACS Mission and Philosophy and prior to enrolling their child. This would help to avoid misunderstandings by parents in regards to what an “American styled education’ means.

The Mission Statement is available on the school website. The new Mission Statement is in the student handbook, the teacher handbook, the policy manual, the curriculum guide, and the website, and framed in a few classrooms and some major offices. The Team strongly recommends the Administration ensure that the Mission Statement is visible in every classroom, office and throughout the campus.

The Philosophy statements are not yet printed in school publications however, the Development and Alumni Affairs office has developed a plan to ensure all school publications and promotional materials incorporate the new Mission Statement.
COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS Board of Trustees for approving the updated versions.
2. ACS administration for allowing the Mission and philosophy to guide decision-making and the school’s anticipated long range planning.
3. Mission, Philosophy and Objectives committee for engaging all constituents of the ACS community in the development of the new versions, so as to convey the school’s purpose and expressed expectations for quality and values.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Administration plan frequent working sessions for all professionals working with the students to reflect on daily practice in light of the Mission and philosophy statements.
2. Administration ensures that all three documents (the Mission Statement and its interpretation, and the philosophy statement) are accessible to all school stakeholders and visible throughout the school.
3. Admissions office develops a plan that ensures those all new parents are well informed, understand, and support the school Mission and Philosophy prior to, and after, enrolling their child.
4. ACS consider reviewing its Mission as an American School in light of its diverse ‘international’ curriculum offerings and its international student body.
Governance and Leadership

**Standard:** The governance and administration work in partnership to ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the organization through the establishment of policy and oversight of leadership. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and purposeful effort on behalf of students and their learning. The administration of the organization provides a productive work environment, timely and open communication, and the leadership necessary to plan both day-to-day operations and the long-term future of the institution. The school is chartered, licensed, or authorized by a state, nation, or authority, which operates in the public interest.

The Governance and Leadership standard is met.

The American Community School “ACS” is an independent private, not-for-profit organization incorporated in Beirut, Lebanon under a charter granted by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, USA on August 24, 1960 for and on the behalf of the New York State Education Department. An autonomous Board of Trustees administers the School. There are 18 appointed board members. Eight board members reside in Beirut and ten reside in the United States.

The Board of Trustees (BoT) and school administration have a policy manual that guides the decisions and responses that the Board and school administration make to the different constituencies of the school. The process of creating and reviewing policies is ongoing. Open and clear communication is a top priority of the Board and of the school administration.

The Leadership Team suggests new policies. The School Improvement Committee, which includes representatives from the community, is involved in reviewing the school’s policies and uses the ECIS manual as a guideline for refining existing or creating new policies.

The BoT approves policies when necessary as defined in the by-laws. It was felt by some faculty and staff members that there is a need to involve more school personnel in discussions prior to policy implementation. The Administration has addressed this concern by implementing procedures, which involves the circulation of minutes to all school personnel from leadership and administration meetings, hosting discussion groups prior to policy implementation and remaining transparent in all its information sharing.

All policies and procedures are reviewed annually by the Administration with particular attention paid to the Mission Statement and educational philosophy. This year the creation of new policies and the review of old ones is occurring in the context of the updated Mission and Philosophy statements, and with the arrival of a new Headmaster.

The BoT, with the participation of the Administration, created a strategic plan in 1999. It is reviewed and revised annually by the school administration and Board. It is a working document that guides the direction of the institution. Progress on milestones of the Plan is reported to the Board by the administration at each Board meeting. The regular review of the strategic plan
indicates that many items have been completed and new items added. The self-study report indicates that it is now time to retire the 1999 Strategic Plan and begin the work to develop a new one.

With the arrival of a new Headmaster, the completion of the accreditation review process, and the celebration of the school's centennial in 2005, the Board and the school administration anticipate the creation of a new strategic plan in the fall of 2004. The Leadership Team will lead this effort. The accreditation Team strongly recommends that the BoT also engage fully in this exercise.

Board education and orientation is best characterized as “on the job training”. All new Board members are encouraged to be briefed by one or more existing Board members. All Board members serve on one or more board committees. Some board members have attended a seminar on board responsibilities. All board members have been invited to board meetings in Beirut. The responsibilities and roles of board members are explicit in the by-laws, which are given to each board member. In discussions with the Headmaster, it was pointed out that several board members have expertise in Board governance and can provide the necessary training for new board members as needed. In spite of the apparent lack of ‘formal board training’, the visiting Team believes that the ACS BoT is a very effective group and works in good faith with the administration in the best interests of its students.

There has been full Board participation in shaping the Mission, Philosophy, Strategic Plan, and fiscal goals of the school, and final approval of each of these items. Board members spend time in Beirut each year, meeting with constituent groups within and outside of the school.

The BoT meets three times a year. Such meetings are governed by a major theme and specific reports and proposals from the Head of School and committees. Most of the work of the Trustees is done at the level of committees.

While the by-laws do not address the responsibilities of the standing committees (academic, finance, investment, development, nomination and membership, strategic planning, and capital improvements), each of these committees is active, has a specific mandate assigned by the Board, and reports to the Board at each board meeting.

The school’s self-study reported that the Board of Trustees has no formal system of evaluation. Rather, the performance of the board and individual board members was done through periodic self-assessment and self-appraisal. However, the self-study committee encouraged the BoT to address this concern and at the March 2004 board meeting an evaluation of the Board, using the instrument developed by NAIS, was completed and the results were reported back to the full Board.

The selection of new board members is driven by the nomination and membership committee with particular attention given to the current needs of the board and to assuring diverse American and Lebanese representation. ACS has a self-perpetuating board.
Recently the BoT was central to the selection process for a new head of school. The outgoing head of school served ACS for 19 years and during this time communication between the BoT and the head of school was consistent and frank.

For recruiting and appointing, the board of trustees initiated the search process for a new head of school. Two finalists were invited to meet the ACS community and based on community feedback and board interviews, a new candidate was chosen.

At this time, there is no formal evaluation tool for the Headmaster and this is an area which the BoT should address. As the current Headmaster is new, three members of the Board, including the Chairman and two members whose expertise is in school management, recently met with the Headmaster to review his transition, the progress made based on the existing Strategic Plan, the progress he’s made on re-establishing the Development and Alumni Affairs office and to develop the goals for 2004 – 2005 by which the Headmaster would be evaluated. It is expected that a ‘formal evaluation’ for the Headmaster will be discussed at the July board meeting. For this academic year the Headmaster was given a verbal report on his performance.

The BoT is increasing its efforts to meet with all constituencies when visiting ACS campus; this includes meetings with faculty, parents, and students. The creation of department heads has allowed for increased communication between administration and faculty. This was the case when department heads were responsible for leadership K – 12. However, this year the transition of a new Headmaster and Elementary Principal has resulted in a restructuring of the department heads’ responsibilities. The new structure created ensures that the elementary principal, as the instructional leader grades 1 – 5, ensures the smooth communication between the faculty and her office and the department heads’ responsibilities have become more manageable with their leadership of grades 6 – 12 only. It is expected that this new management structure will further improve communication between the administration and the faculty and staff.

Improving communication has been a focus for the past several years. Faculty meetings occur monthly or bimonthly. Email has enhanced internal and external communication. The parent coordinators’ program has resulted in better communication. The school publication, ACS matters, is produced on a monthly basis and provided to the immediate community, and there is movement towards increasing web-page communications. All administrators maintain an open-door policy and the minutes of the Leadership and Academic Teams meetings are circulated to the faculty and staff at the school. The Headmaster initiated an Open Forum session on Wednesdays’ in the Fall 03, to allow for free flow of information. Teacher, staff, parent and student informal feedback is used to identify areas, which require clarifications by the Administration.

As a school, ACS hosts numerous parent-teacher meetings and has recently begun informal monthly parents meetings. These include monthly parent coffee meetings and parent workshops on selected topics and/or issues. Elected parent committee members meet frequently with the Administration. Each grade level has parent coordinators who work with the principals to support the educational program. This year a procedure entitled ‘Mail Mondays’ has been
implemented to ensure that all communications with parents are sent out on Mondays. In this way, parents know to ask their child for communiqués from the school every Monday.

While the self-study report indicated “Greater effort is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the efforts to involve the whole community”, in discussions with committee members it was understood that considerable effort was made by the Administration and the faculty to involve the ACS community in the development of the new Mission and Philosophy statements but that the response from parents was lower than the school expected. This is an area which the administration may wish to discuss with its Parent committee.

The school subscribes to the Lebanese National Gazette, which keeps the institution abreast of any legal changes. The school’s lawyer is involved in clarifying the legal applications. The school remains diligent to ensure that there are no discrepancies between applicable statutes, government regulations and school policies. Laws change without notice in Lebanon and this causes the business office some level of anxiety.

ACS has a Development and Alumni Affairs office. This office is responsible for the public relations for the school including the publication of “ACS Matters”, the school view book, brochures, the general design of the web page, and materials related to school events. The office is in contact with local media and keeps them abreast of relevant material either about the school or educational issues. The office has new personnel this year and they are evaluating the school’s effectiveness related to public relations, publications, alumni communications, reunions, and the school’s website.

There are publications available for all members of the ACS community. These information and policy publications are reviewed frequently. New parent, student and staff handbooks are published each year and include new information or updates. Each school hosts at least one open house inviting parents and other community members to experience education at ACS and find out more about our programs.

As the student body has changed over the last ten years and the population has become predominately Lebanese and international in character, the Board and Leadership team have endorsed the approval of the Lebanese Baccalaureate and International Baccalaureate programs. Likewise, curriculum initiatives have remained flexible so as to respond to the changing population and growth of the school. Now that the school has reached full enrollment, new initiatives are being put forward to anticipate the growing number of students who may choose the Lebanese Baccalaureate. These include the offering and delivery of electives for students.

The BoT believes that the Mission and school philosophy should guide the decision making process of the board. The Leadership team is working as part of the accreditation to ensure the Mission and school philosophy are acted upon by all stakeholders. They are introduced throughout the school at the beginning of the year and are used in the evaluation of each segment of the school.

The BoT feels that it has made major improvement in the membership of the board and has accomplished a significant agenda. Through well attended weeklong annual meetings of the
Board in Beirut, Trustees have improved communication regarding board activities and have acquired a better understanding of the needs of the school and its opportunities for growth and change. The creation of specific committees to address the work of the board and the strategic planning process has resulted in greater efficiency and productivity by the Board.

Both the Governance and Leadership are multicultural (Lebanese and Americans). The board is of a workable size although expansion is not out of the question. The board exhibits length of service as well as continuity in that four current board members attended the school and have provided many years of service to the Board. Credential and skills of board members have continued to increase and diversify.

The structure of the Leadership team at the school has undergone major changes over the last five years, as has the curriculum, to better meet the needs of a changing population. All administrators involve themselves in professional development of some sort. This process includes leading and attendance at workshops and conferences as well as certificate based programs. Administrators use professional journals and memberships to stay on top of current educational development. Support networks between administrators at other similar schools are used as well as the research components of professional organizations, electronic newsletters and web searches. The elementary, middle and high school principals are all American. This was a deliberate decision as the Mission of the school espouses an ‘American education’ and therefore, it was felt that the instructional leadership should be American.

The self-study indicates that “under the guidance of the Board and Leadership, the school has become more international, developed a diverse curriculum that offers three diplomas as well as a climate of reflection and continual renewal”. ACS may want to revisit this statement as it relates to the school’s American identity.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS Board of Trustees for conducting a serious and thorough search for a new Head of School.
2. ACS Board of Trustees for working in good faith with the administration.
3. The Administration for initiating new policies to reflect the new mission and philosophy of ACS.
4. The Administration for working towards a more transparent organization and better communication with all its constituents.
5. The Leadership Team for developing a highly respected and reputable school in Beirut.
6. The Development and Alumni Affairs Office for its enthusiasm and commitment to ACS.
RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS BoT develop a new strategic plan based on the school’s accreditation ‘Improvement Plan’, building on the school's centennial momentum and including milestones, timelines, and points of responsibility.

2. ACS Board of Trustees reviews the need for a formal annual board evaluation and regular board training.

3. ACS Board develops a formal evaluation procedure for the Headmaster.

4. Administration and Leadership teams continue to circulate minutes of meetings to ensure open and transparent communication with faculty and staff.
Organizational Design and Staff

Standard: The organizational structure of the institution provides the vehicle for carrying out the established philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the educational program and support services. A clearly defined set of reporting relationships exists and administrative, instructional, and support staff are qualified, competent and sufficient in number to allow the effective delivery of quality education to students. Staff assessment procedures are in place, are clear to all involved, and are collaborative. On-going professional development, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and collegial relationships among staff and administration are evident and conducive to cooperative action.

The standard for Organizational Design has been met. However, it should be noted that numerous teachers and leadership members do not have teaching credentials for their area of instruction (Please refer to attachment giving further explanation).

The American Community School of Beirut consists of 133.5 full and part time teachers. Approximately 40-45% are categorized as foreign hire teachers. The Headmaster is supported with an early years, elementary, middle school, and high school principal. The following positions also report to the Headmaster: Business Manager, Director of Alumni Affairs, Dean of Admission, Academic Dean, and Physical Plant Director. There are clear job descriptions for these positions. A policy manual is available.

The school is supported with an administrative staff of 13, a student services staff of 19, and a support staff of 37 people. The teachers are experienced with the majority having BA or MA degrees. Five people have doctorate degrees. It is noted that four members of the instructional staff do not have degrees, but that they are teaching assistants. It is felt that staffing is sufficient, with the exception of more assistance for the admissions office.

There is a very high turnover of the instructional staff, which has had a significant turnover rate over the last three years. The organizational committee explained that this was due to salary reasons, career moves, and political reasons. Discussions with some teachers indicated that there is also significant dissatisfaction with the quality of housing. In addition, the report indicated that there needed to be improvement of salaries and fringe benefits.

The self study indicated that a fairly small percentage of the instructional staff is officially US certified. Discussions with the organizational committee clarified that numerous teachers were Lebanese or other nationalities, where they do not have a specific teacher certification. The Lebanese University system offers a Teacher’s Diploma, but not a specific subject certificate. The school was asked to resubmit page 75 and 76 on certification and staff assignments. In areas where there was not clear certification or credentials, there are lists of the positions with the educational backgrounds and experience listed for each individual. These pages are attached for your review. These pages will illustrate that 39 teachers demonstrate expertise in their areas, but do not have teaching credentials.
The principals evaluate the instructional staff. There are clear assessment procedures in place for the support staff.

There are frequent staff meetings and weekly grade level meetings for good communication and coordination. The committee reported that the facilities hindered communication as the buildings are fairly spread out. Communication was improved this year as minutes of administrative meetings are provided to the staff.

Staff morale was reported as good and a committee has been established to promote social interaction among the staff.

Professional development opportunities are available, especially from the university and the principals. The self study indicated that even more professional development opportunities could be offered, especially for the support staff.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS administration for establishing clear evaluation instruments.
2. ACS administration for providing a policy manual that is available to all faculty and staff.
3. ACS administration for establishing the new position of Academic Dean, the restructuring of Department Heads for grades from grades K-12 to grades 6-12, and the reestablishment of a receptionist.
4. ACS administration for establishing a committee to promote social interactions among the staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS administration should make every attempt to employ and recruit a credentialed teaching staff.
2. ACS administration and board to review how to encourage teachers to stay for longer periods of time by examining housing and compensation issues.
3. ACS administration to explore the need and feasibility for an additional admission office support person.
4. ACS administration to consider providing for more professional and staff development opportunities, especially for the support staff.
Educational Programs

Standard: The educational programs consist of both carefully planned and well executed curriculum programs that include appropriate standards, solid instructional pedagogy, and appropriate assessment based on research and best practices. The educational programs are sufficiently financed, periodically reviewed, and mission-appropriate. They are developed to meet and address the needs of students and are designed to produce student learning at all levels. Effective policies and practices are in place, along with instructional materials, technology, and equipment that are appropriate, functional, and well maintained.

The Educational Programs standard is met.

The educational program is clearly defined and organized along preK-12 subject areas. The ES and MS follow a regular program based on US national and various state standards (e.g., California). At the HS level, ACS offers three programs from which students can choose: (1) the regular program, similar to the ES and MS, is aligned with US national and various state standards; (2) the International Baccalaureate program; and (3) the Lebanese Baccalaureate program. The Lebanese government mandates the LB program for all those students who hold only a Lebanese passport – this accounts for approximately 33 percent of the students.

Although the self-study indicates that curriculum documents include maps, guides and a scope and sequence there is little evidence of such (there are guides for grades 1-5) being used. Unit plans exist (on the server) which include grade level standards, activities, and assessments, as well as teacher reflections and essential questions. In discussions with the Elementary Principal and teachers at all levels, it was understood that curriculum maps had been developed two years ago but that nothing substantive was done with them. The same situation was reported as true for the scope and sequence. The Elementary Principal, newly hired this year, stated that the faculty will be involved in curriculum mapping in the last two weeks of June (echoed by MS and HS principals) and many processes are “in motion.” As for making sure the educational program is integrated and meaningful across the levels, the principals have been giving workshops in Understanding by Design (UBD) as a way to use the work that has already been done as far as standards go but making the units driven more by assessment than by other aspects. UBD is also planned to be in place next year in the MS and HS (the incoming HS principal is well aware and supports ACS’ plans to incorporate UBD in their instructional program). All elementary teachers expressed enthusiasm for what they are learning (UBD) and can see the relevance to the school’s mission statement which expresses that teachers are to engage the students in “a lively and stimulating atmosphere of learning” (interpreted problem solving, reasoning, and critical thinking). However, there is a concern that too many programs are being introduced and required of the teachers (e.g., 6-traits, character education).

Across the curriculum at all levels, students receive an appropriate amount of instruction in the core subject areas (math, language arts, science, social studies) At the MS level, students receive 270 minutes over a six-day cycle which are grouped into three sixty-minute and one 90-minute
blocks. At HS level students receive 3x90 minutes blocks over a six-day cycle. Students also receive instruction in the other subject areas (physical education, music, art, etc.) commonly found in schools in the international arena and elsewhere. Students are also required to study a language other than English.

Vertical and horizontal articulation is evident at the ES and MS levels. Once students reach the HS level, such articulation becomes much more difficult as the Lebanese Baccalaureate is only partially integrated with the other programs. Administration stated that there have been attempts to make the Ministry of Education accept IB classes in lieu of some LB classes. Therefore, there are students in different tracks in the same class. In discussions, administrators stated that within a year a standardized portfolio will be used across all grade levels and subjects. This will help with articulation (horizontal) being more visual.

Although the self-study stated a need for students to have an average of C- in English to pass (ES) as well as in Arabic and Math (MS), there is a new policy regarding this. At all levels now, there are Child Study Teams (CST), which include the school psychologist, nurse, counselor, resource room teachers, principal, and homeroom teachers. This team comes “together to discuss children who are showing difficulties, both in emotional/social and academic areas that are or may affect success in their classroom.” The purpose of the team is to help students be successful throughout the year and not attend to their needs as the school year comes to a close. Retention is “not ruled out as an option” but “great care is made to match those conditions before retention is recommended.” At all levels, a C- is the point at which the CST becomes involved. At the HS level, students receiving an F will have to repeat the class but not the grade.

Middle school students at ACS are required to take a class titled Technology/Computer Science. They receive 60 minutes per cycle. Technology is used in other classes and there are several labs at teacher and student disposal. The MS teachers and principal are quite satisfied with the level of computer literacy the ES students have entering into the MS. Likewise at the HS level with entering MS students. Not reported in the self-study but available to students are two technology classes at the HS level. At the moment, these are electives. In the future a technology requirement for graduation will be reinstated. It has not yet been worked out yet (ACS is waiting for their new IT coordinator) but it seems that there will be an assessment and if students pass, they automatically are credited toward that portion of their graduation requirement. Conversely, if they do not pass this assessment, they will be required to take a course that will be geared towards preparing students for the kind of technological knowledge they will need in university.

The educational programs at ACS offer opportunities for students at all levels to engage in interactions with adults and peers. At the ES level, teachers set purposeful times for students to interact with younger and older peers (i.e., reading buddies). Other activities make use MS students interacting with ES students. At the HS levels, students are required to put in 100 hours of community service over the four years. In fact, there are 22 community service activities going on at the school. Furthermore, students are provided with opportunities to interact with adults through monthly assemblies in which professionals are brought in to discuss their jobs and in which students are then able to ask questions.
Regarding the transition portion of the educational program, ES students are provided opportunities to interact with MS students on a bi-monthly basis in which they discuss problems faced by MS students. In June, the MS has an orientation for incoming ES students. As well, the MS “buddies” 5th graders with 6th graders for a day (to shadow) so the 5th graders get to know some of the 6th graders. The students are also able to see what it is like to move from one class to another. Furthermore, there is a strong advisory component at the beginning of the year for new 6th graders. The transition from MS to HS is made easier by a 9th grade transition team who holds an assembly near the end of the year for the 8th graders in which they share experiences, discuss the block schedule, and so on. Again, there is a strong advisory component at this grade level. Finally, some of the ACS faculty takes all new grade 9 students on a retreat at the beginning of the year. However, “working on transition between schools” is stated as a significant area for improvement. The MS and HS principals stated that although they have a number of programs in place, the transition “jump is still difficult…emotionally, socially, as well as academically.” This is especially true for those students entering into the LB program. The ACS staff includes two full-time counselors, a half time psychologist, and one part-time college counselors. ACS has also hired a new MS counselor for next year (ridding the school of a psychologist). These counseling/guidance teachers attend to HS students’ needs especially in terms of planning their further education.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS administration and faculty for developing a set of standards based on US national and various state standards but tying them into their Lebanese milieu.
2. ACS administration and faculty for continuing the service component and extended essay over so many years.
3. ACS administration for requiring the above for all students as a graduation requirement.
4. ACS administration for including the incoming principal in discussions and plans for the next school year.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Administration continues with the mapping process ensuring horizontal and vertical articulation and their use of the “Understanding by Design” program.
2. Administrators consider a reduced number of curriculum initiatives as teachers feel overloaded.
3. Administration provides time for teachers to communicate/reflect/refine between grades and buildings for the horizontal and vertical articulation of the educational program.
Assessment of Student Learning

**Standard:** The assessment of student learning outcomes enables students to monitor their own learning progress and allows teachers to adapt their instruction to the specific learning needs of students. The school’s effectiveness is assessed by examining areas such as student learning and performance, program evaluation, performance results for support services, graduate success, and client satisfaction. Results are used to develop strategies for improving service and program quality. Assessment results are communicated appropriately to parents/guardians, students, staff, and school community.

**The Assessment of Student Learning standard is met.**

The American Community School in Beirut services a diverse group of students from Nursery to grade 12. ACS has developed principles and guidelines for student achievement. The school report highlights assessment practices in each department as there are varying degrees of implementation the academic achievement principles and guidelines.

In the *Early Years (Nursery, Kg1 and Kg2)*, observation is the primary form of assessment. Sometimes checklists are utilized to focus the observations in a particular area of development. These observations lead to a wide collection of information that address the whole child – physical, social, emotional, and intellectual – and represents what the child has done over a period of time. These observations combined with photographs and work samples are collected in a *Focused Portfolio* and shared with parents twice yearly. Student-led conferences are held once yearly. The Early Years Department is to be commended for the quality of the Focused Portfolio and the meaningful information it provides for the child and parent. The Faculty also reports students’ learning through progress reports that include checklists as well as comments. Progress reports are detailed and inform parents about their child’s overall progress in all areas of development. During the first reporting period, parents and teachers set goals for the child. Children are involved in talking about their learning during student-led conferences held twice a year: Open House and Celebration Day. The assessment practices are communicated to parents during Back to School Night, during reporting periods and weekly parent teacher conferences. Interpretation of assessment results is done during grade level meetings. These strategies were introduced by the Early Childhood Principal to the Department last year and continue to be fine tuned and expanded upon this year. The checklist have been computerized for flexibility to adjust and expand as dialogue continues through their Department meetings.

The *Elementary School (Grades 1-5)* has embarked on a steep learning curve that includes the understanding, development and usage of a variety of assessment tools. They are utilizing “Understanding by Design”, as a vehicle to strengthen virtually everything they do to deepen learning for their students. Their assessments strategies at the primary level reflect some good practices such as the use of observation, work samples, running records and project work. At the intermediate level, it is recognized that most assessment is dependent on quiz and test results. The Elementary principal and teachers are commended for recognizing the need to expand their assessment strategies to include the use of portfolio collections and project-based assessments.
and to utilize them consistently across the elementary school. Staff development plans have been made to link a broadened base of assessment in congruence with their learning objectives.

The Middle School Division has been focusing on using assessment to develop curriculum for the past three years. In the fall, the Middle School Principal meets each faculty member to dialogue on how to design curriculum by working backward, also referred to as “Understanding by Design”. Next fall, the Middle School Division will begin formal training on the use of “Understanding by Design” so that all faculty have the necessary skills to use assessment in curriculum development. The two primary focuses on assessment this year has been on the use of rubrics and portfolio collections to track student growth. There is evidence of varied rubrics to assess such things as writing for different purposes and presentation skills. There is also evidence that students are being trained in using a rubric for peer assessment purposes. Students are involved in self-reflections and in choosing some of the items placed in their Portfolios. Portfolio collections are subject specific at this time and most evident in the English and Mathematics Departments. Students utilize their portfolios in student-led conferences with their parents. When a parent/guardian is not available another adult in the school acts as the student’s sounding board. There is also considerable evidence that varied forms of student products are utilized to arrive at a more global picture of the student as a learner. The Middle School Division needs to explore ways to utilize a Student Portfolio that reflects student development in all subject areas. The Middle School Division under the leadership of the Principal is to be commended for their work to date in this area.

Assessment has also been an important staff development thrust in the High School Division. It is evident from the curriculum area reviews and student products that an effort has been made to vary beyond tests and quizzes how student performance is evaluated. Rubrics are used in all curriculum areas for self, peer and teacher assessments. These are applied to project work, oral presentations, co-operative learning activities, laboratory work, technology applications and homework. Portfolios are maintained in English. There is some resistance to utilizing Portfolios as this can be quite cumbersome to students if one is to be maintained for each subject area. As in the Middle School, further discussion is required to determine how one Portfolio can be utilized across all subject areas. Teachers are required to prepare unit plans that clearly outline the assessment strategies that will be utilized. The teachers in the High School Department are commended in their efforts to expand their repertoire of assessment strategies.

In general, it is evident that there is a clear expectation that teachers incorporate varied assessment strategies in their unit planning and curriculum mapping. It is not as evident how assessment informs their instructional and budgeting decisions. Implementation of alternative assessment strategies is uneven across the school. How assessment and instructional decisions can be linked requires further professional development. There is also inconsistent use of Portfolios and student-led conferences. It is recommended that ACS Administration revisit their Academic Achievement principles and guidelines with their teachers to ensure consistence practices across the school regarding Portfolios, Student-led conferences, and alternative assessment policies.
COMMENDATIONS:

1. Early Years Department for the quality of the Focused Portfolio and the meaningful information it provides for the child and parent.
2. Elementary principal and teachers for recognizing the need to expand their assessment strategies to include the use of portfolio collections and project-based assessments and to utilize them consistently across the elementary school.
3. Middle School for their work to date in this area.
4. High School teachers for their efforts to expand their repertoire of assessment strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS Administration revisit their academic achievement principles and guidelines with their teachers to ensure consistence practices across the school regarding portfolios, student-led conferences, and alternative assessment policies.
2. Administration ensure professional development be provide to include linking assessment and instructional decision-making.
3. Administration continued to provide opportunities for internal professional development activities to allow for teacher expertise in alternative assessment strategies to be shared across all departments.
Learning Media Services and Technology

**Standard:** *Learning media services and technology function as important tools to enhance classroom instruction and other school activities as grade level appropriate. Well-organized information resources reinforce knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned in other program areas and broaden minds by providing opportunities to conduct research and interact with information.*

The Learning Media Services and Technology standard is met.

**Overview**

Schools need to ensure that students acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to effectively and responsibly conduct research and interact with information. This area necessitates much attention as the pace of technological change and the explosion of information age continues. The Library and IT staff at the ACS have taken their role in this process seriously as evidenced in the following sections.

**Library**

ACS libraries holdings exceed 40,000 volumes. The Upper School library contains 18,250 books and various materials. The Lower School library has 15,406 volumes and the Teacher’s Professional Library 6,961 volumes. The ratio of 34 books per student is deemed adequate.

ACS subscribes to a number of databases such as Ebsco, Grolier Online and Gale Database (a K-12 version of Infotrac). It offers high-speed Internet access, and has an inter-library loan agreement program with the American University of Beirut. These arrangements allow for access to a great deal of information outside the school’s libraries.

ACS’s library uses Follett Version 5.4 and plans to update to version 6.1. Books, software, and audio-visual resources are ordered from Follett and other companies. This ensures that when materials arrive they’re pre-catalogued and ready to be processed. The records are checked to ensure that there are no errors. Cataloguing is done to the Mark 21 standard and their authority file records are downloaded from the Library of Congress. The Library is using the 1998 edition of Information Power.

The Lower School curriculum is tied to resources in the library. It involves much student research. The Upper school curriculum allows students to refine research and IT literacy abilities. This is completed via emphasis on reading and writing in the Language Arts, the need for well-documented research required by Social Studies programs, Senior Independent essays, and Science and Math teachers stress utilization of technology in their courses.

Student study space in the upper school library is adequate. Shelving and material storage are also adequate. Spine labels on the books are visible. There is a lack of posted policies an explanation of what the Dewey decimal classification means. On each student workstation the
OPAC is installed. Teachers currently gain access to the OPAC through a web interface, but will be changed so that they can open it via a desktop icon.

The librarians have a separate room to handle work associated with cataloging and preserving the materials for the collection. Currently work is going on to address the issues associated with the cataloguing of the Arabic collection. A stand-alone database is under development.

The Lower School library has a large project room that doubles as a meeting room. There is a separate story time area. The project room is occasionally used for individual student work. Unfortunately there is not too much independent study occurring in the elementary library. There is a shortage of shelving space in this library, which could be handled by expanding into the area currently used by elementary resource teachers.

Staff members seem to be adequately trained, flexible and competent. Whenever possible, whatever the grade level the Library staff attempts to integrate library skills into school projects. This combined with other special activities; such as Book Talking, has resulted in a rise of Library usage. There is a need for greater communication and collaboration between teaching staff and the Library/IT staff in order to better plan units.

IT

In general the physical IT resources are up-to-date. The majority of the computer equipment is Pentium IV 2.4Ghz. There are School offices and the majority of the school’s classrooms have been connected to the School network. It should be noted that several of the high school classroom are not networked and do not have computers in the classroom.

The schools fileservers are either Dell Power Edge or Compaq ML350 series. Both the PIX firewall and router are Cisco. Data backups are conducted on a daily basis. The MS and HS buildings are linked via a high-speed fiber optic backbone. Since most of the machines at ACS are between 6 months and 3 years of age, the physical quality of computer technology at ACS is high.

As for computer hardware, the number of PCs available to students is 286. There are approximately 1000 students attending ACS. The ratio of students to machines is about 4 to 1.

The types of technology available for use at the ACS are: Printers, scanners, LCD projectors, CD-Rom burners, and digital video cameras. These are placed in various campus locations or available at the computer center.

The trend of technology use shows a higher and more diverse demand for IT. Email use is an essential aspect of communication at ACS. The technology center uses the school Intranet to share files and teachers often set up their own folders on the school server for their classes. This is also reflected in the Library use statistics because students and teachers are moving away from print sources and focusing more on databases and Internet sources for their information needs. In response to this the ACS makes use of a plagiarism detection program as well as an
application called “Surf Control” in order to filter what students can look at while searching the Internet.

Class space restrictions seem to be a serious problem. The high school lacks an appropriately sized computer lab. The current lab only holds 10 machines. The Mac lab in the high school is also very small but is used primarily for the graphic design and publication classes. Many classrooms in the middle and high school are too small to fit multiple PCs. Some of the high school classrooms do not have adequate space for a computer. As for the elementary classrooms, they are quite roomy and space constraints are not so much an issue. The IT department is aware of this.

The IT Department’s workspaces are very small. Its office also serves as a support/repair center. Space for the servers is extremely cramped. Storage space in the computer center is tight. Shelving for software and small components in the computer center is adequate but storage for larger hardware items needs to be found elsewhere. The administration is aware of this and is taking steps to amalgamate the existing photocopy room, the server room and the IT office into one large IT office/workplace.

Though small, the people in the IT department are well informed, extremely good-natured, and adept problem solvers.

It should be noted that many major Computer Department acquisitions are funded through grants. The Administration should consider implementation of a capital expenditure budget to be used for the purchasing of necessary IT hardware.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS Library and IT staff for being courteous, knowledgeable, and hard working in order to deliver a high quality of service.
2. ACS Library and IT staff for creating an environment that is conducive for student study.
3. ACS IT and Library staff for their efforts to integrate library and IT skills into all aspects of the school’s curriculum.
4. Members of both departments for ensuring that resources and materials are relevant and readily available for the use of all members of the ACS community.
5. ACS IT department for researching outside grants in order to purchase necessary IT hardware.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Library staff consider displaying more signage in the Library i.e. the posting of policies, information pertaining to Dewey classification, how to best search for information depending on database used (Internet vs. encyclopedias), try to put up examples of student work
2. Administration consider placing laptop computers into those wireless classrooms deemed too small to accommodate desktop models.
3. ACS faculty and librarians consider working closely together in order to coordinate information skills teaching within the framework of the classroom curriculum.

4. ACS Library staff seriously consider the creation of an electronic copy of the library’s inventory. They should store this offsite for insurance purposes.

5. IT department seriously consider finding offsite storage for its backup tapes too.
Student Services

Standard: The school provides services to students that optimize their preparation for learning. Chief among these services are health services and, at appropriate levels, guidance including academic and personal counseling. Preventive and emergency health care services are provided and health and safety policies are clear and well understood. Other services that may be provided include transportation, food service, services for special needs students, and admissions and placement.

The Student Services standard is met.

Guidance and Counseling Services:

The American Community School of Beirut’s counseling services are under the supervision of the Dean of Students. There are two counselors, a half time school psychologist, and a part time college counselors. The intent of the counseling department is to resolve academic, personal, or emotional concerns. The purpose is to facilitate normal growth and development of students. Next year, the school psychologist will not be continuing. Instead, the school has recently hired a new middle school counselor.

The counselors are supported with a character education program in the elementary school and the homeroom/advisory program in grades 6-12. A list of professional therapists is maintained for outside referrals.

The school has an impressive school profile available and an outstanding college placement program. ACS graduates go to prestigious universities in the US, Canada, Europe, and the Middle East.

Some career exploration is available, but this could be expanded.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS administration for hiring an additional counselor at the middle school level.
2. ACS counseling department for providing a well established college placement program and an outstanding school profile.
3. ACS for employing a highly qualified and experienced counseling staff.
4. ACS for providing good communication with teachers and parents on student concerns.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS counseling department to further develop career counseling opportunities, especially for liberal arts programs since that is an emphasis of the school.
2. ACS counseling department and the Development and Alumni Affairs office work collaboratively to continue to communicate with former graduates on their degree of success and to obtain their input on how well they were prepared for post high school experiences.
Health Services:

The American Community School of Beirut’s health service team is part of the Student Services team. It is composed of a school psychologist, upper school nurse and lower school nurse, the Dean of Students, two counselors, two family doctors available for short term needs, and two special education teachers. The nurses handle the majority of the medical needs of the students. The doctors conduct annual medical screening for all new students and for grades KG II, 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10.

By discussions with the staff, the school will not be supporting student annual physical. These physicals are the parents’ responsibility. The school psychologist will not be replaced in lieu of a new middle school counselor joining the school next year.

A doctor is available an hour each day for basic medical care for the faculty and staff.

All staff members carry an emergency medical card for important contacts and emergency procedures. Each classroom has a medical kit with basic medical supplies.

There are two fully equipped infirmaries, one for the lower and one for the upper school. The upper school infirmary needs its own bathroom as it is presently being shared with the upper administration. There is a doctor’s room equipped with an EKG machine and standard medical equipment. It needs to be repainted. The school also has an emergency van if students or staff need to be transported to the hospital. There is a procedure for dispensing prescriptive medicines and policies for handling medical emergencies.

The school conducts occasional health workshops for parents. The school uses community resources and medical resources as required. The health program uses the nurses for instruction and as a resource. Health education has been incorporated into the PE curriculum.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS nurses for conducting occasional health workshops for parents.
2. ACS administration for the incorporation of health education into the physical education program.
3. ACS administration and nurses for the availability of procedures and policies for handling medical emergencies, after school, and off-campus activities.
4. ACS for maintaining an experienced and qualified medical staff.
5. ACS for providing sufficient and well supplied medical facilities

RECOMMENDATION:

1. ACS to provide additional training for the staff on basic first aid and CPR.
**Transportation Services:**

The American Community School of Beirut contracts for buses for field trips and school related events. The parents contract directly with a bus service for daily transportation to and from school. The buses are in good condition, provided with seatbelts, are air-conditioned, and have supervision. A small percentage of the students use these buses. Most students arrive and depart from the school via private automobiles.

Some older students use public transportation and some students walk or ride bicycles to school. The drop off and pick up of students was observed. It is a workable system, but because of the building locations and streets, is quite congested. Five traffic guards are strategically placed and each person has a 2-way type of communication. The guards assist as needed and try to keep the traffic flowing.

**COMMENDATIONS:**

1. ACS for providing a supervised pick up/drop off system for the students.
2. ACS and the bus company for a good communication system as each bus driver has a cell phone and the guards a two way means of communication.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. ACS administration explore a more efficient busing system to address scheduling and timing concerns, especially for after school activities.
2. Administration and parents work more closely to ensure the mission statement is reflected in the student bus conduct.

**Food Services:**

The American Community School of Beirut contracts with a private company to provide for the food service needs of the school. There is a catering supervisor and nine staff members, which include the supervisor, two chefs, two waiters, two cashiers, and two cleaners. The school serves healthy and nutritionally balanced food at breaks and at lunch. There is a strong attempt to avoid the serving of junk food. It was observed that a large proportion of the students utilize the food services.

The school currently does not have adequate facilities to meet the needs of the school. It is crowded during student peak times. Middle and high school students share a small area with few tables. The elementary students eat in their rooms. The kindergarten area does not accommodate all of the students and it is cold in the winter. There are plans to expand the kitchen and to enclose the cafeteria eating area for next year. There will be additional tables available as well.
All food is prepared in the cafeteria kitchen and then is delivered to the elementary and kindergarten students.

The kitchen staff maintains sanitary standards and they wear gloves and hats. The preparation area is regularly cleaned. Vegetables, especially lettuce, are sanitized and washed carefully.

The school’s water supply is safe and bottled water is also available for purchase.

The health curriculum supports healthy eating habits. Student representatives serve on an advisory cafeteria committee.

Inspectors from the food company inspect the standard and quality of the food twice a month. Expiration dates were being monitored and observed. The nurses monitor the food.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS administration for contracting a company to serve healthy and nutritious food, and avoiding junk food.
2. ACS administration for a plan to upgrade the present eating facilities.
3. Catering company for maintaining good sanitation standards.
4. ACS staff for role modeling good eating habits and for providing healthy eating guidelines to the students and parents.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. ACS administration to examine the schedule to allow more students to eat at once in a timely manner.

Services for Special Needs Students:

The American Community School of Beirut employs two special educators and one resource room teacher. They are supervised by the Dean of Students. Psychological services are available through a referral process for short term treatment. If further treatment is needed, the student is referred to outside professionals.

The school does not have services for social work, psychiatric services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, or speech and language therapy.

There were two recent cases of enrichment.

Students having learning differences receive academic support, which includes study skills. The teachers work with the classroom teachers. There is a referral procedure and files are kept on each student. The school does not use IEP reports. Teachers report that more in-service and professional development opportunities would be helpful. It is noted that recently, a workshop on ADHD was available.
There is a concern of small room spaces for the special support teachers.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS special services staff for providing a procedure of referral for special needs students.
2. ACS special services teachers for working with the regular classroom teachers to achieve optimum learning opportunities for each child.
3. ACS special services teachers for maintaining adequate record keeping and procedures for review of student’s individual files.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS administration to provide adequate facilities to the special service teachers to meet with students.
2. ACS special services teachers to ensure that adequate student plans and documentation are completed since the school does not use IEP’s (Individual Educational Plans) for special needs students.
3. ACS administration to continue to provide in-service to the staff on identifying students with special needs and on appropriate teaching strategies for specific students.

Admission & Placement Services:

The American Community School of Beirut has a Dean of Admissions to run the admissions office. ACS enrolls students without regard to race, nationality, gender, or religious beliefs. For the current year, 729 applications were sent out. 342 were turned in and 233 were accepted. The actual number of admissions is 171 for 2003-04. Because of the high volume of work, the need of an additional admission’s person has been noted in the self study report.

There is a clearly established admission’s policy and procedure. Students are admitted based on previous school records, performance on the admissions exams, a writing sample, age appropriateness, and availability of space. Early years students are admitted according to the principal’s discretion. Special needs students are admitted if they can be successfully mainstreamed with the support of the special education teachers. Student applicants are interviewed.

The school has a website, but it is acknowledged that this needs further development.

There is a preferential system of admission with categories of varying degrees of relationships with the school i.e. teachers, present parents, alumni, etc.

A financial aid and scholarship system encourages a socioeconomic mix of students.
The school has tried a buddy program for new students. This has not been successful in the high school, but worked well at the middle school level.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS for establishing a clear admissions policy, process, and procedures.
2. ACS for making available various scholarships and financial aid to selected students to allow and assist them to attend the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS administration to continue to keep the student admissions consistent with the admissions policy.
2. ACS administration to consider employing an additional admissions’ person to assist with the volume of work.
3. ACS administration to further develop a program to assimilate new students to the school.
4. ACS administration to further develop the website to reflect the admissions information and general information about the school’s programs, activities, and academic curriculum.
Student Life and Student Activities

**Standard:** A healthy atmosphere exists for all students. At all levels, non-discriminatory, appropriate student activities that supplement classroom experiences or community life are provided. An appropriate student activities program fosters a positive intellectual, cultural, and social climate, promotes growth in student leadership and social interaction skills, and encourages students’ special interests.

The Student Life and Student Activities standard is met.

ACS provides students with a wide variety of activities for all levels. These activities are non-discriminatory, supplement and integrate with the regular classroom instruction, and contribute to the academic, physical, and social development of students. Provision is made for students, staff, and community to offer input to the school’s student life and student activities.

ACS maintains a desirable balance among academic, social, co-curricular, and service activities and ensures appropriateness according to the age, development, needs, and interests of their students. There is a strong community service program, which expects high scholars to complete 25 hours per year as a graduation requirement. Staff members, parents, and others who participate in student activities are suitably qualified and provide appropriate supervision to students.

During the committee meeting the issues of increased funding and inadequate facilities frequently arose. Some activities were not offered due to lack of funding. Discussions also pointed out that the quality of activities would improve should the coaches be able to update their qualifications.

The student activities program receives good financial support and finances are under the control of the Dean of Students’, Outdoor Ed., and the PE Dept. Students’ must provide their own funds for EMAC, AMIS and MUN activity trips. There is limited financial assistance available upon student application. Recently, regional security issues caused the cancellation of an EMAC event to be hosted by ACS.

Student life is organized in a manner that provides students with the opportunity to experience responsibility, initiative, leadership competencies, cooperation, and self-direction. The newly finished High School student handbook clearly explains policies, expectations and consequences. Relationships between staff and students demonstrate respect, fairness, and understanding.

**COMMENDATIONS:**

1. ACS for offering a wide variety and number of student activities, which is enriched by parent involvement.
2. ACS for their strong community service component.
3. ACS staff for their enthusiastic support of the student activities program.
4. ACS students for their active community service contributions.
RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS should consider actively addressing the lack of facilities issue, which severely limits the growth of the student activities program and hampers the present program.
2. ACS review their financial commitment to this growing activities program.
3. ACS administration consider offering updates for coaching qualifications and first aid training to improve the quality and safety of P.E. activities.
4. ACS administration review their security policy to ensure the safety of students and staff.
Facilities

**Standard:** *The school facilities, consisting of the site, building(s), and equipment, provide a safe, well-maintained physical environment that supports optimal student development and achievement. The school facilities are appropriate to implement the stated philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the school.*

The Facilities standard is met.

The grounds, buildings, furnishings, and equipment appear to be sufficiently maintained in order to meet the school's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and objectives. The school buildings are generally old but are reasonably well maintained and periodically renovated. School and office furniture is continuously upgraded and is generally in a state of good repair.

There is a variety of large and small group instructional spaces, including laboratories, as well as sufficient conference spaces. Special purpose areas include a library media center, health service offices, and cafeteria. The school lacks sufficient storage space except in the elementary building. Administrative offices are sufficient and well maintained.

Recreational areas include an Elementary roof playground, nursery, Kindergarten, and grade 3 playgrounds, Rabbit field, a gymnasium, and outdoor athletic fields.

School grounds and buildings are regularly cleaned. The maintenance of boilers, air-conditioning units, power generators, central UPS units, the elevator, fire extinguishers, and alarms are outsourced.

Classrooms appear to be of a sufficient size to meet the maximum student capacities in the different sections of the school. The relatively small size of middle and high school classrooms (40m2) mean that these classes have to be kept smaller than would be the case if larger classrooms were available.

The high school building is the oldest of the buildings, and is in a relatively poor state of repair, particularly the bathrooms, which are rather shabby and covered with graffiti. The high school corridors are poorly lit. School facilities are considered inadequate for student activities, and the cafeteria is inadequately small.

There is at least one fire extinguisher per level, and in some cases, two per level. In some of the corridors where there is only one extinguisher, some of the classrooms are quite distant from it. The generator fuel tank is close to the school and may pose a potential danger.

The buildings are configured in a manner which makes increased security problematical. External windows are not equipped with safety glass nor protective film.

Short-term plans include a project for upgrading the electrical power infrastructure to allow for air-conditioning of all classrooms, creating a park-like setting outside the upper school building,
providing extra work and snack areas for elementary students, and providing internet connections for all faculty housing.

The long-term facilities plan calls for land title clearance and land parcels merger, funds for the above, and a master plan. The report’s authors state that the land title clearance problem has precluded long-term facility planning until now. The Headmaster indicates that it is not an obstacle and is determined to go ahead with completing a master plan within a year’s time.

Maintenance and capital budgets appear to be sufficient to provide for proper maintenance and minor up-grading of buildings, grounds, and equipment.

On-campus faculty housing is described as inadequate and as a major source of faculty dissatisfaction. Many of the faculty apartments are quite small but are in a good state of repair. Maintenance of faculty housing is described as excellent.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. Physical Plant Manager and the maintenance team for providing the school with clean and well-maintained facilities in an economical manner.
2. Physical Plant Manager, maintenance team, Administration, and staff on making the best short-term use of facilities that require major modification or replacement as soon as is feasible.
3. Physical Plant Manager and maintenance team for providing excellent maintenance of faculty housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Administration formulate a long-term plan for gradual replacement and/or major renovation of aging school buildings.
2. Administration ensure that the building master plan place major emphasis on designing new buildings and/or major renovations with the security of students and staff foremost in mind.
3. Administration ensure that the building master planning process address the issue of on-campus faculty housing and consider whether current on-campus faculty housing should be modified into larger apartments or converted into classroom space, with the faculty housing then moving off-campus.
4. Physical Plant Manager considers adding a second fire extinguisher on those levels where there is only one.
5. Physical Plant Manager considers moving the generator fuel tank to a safer location.
6. Administration seriously consider the safety of the elementary playground areas.
Health and Safety

**Standard:** A safe and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided. Both preventive and emergency health and safety procedures are clear and well documented. The school environment is productive and orderly.

The Health and Safety standard is not met.

Overall student safety and well being at the ACS are seen as a primary concern. This is evidenced by the following facts:

The spirit of respect and oneness of the community does exist between both the staff and student body. Students are taught to respect both themselves and others. The new mission statement also reflects this.

There are several written documents that form an annually updated emergency procedure manual. Contained within it are written instructions for drills and evacuation maps, maintenance and safety records. These document help to disseminate information throughout the school community.

There are procedures in place for students’ health concerns. New students need to have a medical form completed by the parent, prior to entering school. This needs to be submitted along with a copy of the child’s vaccination record. Medical records are updated at all grade levels annually. In-school medical exams are given annually to grade levels KG2, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10.

Only four of the fifteen gates are opened each day. During school hours there is one trained security guard at each gate. Visitors are required to be screened by guards on duty. There are nine full time security guards. They provide twenty-four hour protection of the campus. Most of the guards were trained and employed by the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. All have had specific training on how to effectively perform their job responsibilities.

The Accreditation team noted during the pickup and drop off times that:

- Guards communicated via radios.
- Only cars displaying parking permits were allowed to park near the school.
- If students were not present at pick up time, the car that they would ride in had to keep moving.
- The guards knew students, parents, and drivers by name.
Several Emergency drills of various types are carried out yearly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Emergency Drill</th>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
<th>Frequency of Drill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>N - 12</td>
<td>4 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tornado</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bomb threat</td>
<td>N - 12</td>
<td>1 – 2 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood</td>
<td>N - 12</td>
<td>1 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus evacuation</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil disturbance</td>
<td>N - 12</td>
<td>1 – 2 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthquake</td>
<td>N - 12</td>
<td>2 per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During these practice drills faculty and staff members are expected to lead students to specified safe havens. Depending on the situation these safe haven may be on the ACS campus or at the neighboring American University. Assigned teachers take attendance immediately and report all absences to their respective administrators. Each classroom teacher and administrator takes an Emergency bag containing First Aid supplies, student medical Info, emergency supplies, contact information etc with them to the muster point. Nurses accompany evacuations in case there is a need for first aid.

Teaching staff carry an “ACS Emergency Card” on their person at all times. This card outlines basic First Aid procedures.

At this time there is no data on the number of staff members that are trained and hold current First Aid certifications.

It was noted that in each classroom there is the Emergency Grab Bag as well as a well-detailed evacuation route map.

All three buildings are wired for fire alarm and smoke detectors. Fifty fire extinguishers are located in corridors, labs, cafeteria, libraries, gymnasium, and both auditoriums. A subcontractor carries out six preventive maintenance visits per year. Additional fire extinguishers are required for those classrooms that are deemed too far from the closest extinguisher.

On staff there are two Registered Nurses, one of which is an experienced Emergency room nurse whose skills are well recognized in the community. The nurses’ office featured a clean and inviting ambience. In it there is a lockable cabinet filled with non-prescription medicines. The medicines surveyed had over a year left on their expiration date. A medicine inventory is conducted tri-annually. Containers containing other medical supplies are clearly marked and placed on high shelves.

The school has its own van in order to transport sick/injured individuals. It is estimated that it would take 15 minutes for emergency vehicles to reach the campus. A nurse rides in this vehicle.
when injured students/staff need to go to the hospital. Suspected back and neck injuries are not moved. More specialized assistance is requested in these cases. The words “ACS Emergency Vehicle” are written on the doors of the van. Unfortunately, because it is type of motor vehicle commonly used in Beirut, motorists do not acknowledge its role. There is no specialized emergency equipment in the van.

It should be noted that the nurses’ schedule does not cover the times that students are on campus for after-school activities.

Nurses conduct an annual in service to those staff members who are interested so that they will have a basic understanding of First Aid procedures.

A maintenance and repair schedule is carried out once a year for all student play equipment. An outside contractor conducts this check.

The campus environment is cleaned and maintained daily by custodians.

While touring the school team members noticed the following:

- Low banisters/railings in the secondary building
- Wooden handrails in the Elementary section were rough.
- In some doorways there were raised lips
- On the steps going up to the Library’s second level the first step was not the same height as the others.

During this accreditation visit an unannounced fire drill was requested. Team members were posted at the various exit gates around the school and the two muster points.

The following points are observations made by team members.

**Positives**

- Teachers had brought their class Grab Bags.
- Few bottlenecks at choke points. Exit gates were of adequate size.
- Guards were in position quickly and stopped traffic allowing students to cross streets.
- An AUB guard was present to observe and assist as needed.
- Nurse brought her emergency medical kit.

**Concerns**

- During fire drill a teacher was observed talking to a visitor. This discussion carried on at the front door of the Administration building throughout the drill. This teacher did not report to her assigned post even after being prompted by a member of the accreditation team.
• Several staff members did not leave the staff lounge. It took these staff members approximately ten additional minutes to exit the building only after being prompted by the school’s headmaster.
• The sounding of the alarm was too short. Approximately 30 seconds.
• Atmosphere during the drill was too relaxed. Staff supervision was very relaxed. There was no sense of urgency.
• Students did not exit in either a straight line or with partners.
• Hand signals are used to alert Elementary Principal if a child cannot be accounted for. Members felt that this could cause serious problems.
• Both the Elementary and High School Principals neglected to bring their 2-way radios.
• At the upper school there was no way to communicate information to a large group of people.
• Teachers did not appear to have a class roster, or use the one stored in their Grab Bag.
• As older students were coming down the exterior stairwells they would jump 2-3 steps onto the landings.
• Janitors/Cleaners unsure of their role during fire drill.
• Not enough traffic control once students arrive at the AUB campus.
• Very long way to AUB Muster Point for small children. Also, parking lot offers little shade or access to bathroom facilities.
• It was noted that in 9 classrooms lights were not switched off and doors closed.
• Plastic chairs blocked entrances to the gym. Cleaners were on stairs as students were trying to exit.
• Poor attendance taking procedures by High School teachers.
• Dismissal procedures were lax.

Additional Concerns

• No way to determine how a Substitute Teacher would know whom the Principal is?
• No way to determine what procedures are in place for Substitute Teachers during these drills?
• No way to determine how guests and support staff accounted for?

Analysis

Following careful observation of the ACS campus, and given the world’s current political climate, the team strongly feels that campus security issues are an area, which require urgent attention. Although the ACS has gone to great lengths to plan for contingencies and provide a secure environment, it should consider the review of its existing security policies to ensure a high safety level for both students and staff. ACS should consider involving external agencies and/or embassies in its security evaluation in order to guide this plan.

Further, the school’s culture has not developed a serious approach to dealing with situations of emergency/security. A “Culture of Urgency” needs to be encouraged in emergency situations. A necessary, thorough analysis of security and evacuation procedures is vigorously encouraged.
The buildings are configured in such a way that makes increased security problematic. External windows are not equipped with safety glass or protective film.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS’s Health and Safety committee for their tremendous amount of work and forethought in ensuring that the ACS campus is a child friendly and safe atmosphere. Various emergency situations have been considered and planned for.
2. The Administration for already implementing changes as a result of the Health and Safety committee’s self study report, (for example: number of times when the generator fuel tank is refilled and placing phones into guard huts).
3. Administration for creating the “ACS Emergency Grab Bags” and “ACS Emergency Cards”.
4. ACS administration for the installation of a generator as a standby power source in case of large-scale power failure.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Administration ensures that the Building Master Plan includes new buildings and/or major renovations with the security of students and staff foremost on mind.
2. Administration reviews the school’s admission policy in light of the fact that students are presently accepted without required vaccinations.
3. Administration considers the implementation of some means of school wide communication other than a phone system. This would include the security personnel posts as well.
4. Administration reviews the nurses’ schedules so that there is after-school coverage in case of an emergency.
5. Administration considers the relocation of the fuel tank for the backup generator.
6. Administration develops an accountability plan for all staff with regard to security evacuation procedures i.e. Fire Drills.
7. Staff assume responsibility for their “Thoughts, words and actions to act with honor and purpose” in regards to school evacuation procedures. (As stated in the ACS Mission Statement)
8. Administration consider ways in which to accentuate the “ACS Emergency Vehicle” to ensure safe and expeditious passage through the streets of Beirut.
9. Administration reviews the muster point for Elementary students in regards to evacuation procedures.
Finances

**Standard:** Financial resources are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the school’s philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. The business practices of the institution promote confidence in the organization’s ability to manage fiscal and material resources in a responsible manner and to follow prescribed budgeting and accounting principles. The majority of resources raised for school purposes must be dedicated to school operations.

**The Finances standard is met.**

The school has a detailed budget plan and quarterly reviews of the financial situation are given to the Board. The school’s financial statements are audited annually by a first class external and independent auditing firm.

While funds for capital improvements and curriculum budgets are viewed as being scarce, the school appears to do a reasonably good job of providing adequate resources to meet the basic operating needs of its educational programs. Staff salaries represent 75% of school operating expenses, and 7% are used for educational supplies and student activities. The annual audit process has approved the school’s accounts with few modifications and indicates that resources are being managed responsibly.

The school’s financial position has recently improved, with an increase in the net fund balance last year as opposed to a deficit the previous year. While a bottom-line deficit is forecast for the current year, this is less than the depreciation provision, such that positive cash flow will be generated by this year’s operations if the forecast is accurate. The school has gradually decreased its dependence on tuition fee revenue from 90% to 85% of total revenues for 2003-2004.

The school does not have a significant reserve fund, and the authors of the report feel that this makes the school vulnerable given that it operates in a potentially volatile environment. Included in the report is a survey which indicates that lack of a significant reserve fund is not exceptional in a broad range of international schools. The school has no long-term debt.

The report’s authors feel that the budget development process is too top-down, and does not allow for adequate input by most stakeholders, although they feel this is changing under the new Headmaster. They also say that the tuition-setting decision process « is not effective, » by which they mean that certain Board members who are also parents exert pressure to keep tuition fee increases lower than recommended by the business office.

There is no evidence of any concrete long-term financial planning for the school, but the Headmaster indicates that this will be included in the upcoming strategic planning process.

Foreign faculty turnover is high, and this appears linked to compensation and benefit issues.
COMMENDATIONS:

1. Business office personnel for developing a coherent budget plan and timely financial reporting.
2. Administration and business office personnel on the improvement in the school’s financial position and the reduced dependence on tuition revenue.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Administration and business office personnel continue to consider more input from the faculty and staff in the budget development process.
2. Board consider instituting a policy which calls for tuition-setting to be based on actual forecasted costs.
3. ACS administration and Business Manager develop a long-term financial plan in the context of its strategic planning process, to include the eventual establishment of a reserve fund of approximately 50% of annual turnover.
4. Board and Administration consider a review of benefits for foreign teachers, with a view to improving foreign teacher recruitment and retention.
Planning

**Standard:** The school makes use of strategic, long-range, and operational planning to continuously improve its educational programs and services. Improvement plans focus on student performance and organizational growth and engender continuous improvement across all aspects of the school organization.Externally validated processes for evaluation, strategic planning, and school/district improvement are continuously maintained. Systematic analysis regarding student performance and organizational growth is coupled with analyses of instructional and organizational practices to ensure alignment with the school’s philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. Trends in outcomes and results are projected and goals of demonstrated strategic merit are identified.

The Planning standard is not met.

The school developed a strategic plan in 1999 that has since been updated several times, but is now considered outdated.

The authors of the report recognize the need to develop a new strategic plan, a long-term financial plan, a technology plan, a master facilities plan, an updated staff development plan, a staffing plan, a student enrollment plan, a curriculum review plan, an institutional advancement and development plan, and a public relations plan. They also recognize the need to base effective planning on data, and that this has not been done to date.

There is evidence that ACS has begun a process to develop a strategic plan that encompasses most aspects of school operations, but a coherent plan has yet to be adopted.

**COMMENDATION:**

1. Planning sub-committee on recognition of the need for planning and the need to base planning on relevant data.
2. Administration for having established an ambitious schedule for developing and adopting a strategic plan.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. ACS administration develop a strategic plan that encompasses all aspects of school operations, and that this plan be systematically up-dated on an annual basis.
LEARNING AREAS

As an educational institution, a school needs to give considerable attention to the quality and comprehensiveness of its curriculum as well as the effectiveness of instructional pedagogy and assessment techniques used to ensure student success. American Community School at Beirut examined the following nine individual learning areas through an in-depth examination of the curriculum content, instructional methodology, and assessment practices within individual curriculum areas. Each curriculum area was examined separately and evaluated to ensure that the existing educational program is consistent with and supportive of the school’s statement of philosophy, mission, beliefs and objectives.

The Visitation Team has responded to each of these areas with a description of the area found while onsite and through document review, followed by commendations and recommendations. As with suggestions for the areas noted previously in the accreditation standards, these comments are made in the spirit of validating the findings of the school’s self study with the added benefit of an external perspective.

As with recommendations found in the section on standards, the comments included here are not meant to be construed as criticisms of individuals within the school. All recommendations are to be viewed as suggestions from critical friends, designed to help the school in its improvement processes.
Arabic

American Community School offers Arabic as a foreign language from KG1 to G12 students. In the KG’s the curriculum addresses all areas of a child’s development. Art, music, social, math studies and sciences are integrated in the Arabic curriculum. The (1-12) Arabic curriculum themes, novels as well as the learning activities are selected to serve the students’ emotional, social and cognitive development. The transition from one level to another is very smooth. The ongoing process of studying and updating the curriculum by adding and deleting whenever necessary, ensures that gaps, omissions and inappropriate repetition are immensely minimized.

Even though the Arabic course is taught as a foreign language Students in Grade 9 & 12 sit for external Lebanese examinations (the Brevet in G9 and the Lebanese Baccalaureate in G12). Arabic is considered to be the first language in Lebanon and 64% of the school population is Lebanese. The Arabic department faces an ongoing process of development and improvement of teaching methodologies that leads to alignment with the school mission. The Arabic Department has 11 qualified faculty members.

The instructional time that is allocated for Arabic courses is:
270 minutes/week for KG1 & 2, G9 & G11
420 minutes/week for G1…G5
300 minutes/week for G6…G8
360 minutes/week for G10
180 minutes/week for G12

Basic Instructional Materials used to teach Arabic Language from G1 … G9 and Arabic Literature from G10…G12 are Theme and Library books, thematic novels and learning activities. The number of students in the Arabic classes from 1 – 12 is small. The time allocated in KG2 is not enough; the same problem exists in the middle school. There is no specific strategy to accommodate students with special needs. In the middle school the Arabic Department was excluded from the language lab schedule, and the computer schedule restrains the Arabic teachers’ choices and plans.

“In 1995 the ACS policy on Arabic was that all students will study Arabic according to their level. Those who begin their studies at ACS in the primary grades will participate in the regular Arabic program. If a child has not studied Arabic before entering the grade three, she/he will be placed in the appropriate ASL level with the expectation that she/he will be placed in the appropriate level by the end of elementary. The child entering ACS at middle school level without a background in Arabic will join the ASL program. Whether a student is following the official Lebanese examination program or not, all ACS students will study Arabic language and culture. A child who enters ACS with a first language other than English or Arabic will be exempted from Arabic for 1 to 2 years while she/he builds her/his English skills”.

Since September 2001, this policy was changed. Every student entering the school and who can be exempted from Arabic, was following ASL from N-12. The committee explained that this is not a remedial language program. It addresses “Non Arabic students or those who are exempted from Arabic” and who cannot follow the regular program.
In November 2003, the Headmaster proposed to take the policy back to what it was in 1995. A new restructuring of this department will occur in September 2004. There will be two strands for this section of the school, Arabic and French as separate departments. ESL will join Students Services department. It was felt by the administration that this would better meet the needs of ACS students and strengthen the two programs.

The Headmaster explained that only one level of Arabic will be taught at each grade level from N-8. The implementation of the new Arabic curriculum will start in 2004-05 for N-2. The maximum size will be 12-15 students. Task forces have been formed, seven volunteers and a facilitator have been appointed by the administration and their job is to:

- Define a set of standards for G8,
- Create a scope and sequence for N-8 curriculum including colloquial and modern standard Arabic.
- Identify professional development needs to improve pedagogy in the classroom.
- Identify collect and develop teaching materials and resources for N-2.

The Modern Language Department is developing the High School Arabic Foreign Language Program. The implementation will start in 2004-05.

In discussions with the committee, Visiting Team members concluded that there was a great deal of dissatisfaction among the Arabic teachers with the administration’s policy change in regards to the restructuring of the Arabic program. This dissatisfaction appeared to be the result of a lack of understanding of the administrations’ vision and philosophy regarding a combined Arabic program for all learners.

Visiting Team members strongly recommended to the Arabic teachers that all concerns and misunderstandings should be directed to the appropriate administrator in order for teachers to feel less threatened (as a result of the restructuring) and less vulnerable in terms of their effectiveness as practitioners in the new structured Arabic program.

It was also strongly recommended to the administration that clear written explanation regarding the new Arabic structure be disseminated to all stakeholders (teachers and parents) and that planned school meetings be scheduled, prior to September 2004 and the implementation of the new program, in order that teachers and parents support this initiative. While it was understood by the Team members that efforts by the administration to communicate the changes were done earlier in this academic year, it was clear that more work needs to be done in order for the faculty to understand the new structure and its implications for their assignments.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. Administration for allowing for small number of students in grade 1-12 classrooms.
2. Administration for hiring qualified teachers and organizing series of in-services, which helped in changing the methods of teaching in some Arabic classes.
3. Arabic department for establishing a network for communication with local and international schools in Lebanon and in the Arab world.
4. Teachers and students for allocating time for creative writing and for doing their best to reach the National standards in Arabic Language.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Administration should consider an equal amount of instructional time for Arabic across the grade levels.
2. Administration should consider giving time and place to the Arabic department to use the language and computer labs.
3. Arabic language department should begin to replace the local textbooks with thematic units that reflect the school philosophy and mission.
4. Administration ensures that the changes in September 2004-05 are published and well explained to the school community.
5. Administration seriously consider informing Arabic teachers and parents in writing and at planned school meetings about this major change.
Fine Art

The American Community School of Beirut provides art and music instruction from pre-K to 10th grade. Drama instruction begins at grade eight. The high school includes electives in art, music, band, drama, photography, and yearbook with two Fine Arts requirements for graduation. A music course is included for the International Baccalaureate program. The school strives for international standards of excellence by participating in AMIS and EMAC international fine arts festivals. Music and Art programs are based on California Fine Arts Standards.

Improvements include the recent addition of 8 computers in the high school art rooms and additional outdoor work spaces equipped with marble tables for sculpting and clay work. The Fine Arts team has a common area for the team to meet and plan, however this is remote for the EY and ES staff.

Concerns evident at the committee meeting were budget cuts, the inadequate supply of band instruments and secure band instrument storage. This team actively seeks integration and technology support for research. They are eager to display the students’ talents through out the school. This committee expressed the concern that the 3 diploma program severely limits the 11th and 12th grade students’ ability to pursue diverse Fine Arts interests.

COMMENDATION:

1. Administration for unifying the arts as a team and providing technology to the High School Art room.
2. Fine Arts team for their integration and coordination efforts with the English and History Departments.
3. Fine Arts team for their efforts to revise the scope, sequence, and curriculum of Pre-K through 12.
4. Fine Arts team and students for their interest and efforts to improve the ACS environment artistically.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Fine Arts team completes their curriculum and finalizes their scope and sequence plans.
2. Administration addresses security and size of music/band facilities, the IB art room and art storage space be in the master plan of ACS.
3. Administration review the limitations placed on 11th and 12th grade students by the 3 diploma program.
4. Business Manager and Fine Arts department work to assure better communication.
Computer Science/Technology

The IT standard is being met (Provisionally)

The American Community School – Beirut has made significant growth in its IT standards and services. There has been demonstrable growth in the IT curriculum at ACS. Although the computer curriculum is still being constructed, it should be acknowledged that it has come a long way in 5 years – where at least at the High School level there was no classes or curriculum. The addition of new forms of technology has helped to create a diverse range of learning.

There is a school wide initiative to improve the ACS’s IT curriculum across all grade levels. This is seen as one of the objectives of the ACS School wide Improvement plan:

**Objective #2: By 2009, all ACS students will be computer literate as measured by performance assessment to be determined Fall 2004 by the technology committee.**

In reading the self-study documentation three areas of concern became apparent. The first being an unclear curricular structure, lack of IT offerings at the HS level and the continued mention of space constraints and lab availability.

A Master Plan that relates to the delivery of IT instruction is needed. The administration is aware of this and has taken the following steps to address this issue:

- Hiring of a new Technology Coordinator. It is felt that given this persons level of experience he will be able to guide the school in the creation of its overall IT plan.
- Formation of a Steering Committee that has already convened and is discussing the more pressing issues.
- Ongoing communication with the incoming Tech Coordinator so that initiatives are being implemented prior to his actual arrival.

Although there are curriculum documents and IT standards documents in existence and are being well used by the IT instructional staff, these are felt to be outdated and in need of revision. It should be noted that standards and curriculum documentation for the High School IT elective classes were not provided.

In order to ensure (that in order to ensure) an adequate level of IT understanding, an Exit exam will be administered to students as they progress from Grades 5, 8 & 12. What to be done with students who enroll in the ACS late in High School and lack requisite skills will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the overall skill set is met. This plan will be implemented in 2007.

One of the areas that concerned the team was that IT was seen as an elective once students reached the High School level. In talking to ACS Administration, this was not seen to be a major concern. Technology is used in a great many of the students’ regular classroom activities. The technology exposure that students are given is seen to be more relevant and meaningful.
is tied directly to the educational experience through the various projects and assignments that they are expected to carry out.

The Administration also stressed that due to the scheduling problems caused by the need to satisfy three diploma tracks (International Baccalaureate Diploma, Lebanese Baccalaureate Diploma, and American Style High School Diploma) students were not always able to take the full range courses that they would like to. This is the rationale for making IT an elective rather than required course in High School.

Administration went on to say that given the feedback they’d received from returning college students that the technological exposure received whilst at the ACS was more than adequate. They were not able to provide hard evidence to back up these claims (such as surveys). These opinions were formed from verbal conversations.

Technology learning opportunities are structured in such a way so that it provides a well-balanced curriculum for all students. At the lower levels, activities are flexible so that students can apply their ideas after discovering new concepts. Specific tasks taught by the teacher and covered in the learning modules address basic and advanced computer skills & competencies. At the upper levels technology issues although taught by the teacher, are also allowed to develop independently as the students branch to other areas (student-directed). A computer mediated online discussion forum creates an environment to post individual discoveries with information leading to the resource.

Amongst the student body, technical skills are felt to be strong. There are only a few instances of a student that does not have a computer at home. Judging from the samples provided this appears to be true. It needs to be noted that no samples from the high school were given. In the lower grades although the overall quality of the work was high, written language skills needed to improve.

Please be aware that printed work samples (generally from the MS Office tool suite), though informative, cannot be the basis upon which one can decide the overall success (or failure) of a program. IT is a broad and diverse field and by its nature can appeal to a various range of learners. Other forms of anecdotal evidence to be used to demonstrate evidence of an overall understanding could be:

- Rubrics
- Tests and/or quizzes
- Examples of programming applications built by students
- Any other students’ IT related activities

Due to the fact that the ACS IT department is comprised of three individuals, as a general rule it is easy to find a common time in order to get together and discuss experiences and student needs across all grade levels.
The Technology Mentorship program has been a very successful initiative. The program was created so there would be a Tech Mentor in place for each grade level up to 5 and for each department thereafter. The Tech Mentor’s job responsibility is to aid fellow teachers with integrating technology into their lesson plans by either creating lessons or finding lessons that feature IT as a main component. These lessons are then saved to one of the school’s file servers for other teachers to refer to.

Instructional space and lab availability is a problem that is seen in several of the upper school classrooms. The Administration is aware of these issues and is cognizant of how such space problems can affect the teaching of all subjects not just IT. Several solutions have been bandied about, and the one that seems to be the one most supported by the Administration, IT Teaching and Technical staff members is the implementation of a wireless network. This will allow students with laptops to work in a variety of environments and locations around the school. Reliance on lab space will no longer be such an issue.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. Administration and IT staff for identifying the problems that will need to be dealt with and the pre-emptive moves to address such concerns.
2. IT department for an effective student-computing skills program.
3. Technology teachers for integrating new ideas into their teaching model.
4. Staff members for flexibility with the curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Administration and IT Teachers consider working toward refining the needs of the school’s computer curriculum.
2. Administration and IT Teachers consider the creation and putting forth of various models in order to address problems associated with lab availability.
3. Administration contemplate different scheduling scenarios in order to allow those students wishing to take a more challenging IT classes.
4. Administration continue to monitor the development of an IT program as highlighted in the school’s “Improvement Plan”.

English/Language Arts

The American Community School of Beirut follows an American style English/Language Arts curriculum. The International Baccalaureate courses and the Brevet program are available at the high school level. American textbooks are used for instruction, but novels are used as key instructional materials at the secondary level. The 6 + 1 Writing Traits program is used throughout the school. Instruction is divided between lecture, discussions, activities, research, and independent study.

The California State standards have been adopted and adapted and are being used as a guideline for the school’s language arts program.

Elementary
The elementary reading and language arts program was not adequately addressed in the self study report and there was weak attendance at the English committee review meeting. Thus, elementary comments derive mostly from a meeting with the elementary principal.

The elementary has a strong reading program. The present basal reading system has been used for a number of years. The reading program has a strong writing connection for a total language arts approach. There is a 70 minute block of reading each day and there is a desire to increase this time.

Strengths include a guided reading program, a strong phonics component, and utilizing good reading instructional strategies. Students appear to have the necessary basic reading skills. In the lower grades, teachers have the basal textbook series, but also depend heavily on a rich supply of supplemental materials. Students score above average (60 percentile range) on the reading section of the Stanford Achievement tests. The 4th-5th grade teachers place a heavier emphasis on use of the basal reading series.

There could be more of an emphasis on the teaching of higher level of thinking skills in the elementary program. More professional development in the area of reading would be helpful, although the principal assists with this when doing one-on-one teacher observation discussions.

Future goals for the elementary include incorporating the best teaching practices into the reading program, obtaining more materials, and continuing to improve skills.

Secondary
At the secondary level, teachers are developing a skills checklist to ensure that skills are being coordinated and taught at the appropriate grade levels. There appears to be good articulation between the middle school and high school program. The teachers allow older students to have a voice in the curriculum by choosing one novel over another. The department appears to be doing an excellent job of integrating instruction with the history department and hopes to coordinate with other departments as well. There has been an attempt to increase the English instructional time and this has occurred at the 6th grade level and possibly the 9th grade.
There is evidence of portfolio and workshop learning. Grammar instruction depends on the teacher and the needs of the students. Grammar instruction becomes less formal as the students get older.

The department is developing a Writing Across the Curriculum program and this is in the beginning stages. The department has an emphasis on debate, argumentation skills, and critical thinking. They are searching for an appropriate writing measurement instrument.

During the English committee meeting, there was a strong desire for a computer lab at the high school level so that teachers could take their class for word processing and research.

Class sizes vary from 12-18 students. The classrooms are too small to handle larger numbers. Teachers teach four classes with some additional instructional blocks.

It appears that there is good coordination of the teaching of research skills and the library appears to have a good supply of resources. There is a major writing project that begins in the junior year to be completed in the senior year as part of the graduation requirements.

There are school wide activities of author visits and plays. For professional development, workshops and courses are available from NESA and the university. The teachers feel that they still could benefit from visiting consultants.

**COMMENDATIONS:**

1. English department for adopting the California State Standards for the English Department and applying the standards to all grade levels.
2. English department for the development of a skills checklist for the middle and high school grades.
3. English department for adopting and using the 6 + 1 Six Traits Writing program in the curriculum.
4. English department for integration of activities with the history curriculum.
5. English department for developing Writing across the Curriculum opportunities.
6. English department for emphasis on debate and critical thinking skills.
7. Elementary school for maintaining a strong reading and language arts program.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Elementary school continue conversations on best practices on reading and writing instruction.
2. Elementary school make use of a wider variety of instructional materials beyond the basal reader.
3. Secondary English department to consider increasing integration of instruction with other departments and subject areas.
4. Secondary English department to research and select more assessment tools.
5. ACS administration to review the possibility of a computer lab at the high school to support the academic program.
Foreign Languages/Languages Other than English

American Community School offers French, Arabic and English as Second Languages. The department Mission Statement is in line with the school’s Mission Statement. The three programs foster long life learning, develop cultural integrity, foster technological development, and seek to ensure that students are well equipped to benefit from and participate in their community.

“In 1995 the ACS policy on Arabic was that all students will study Arabic according to their level. Those who begin their studies at ACS in the primary grades will participate in the regular Arabic program. If a child has not studied Arabic before entering the grade three, she/he will be placed in the appropriate ASL level with the expectation that she/he will be placed in the appropriate level by the end of elementary. The child entering ACS at middle school level without a background in Arabic will join the ASL program. Whether a student is following the official Lebanese examination program or not, all ACS students will study Arabic language and culture. A child who enters ACS with a first language other than English or Arabic will be exempted from Arabic for 1 to 2 years while she/he builds her/his English skills”.

In September 2001, department restructuring grouped all second languages (ASL, FSL, ESL) under one department chair. The second language committee reported in the self study that this gave the teachers the possibility to better share resources, strategies and expertise under the leadership of one person. Students’ achievement and satisfaction were evaluated and improvements to the three programs were introduced based on those evaluations. New courses were designed in the ASL program that catered to the needs of both national and international students. The integration of technology into the SL programs and the creation of a language lab allowed for updating of new resources and for the implementation of current teaching techniques whereby technology is an integral part of all three programs. The Second Language Department has 22 qualified faculty members.

The instructional time that is allocated for French courses is:
80 minutes/week for G3
120 minutes/week for G4, G5, G6
180 minutes/week for G7…G10
270 minutes/week for G11&G12

The French language is divided into 7 different levels from G3 to G12 (French 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, French IB, French B/SL, French B/HL) depending on the students level.

For the French program, the time allotted in elementary and middle school is sufficient for fulfilling the school's goals and objectives. At the High School level, the status of the Second Language courses in grade 9 and 10 is not perceived as comparable to other subjects’ areas; it is allocated 90 minutes less than all other courses, which the committee deemed to be insufficient. The French program relies very heavily on audio, video and interactive computer software as support for its courses. The entire French curriculum was thoroughly reviewed in May 2002 and a new curriculum implemented in September 2002.

The Arabic as a Second Language program offers courses that cater to all levels. According to the Community and School Profile “one main reason why parents enroll their children at ACS is
the fact that an ASL program is being offered”. This is given to non-native speakers or those who have been exempted from the national Arabic. It recognizes the duality of the Arabic language and follows the most updated methods in teaching both the colloquial and the classical aspects of the language. The instructional time that is allocated for Arabic as a Second Language courses is:
240 minutes/week for KG2
420 minutes/week for G1…G5
360 minutes/week for G6…G8
180 minutes/week for G9&G10
270 minutes/week for G11 & G12
ASL courses are divided into (ASL 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B) depending on the students level. ASL classes run back-to-back to Regular Arabic classes in the lower and Middle School. At the elementary level, same frequency but shorter contact time would be ideal for ASL purposes. The ASL program is reviewed on a yearly basis, the last official review date was in May 2003.

The instructional time that is allocated for English as a Second Language course is:
120 to 420 minutes/week for Elementary
180 minutes/week for Middle & High school
ESL classrooms are equipped with one to two computers with Internet access, headphones and a collection of educational CDs and programs.
The ESL curriculum adopted the TESOL standards in the fall of 2002 as its general guidelines. However, a detailed curriculum outlining of what is being taught at ACS needs to be developed.

The three programs are designed to cater to all learning styles and are challenging to most learners. Competitively, SL learners participate in debates and class discussions. Students develop independent skills by indulging in such activities as creative writing, argumentative essay writing, researching and presenting individual projects and reports, and reading for pleasure.

The committee expressed the need to have a clear policy for admitting and exiting students from ESL and to give the SL teachers the chances to follow recent professional development in their fields by attending local and international conferences.

The team understands from discussions with committee members and the Headmaster that a new restructuring of this department will occur in September 2004. They will go back to the structure that was in place before 2001. There will be two strands for this section of the school, Arabic and French as separate departments. ESL will join Students Services department. It was felt by the administration that this would better meet the needs of ACS students and strengthen the two programs.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. SL teachers for sharing resources, strategies and expertise.
2. ASL teachers for designing new courses that caters to the needs of both national and international students.
3. Administration for the creation of the language lab that allowed for exploration of new resources and for the implementation of current teaching techniques whereby technology is an integral part of all three programs.

4. Administration for offering intensive ESL courses tailored to students’ needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. SL teachers to pursue adequate training in dealing with students with exceptional needs and talents and they should attend local and international conferences.

2. Administration continue with its efforts to work with the second language team, consolidate the work of the Second Language department and support them in their commitment to improve second languages for all students.

3. SL department should establish a formalized clear policy for admitting and exiting ESL students.
Health and Physical Education

The American Community School’s Physical Education program begins in the nursery school and is offered until Grade 12. The Health portion of the program spans Grade 1 to Grade 12. The ACS’s PHE program, like all programs at ACS, is organized into 30 cycles a year and as the grade level increases, so do the minutes per cycle (e.g., Grade 2 receive 170 minutes/cycle, Grade 6 receive 240 minutes/cycle, Grade 9 receive 270 minutes/cycle). However, because of problems organizing the schedule due to time and space, students in Grades 4 and 5 only receive 120 minutes/cycle but the students in Grade 3 receive 210 minutes/cycle.

Basically, each grade at the school has the opportunity to engage in physical education as well as health education. PHE is mandatory for all students in up to and including grade 10 and is an elective for Grades 11 and 12. It is mentioned that the IB and LB programs tend to “disway” students in Grades 11 and 12 from selecting the PHE elective. Additionally, the PHE teachers feel that the counselors do not support students taking PHE.

The PE aspect of this curriculum area is strong in its use of a variety of instructional methods. There is clear evidence that the PE teachers incorporate opportunities for students to work collaboratively, competitively, and independently. There is also evidence that students are grouped heterogeneously and homogeneously when engaged in cooperative games.

The Health curriculum attends to students’ emotional and cognitive development more so than the Physical Education part of the curriculum, which focuses on social and physical development. At the ES level, the PE teacher and the homeroom teacher get together to work out how the homeroom teacher can incorporate health into the curriculum. Therefore, the PE teachers do not specifically teach students about health but do guide the homeroom teacher to the standards for the grade level. At the MS and HS levels, students receive two 1-hour classes and one 2-hour class each cycle. During one of the two 1-hour classes each cycle, students receive a health class – this happens throughout the year. PHE teachers at these two levels also get together with the science teachers to see how they can integrate the two classes – for example, disease as social (PHE) and biological (Science).

The PHE curriculum area has updated unit plans which include skill standards and rubrics. Students in Grades 11 and 12 receive “a more sophisticate program” which include survival weekends in the forests in the spring and winter, hiking, first aid, pool safety and water survival and other such outdoor skills. The Health portion includes more sophisticated approaches and include units of sexually transmitted diseases, dating, etc.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS administration for hiring highly qualified staff.
2. ACS PHE teachers for (1) working with classroom teachers so students receive health instruction integrated into their day, and (2) for providing MS and HS students with a once per week health class.
3. ACS PHE teachers for using a variety of instructional methods and assessments.
4. ACS PHE teachers for developing and using detailed unit plans and rubrics for all levels.
5. ACS PHE teachers for providing professional development to each other.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ACS administration to work on a schedule that provides for the equal opportunity of PHE instruction.
2. ACS counselors to support PHE teachers in their program.
Mathematics

The high school offers 3 diploma programs: International Baccalaureate, Lebanese Baccalaureate, and American High School. These programs determine the mathematics courses that are offered by the ACS. Students are heterogeneously grouped through the 10th grade, and then based on the chosen diploma program in high school, are placed in appropriate courses for grades 11 and 12, where the groups are homogeneous. Extra effort has been made to provide a smooth transition into high school and higher-level courses.

There are well-written curriculum guides, essential agreements, curriculum maps, and scopes and sequence charts for Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12. There is an effort at all levels for teachers to use a variety of assessment strategies and teaching strategies to reach the needs of all students. Samples of portfolios, tests, quizzes, independent studies, research projects, rubrics, and group projects were made available to the committee for viewing. Teachers are available to give students any extra help or enrichment they need.

A wide range of instructional practices are being used, such as lecture, cooperative learning/group activities, investigations, group discussions, student board demonstrations, hands-on tasks, and math games. During an elementary class, the team observed the students effectively using manipulative in a game to reinforce the concept of regrouping in place value. There is a strong attempt to integrate math with other subject areas. For example, technology has been integrated and software programs are being utilized such as the Cabri geometry programs in grades 6 through 10, the Excel program in all grades, and there is a plan for LOGO to be used in the 8th grade program during the coming year. As additional computers are being placed in the classrooms, this kind of integration is easier to do. Classes also visit the computer lab for special activities and assignments.

Frequent team meetings by grade level enable teachers to plan units, interdisciplinary projects, and field trips together. Science and math departments also make connections for some projects, such as the GLOBE project. Frequent department meetings ensure communication about issues, curriculum, and the sharing of ideas. Some unit plans and assignments are on the school website so that teachers can easily share. There has been effort to update classroom libraries and resources, and these are available to every teacher, grades Pre-K through 12, in the teacher’s professional library. Graphing calculators are being successfully used as a teaching tool in the high school. As an additional means of controlling consistency in the department, colleagues share tests and quizzes as well as numerous other assignments amongst themselves. This also enables teachers to give each other feedback.

During math committee meetings, some concern was expressed about the lack of opportunity for sharing and communication, both between the Middle School and the Elementary School, as well as from grade to grade in the Elementary School. Common planning and meeting times are not possible under the present schedule. This hinders the process of refining the curriculum work, such as eliminating unnecessary repetition in some topics in geometry or reinforcing weak links such as place value or probability. It also makes it difficult to achieve their departmental priority of improving math communication skills (math language, problem solving, and critical thinking skills). The department also expressed a need for in-service training. They want time for sharing
and to train each other. There is a wealth of know-how and expertise in the department and the department could benefit greatly from this. Some teachers still need to be trained in the use of portfolios and alternative assessments. At this point they are in the developmental stage, so there is a great deal of flexibility about how portfolios are used. Next year 1 teacher will be training the others in the Middle School and High School in the use of technology, but they want to see this done even further.

One unique feature of the program would be the diversity of the teachers in the department. During a math department high school meeting, the committee observed the effective functioning of the department, as well as enthusiasm, collegiality, sharing and support between professionals. Another unique feature is the creation of 2 new courses, ALGEO I and II, which was done to meet the needs of the students in the 3 high school programs. In meetings with the classroom teachers, they appeared to be enthusiastic about the results of these courses thus far.

A challenge for the department is posed by the fact that ACS offers 3 diploma programs. The school would like to see unity of all the students, but because of the course requirements for each program, this is not possible. To try to address the issue of unity, the math department tries to ensure that all teachers in the high school teach classes from each program.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. Math department for the rich variety of instructional practices and assessments.
2. Administration for supporting the math department in its desire to integrate math with other subject areas by providing software and equipment.
3. Department for its attempt to reach all the needs of the students.
4. Department for its enthusiasm, professionalism, flexibility, and the collegiality of its members.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Administration considers providing meeting time between elementary and middle school teachers, as well as between middle and high school teachers.
2. Math department continue to address math communication skills (language, problem solving, and critical thinking) of the students.
3. Administration considers providing opportunities for teachers to share their expertise with colleagues. This will enable them to achieve their priorities in a more effective manner.
Science

The science curriculum at ACS Beirut is designed to prepare all students to fulfill the requirements of the 3 high school programs: International Baccalaureate, Lebanese Baccalaureate and American High School diploma. There were 2 major challenges faced by the science department during the past 5 years, which caused some changes in the courses offered as well as in the curriculum: the National Curriculum changed and the ACS requirements for graduation changed. During the committee meetings, some concern was expressed about the frequency of changes in policies as well as in the curriculum, leaving teachers little time to fully adapt or to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of each revision.

As ACS attempted to face the changes, too many courses resulted, therefore this year they integrated some 9th and 10th courses into one, called Integrated Science I and II. This helped in smoothing the 8th/9th grade transition and in preparing students to meet the next level’s expectations.

Other recent curriculum changes were noted by the committee. In the 5th grade a textbook was adopted this year in order to facilitate the transition from 5th to 6th, with which the teachers are satisfied. There also have been positive changes in the health curriculum. The child-centered approach to health in the elementary school was so successful that it was extended to the Middle School. The Foss hands-on curriculum sets were acquired for the elementary teachers, which are teacher-friendly and are producing enthusiasm about the subject by students and faculty. The outdoor education and the GLOBE programs have been implemented to allow students to explore the local surroundings.

There has been a 3-year curriculum revision process, where gaps and omissions in the program have been minimized to allow for a more effective program. They now have well-written curriculum guides, curriculum maps, and scope and sequence charts for Pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The science teachers want to continue the priority of further reviewing the standards and skills in each subject area of science for all grades. This will be an ongoing process.

The department demonstrates the use of a variety of assessment tools, including group and individual projects, lab reports, tests, quizzes, research assignments, portfolios, and science fair projects (middle school). During science committee meetings, the teachers expressed that they feel they have been effective in helping their students improve their communication skills. They plan a variety of assignments to allow students to verbally express or explain science concepts in writing. Through frequent team meetings by grade level the teachers are able to plan integrated field trips.

The science department has successfully integrated technology into their classes. Lab probes have been provided so that there can be more accurate gathering of data and conducting of experiments. Some teachers have set up web pages with information and assignments. Depending on the course, email dialogue, video links, power point, science software, videotapes and video discs are also used. Science has been integrated with other subject areas such as math, for example, in the use of formulas in the high school and middle school. In the elementary school, teachers combine science with spelling by including science vocabulary words in their
spelling lists. The health curriculum is integrated through the physical education department, with input from the science department about topics being taught by the grade level.

A new Middle School state-of-the-art science lab, including many computers, has recently been provided. There are 3 high school labs, but the teachers expressed a desire to have more computers and equipment. There is no lab facility in the elementary school, and a need is also felt for improving their equipment for science activities.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. Science department for the rich variety of learning experiences that they provide their students.
2. Administration for supporting the science department in upgrading facilities, technology, and equipment to improve the effectiveness of the program.
3. Department for its professionalism, dedication, and enthusiasm of its members.
4. Department for its effort to integrate science with other subjects.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Administration consider providing additional support to improve space allocation and equipment to further enhance the effectiveness of the science programs.
2. Science teachers continue the revision and fine-tuning of their curriculum so that they can continue to effectively prepare their students.
Social Studies

The American Community School of Beirut follows an American style social studies curriculum. The Living Values Educational Program and Character Education program supports the humanistic commitment in the school’s mission statement. There is a U.S. History course at the eighth grade level. There are three levels of World History, which include U.S. History Studies. Electives include economics, psychology, and Middle East History. A major component includes a focus on the Middle East since most of the students are Middle Eastern. Instruction is divided between lecture, discussions, activities, research, and independent study. An IB History course is available. High school students also have the opportunity to participate in the Model United Nations program.

Committee concern was that there are missed opportunities for research as there are not sufficient computer labs for full class use. Middle and High School room size combined with the staff/class movement severely restricts Social Science activities. Staff seek opportunities to integrate Social Sciences with Fine Arts.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. Staff for their cross curricular integration with Technology and Fine Arts.
2. Staff for the revision of their Pre-K to 12 Social Sciences curriculum and further development of Middle Eastern Studies with special resource focus on Lebanon.
3. Staff for the development of yearly themes, essential questions, and historical biographies, for the inclusion of Character and Living Values Programs in this curricular area.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Staff continue the introduction of historical themes in the elementary curriculum.
2. ACS administration increase the financial resources available to this growing historical program in the elementary.
3. ACS administration address the room size issue in the Master Plan and seek avenues to allow further technology access.
As part of the Reflections on Standards of Quality protocol, schools are required every five years to develop three to five measurable objectives, at least two of which must in student performance areas. A limited number of objectives is suggested so that the school can focus on the highest priorities without diverting its resources and energies in too many directions. These objectives should have school-wide impact.

Schools may develop objectives that are tied to improve student performance in particular subject areas such as mathematics, sciences, or reading. Increasingly, however, Middle States is seeing a trend toward the development of cross-disciplinary objectives such as oral and written communication skills, general academic performance, technology skills, interpersonal capacities, or career planning capabilities. While cross-disciplinary objectives may initially be harder to measure, schools indicate that they focus the school’s attention on critical student outcomes that require the efforts of the entire school community to achieve.

Specifying clear and measurable objectives identifies the school’s commitment to achieve specific end results and thus, is tied directly to accountability. The objectives represent the major focus for school improvement in the school. They should be consistent with the mission/philosophy statement and should extend and define the aim portion of the mission/philosophy in more specific detail. Objectives explicate in measurable terms the key end results that the school seeks to realize from its mission/philosophy.

In addition, the school is asked to develop comprehensive action plans that clearly chart the path to success for those objectives. While Middle States expects that the school will show continuous progress in its achievement of these objectives, and therefore, expects that they will remain constant over the course of the next five years, the nature of planning and growth not only permits, but demands that review and update of action plans happens periodically. For that reason, the objectives are included in this report for future reference, while the action plans are available as part of the school’s self-study and will undoubtedly be revised occasionally during the course of the next five years.

**Objectives**

ACS has a plan that includes 5 objectives, 3 of which are about student performance. The objectives are appropriate for the priorities of the school. There is at least one viable measure in place for each objective in order for the school to demonstrate growth.

**Action Plans**

ACS has developed an action plan that includes 5 objectives.

ACS has included all of the following elements in their action plan:
- A description of the activity.
- The name/title/role of the person(s) or group(s) that will be responsible for this activity.
• The timeline during which the activity will be accomplished. The timeline for implementing the activities of the action plan should be very well defined for the first two years of the plan. Less specificity is expected for years three through five, as it is anticipated that activities and timelines might be changed during the annual review process.

• The resources needed to accomplish the activity in terms of time, materials, funding, etc.

• The indicators the school will use to determine whether the activity has been successfully accomplished.

• Space to record the date on which the activity was completed.

**Objectives**

**ACS has developed an action plan that includes 5 objectives.**

Objective #1: By 2009, students at ACS will demonstrate a 10%** improvement in their English writing skills as evidenced by an external norm-referenced test and internal criterion-referenced assessment that reflects the 6+1 traits.

Objective #2: By 2009, all ACS students will be computer literate as measured by performance assessment to be determined Fall 2004 by the technology committee.

Objective #3: By 2009, all ACS teachers will be using and developing varied assessment tools

Objective #4: By 2009, staff and faculty will receive professional development training based on defined needs which emerge from the school’s strategic plan.

Objective #5: By 2009, the school will have a Board approved Master Plan

**The above objectives require further consideration in order to be more comprehensive:**

Objective #1: ACS needs to highlight and consolidate how other curriculum areas will contribute to this objective.

Objective #3: ACS consider moving their timeline for implementation of student led portfolio conferences.

Objective #4: ACS explain how professional development will be extended to administration and support staff, including business office personnel.

Objective #5: ACS insure that the Master Plan include long-range financial planning with a time horizon of at least 10 years. ACS also needs to determine if the target dates for the Strategic Plan are realistic. The Master Plan should include a communication plan that includes all stakeholders.
ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDATION

As a Visitation Team we are asked to make an accreditation recommendation to the Commission on Secondary Schools at the conclusion of our visit. Our nine person team has unanimously concluded that

1.) The school has sufficiently conducted a comprehensive review of the accreditation standards that describes the current status of the school, reflects on and evaluates what the school does well and where it can improve, and prioritizes these findings for future planning efforts.

2.) The school has demonstrated a coherence of the school operation with the philosophy, mission, beliefs, and objectives of the school.

3.) The school currently meets the Middle States Standards for Accreditation.

4.) The school has identified appropriate objectives for school improvement, established methods to measure progress on those objectives over the next five years, and has developed thoughtful action plans designed to move the school forward toward success in those objectives.

The Visitation Team will be pleased to recommend continued accreditation with following stipulations for American Community School of Beirut.

A written import be submitted to MSA by January 30, 2005 which includes:

1. Security report addresses evacuation procedures and other security concerns as outlined in this report.

2. A Strategic Plan which includes:
   a. Master Building Plan
   c. PD plan for faculty and support staff.
   d. Communication Plan
   e. Staff housing and benefits.
NEXT STEPS

As American Community School of Beirut proceeds with the implementation of its plan, there are a number of “next steps” the school will be expected to take in order to maintain accredited status. These include the following:

- **Conduct Annual Reviews**
  While Middle States does not “collect” evidence of the school’s annual review, American Community School of Beirut is expected to review progress on its objectives and success of its action plans each year. The purpose of the annual update is to revise the plans as needed and to ensure that the school is making appropriate progress towards its objectives. American Community School of Beirut should keep a record of what transpired during each annual review. The meeting agenda, minutes, documented changes to the plans, and summaries of progress made over the past year are examples of evidence to collect. The 5-year reviewer and the next Visitation Team will want to see these examples of growth.

- **Prepare a 5-year Report**
  The Reflections protocol is designed to be a ten-year process where accreditation must be renewed after the first 5-year cycle of improvement planning. In a sense, the annual review conducted by the school takes the place of the traditional progress reports that used to be submitted to MSA. At the conclusion of the first 5-year cycle, however, the Commission on Secondary Schools requires the school to develop a comprehensive 5-year Report detailing progress made on recommendations and improvement plans which is to be submitted to the MSA Office.

- **Prepare for a 5-year Visit**
  To follow-up on the 5-year report, MSA will appoint a review team of 1-2 persons at the midpoint of the ten-year cycle to make an onsite visit to the school. Where possible, the reviewer(s) will be someone from the original Visitation Team since this/these individual(s) should require less explanation of what the school is aiming to do in its planning activities. S/he should be able to readily see the progress that the school has been made.

  Typically, the visit will last one day; the school will be responsible for travel expenses. The visit will not be scheduled until the 5-year report has been submitted to the MSA Office and is available for submission to the reviewer(s).

- **Prepare for Reaccreditation**
  Prior to the conclusion of the 10th year of accreditation, the school will be asked to consider an appropriate accreditation protocol and enter a comprehensive self-study process anew.
CONCLUSION

The MSA Visiting Team began its review of the American Community School at Beirut’s (ACS) Reflection on Standards of Quality self-study on Sunday, April 25th 2004. The nine member team was well prepared for the four day visit and worked collaboratively and cooperatively to ensure that ACS received a well-written report which would help the school move forward in its efforts to become a school of excellence.

The MSA Visiting Team to ACS consisted of a Chair, Team Secretary and eight other professional educators. A list of Team members is shown as an appendix to this report.

The Team wishes to express its gratitude to the Headmaster and the Academic Dean for the organization of the workrooms set up for the Visiting Team and the gracious and generous support they provided each Team member and to the Team as a whole. The Team also wishes to extend its sincere thanks to the members of the self-study committees for their diligent, frank and honest reports. Their cooperation ensured that our visit was successful. Special thanks is extended to the Business Manager who organized the Team members’ travel arrangements. Most importantly, the Team wishes to extend their gratitude and sincere appreciation to the Team secretary who worked tirelessly to ensure that all Team members’ needs and comfort were met and that the report was typed in an effective and coherent manner. In every respect, Team members felt that ACS administration, faculty, staff, and students were “somewhat” prepared for the visiting Team and were open to, and accommodating of, all our suggestions and requests for additional information. ACS began their self-study in May 2003.

There was a general consensus by all Team members that ACS has a warm and inviting atmosphere where the teachers and students appear to enjoy a close and respectful relationship. The rapid growth in the student body is a compliment to the tone, which has been set by the Leadership Team, faculty and staff. In spite of the high turnover at the faculty level, Team members were impressed with the continuity that existed within the different sections of the school. ACS’ positive school climate was well embedded in the vibrant, optimistic student body.

The Headmaster’s desire to establish an ‘institutional loyalty’ was supported by the highly enthusiastic newly hired Development and Alumni Affairs personnel. Their annual fund raising goal of $150,000 is ambitious and they believe achievable. In their first fund raising dinner this year the Development office collected $75,000.

ACS has restored its student population to nearly 1000 and has earned the reputation as the ‘best school in Lebanon’. This reputation is supported by the fact that the school offers three distinct programs in the high school, including the American style high school diploma (accompanied by AP examinations), Lebanese Baccalaureate and the International Baccalaureate. They have maintained their premier place in the community by offering many innovative programs and being recognized as the ‘first’ school to achieve:

1. Accreditation by a US regional accrediting agency
2. IB Diploma authorization
3. Recognition of its Community Service Program for K - 12
4. Recognition of community service hours (minimum 100) as a high school graduation requirement.
5. Host of the Youth Can Education Conference
6. Successful Lebanese government examination results
7. Outstanding IB examination results
8. Significant parent involvement
9. Appreciation for its provision of special needs support
10. Exceptional co-curricular and sports program for the secondary school (grade 6-12)

ACS' humanitarian approach in its Financial Aid program presently benefits 47 families in the community and the Team felt that this was an area that ACS deserved special commendation.

The effort by the Philosophy, Mission, and Beliefs committee to involve all stakeholders in the development of new Mission and Philosophy statements was equally commendable. The new Mission statement more accurately represents the community’s expectations of the school and the school’s commitment to its Lebanese national students, a majority of the school’s student population. In addition, ACS has a strong commitment to its international student body and to its ‘American style education’. However, more and more it associates itself with an international school (the philosophy statement states “ACS is an international school”). The school will need to come to closure on this matter in the future as the present Mission statement continues to be a source of debate and misunderstanding in terms of ACS’ purpose as a school. The committee, recognizing that the Mission would be subject to an individual’s interpretation, developed a comprehensive written interpretation of the Mission statement. The Team felt this was an excellent idea and congratulated the committee on its foresight and initiative.

The Board of Trustees’ (BoT) need to implement a formal evaluation process for the Headmaster is a matter, which will be addressed at the upcoming Board meeting in July. With the majority of ACS board members residing in the United States, this objective is somewhat more complicated. However, the Headmaster assured Team members that this is an issue that the BoT has already made a commitment to address. In spite of the lack of formal board training, the board appears to have a healthy relationship with the Headmaster and understand their governance role. The Board has begun the process for its annual self-evaluation.

Communication between all stakeholders appears to be an ongoing concern at ACS. The new Headmaster has implemented several new practices to better improve communication in the school and in the community. The circulation of all Leadership Team meeting minutes keeps faculty, staff and parents informed of discussions held at the management level and the reasons some decisions are made. The administration’s open door policy invites faculty, staff and parents to meet with the appropriate administrator to discuss any concerns or matters which they feel require administration attention. The introduction of the ‘PROS’ website allows all ACS constituents to communicate information in an open and expedient manner. The introduction of “Mail Mondays” has provided parents with a clear understanding that all school communications will be sent home with their child every Monday. The Headmasters’ ‘Open Forum’ provides a steady flow of information to and from the administration and the school staff. The Team
congratulates ACS administration for its efforts to address this concern, which appears to be common to all schools.

The Business office personnel also deserve accolades for their conscientious efforts to remain abreast of the changing laws in Lebanon. The bureaucracy surrounding Value Added Tax and other government-imposed taxes can be overwhelming. Remaining well informed of the country’s changing laws (which can happen without notice) and their impact on the financial health of the school is due to the Business Manager’s dedication and commitment to ACS. He has successfully networked with his colleagues at American University of Beirut and International College, exchanging information and knowledge as needed.

The administration and faculty have done an exemplary job on the development of a set of standards based on US national and various state standards and tying these standards into the Lebanese milieu while attending to the three programs of study at the high school. One of the administration’s greatest challenges will be to allow time for teachers to communicate and reflect between grade levels and across divisions for successful horizontal and vertical articulation to occur.

The decision to restructure the Arabic program for the 2004 – 2005 academic year has created a great deal of unrest within the Second Languages and Arabic departments. This unrest appears to be the result of a lack of understanding of the administration’s vision and philosophy regarding a combined ASL and Modern Arabic program for all learners.

Visiting Team members strongly recommended to the teachers that all concerns and misunderstandings should be directed to the appropriate administrator (and not allowed to fester in the rumor mill) in order for teachers to feel less threatened (even though next years’ contracts for full-time teachers have already been distributed) and less vulnerable in terms of their effectiveness as practitioners in the Modern Arabic language program (as a result of the restructuring).

It was also strongly recommended that the administration develop clear written explanations regarding the new Arabic structure which are disseminated to all stakeholders (teachers and parents) and that planned school meetings be scheduled, prior to September 2004 and the implementation of the new Arabic program, in order for teachers and parents to support this initiative. While it was understood by the Team members that efforts by the administration to communicate the changes were done earlier in the academic year, it was clear that more work needs to be done by the administration in their communications with faculty to understand the new structure and its implications for their assignments and students’ success. It should also be noted that the administration’s ‘new structure’ is in fact reestablishing the policy set for the Arabic program in 1995.

An important issue facing ACS is the need to further develop more effective assessment strategies, which reflect student achievement. It was felt that the Early Childhood Department excels in this area while the rest of the school is at various levels of implementation in addressing this concern.
The newly hired elementary principal is addressing this matter by delivering workshops to the elementary teachers and coaching them in the delivery and implementation of various assessment techniques, including ‘Understanding by Design’. At the Middle School level, progress is being made on the use of portfolio assessment but there remains a great deal of inconsistency from one department to another. At the high school, the Lebanese Baccalaureate and the IB prescribe the types of assessment required within each of the respective curricula. The school is addressing this important issue as one of its objectives in its ‘Improvement Plan’.

One of the most urgent matters requiring ACS’ attention is in the area of security. Greater emphasis must be placed on the actual execution and follow through of emergency evacuation procedures for all ACS stakeholders. A staff accountability plan must be established and a school culture of ‘urgency’ must begin to take shape if ACS stakeholders are to remain safe in the face of adversity. The ‘laid back’ approach of faculty members to the unannounced fire drill, which occurred at the request of the Visiting Team, was a major concern of Team members. The lackadaisical nature of students and administrators was also a worry. For this reason, and other less urgent concerns, the Visiting Team felt strongly that ACS did not meet the Health and Safety Standard.

The other MSA Standard that the Visiting Team felt ACS did not meet was ‘Planning’. It is imperative that the school develops and adopts a Strategic Plan which encompasses all aspects of school operations. The most important components of the Plan should include but not be limited to:

1. A Master Building Plan which provides for replacing and/or major renovations of aging school buildings.
2. Improved campus security.
3. A long-range ten year financial plan, which provides for an adequate reserve fund.
4. Improved housing for foreign hires.
5. Increased professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.
6. Practices and procedures to improve communication between the administration and all school stakeholders.
7. Increased opportunities for student leadership and responsibility (as stated in the Mission statement).

Jim Collins, in his wonderful book entitled ‘Good to Great’ writes: “What work makes you feel compelled to try to create greatness? If you have to ask the question, ‘Why should we try to make it great? Isn’t success enough?’ Then you’re probably engaged in the wrong line of work.”

Perhaps for some of you to be part of building something great is not important since you already recognize the success ACS enjoys in the Lebanese and international community. However, it is clear that the new direction of this school reflects the passion by many ACS personnel to make this school the greatest it can possibly be for the students it serves. They care deeply enough about the work in which they are engaged to make a significant difference to this already wonderful institution. Moving ACS from good to great will take more planning, more transparent communication on critical issues between and among all stakeholders, and the creation of an organizational culture supportive of change.
It is of paramount importance that ACS continually asks the question “Why do we do what we do the way we are doing it”? This will help ACS move closer to the humanist and constructivist approach, which has served to build its new Mission and philosophy. The Visiting Team’s commendations and recommendations are not an end to ACS’ accreditation process but a beginning. It is crucial that thought be given by all ACS stakeholders to the issue of how will you do what you say you are going to do.

The ACS Improvement Plan is an excellent base for the development of a new Strategic Plan. Thought must be given to the development of action plans and the process by which these actions plan will be implemented. Objectives must be reviewed regularly and revised and/or replaced as progress is made and new areas of need arise. This Plan will need vision, a sense of purpose, enthusiasm, commitment, patience and resilience to succeed at this stage in the accreditation process. However, with each success momentum will follow and ACS will be well on its way to becoming a great school.

Lebanon is a wonderful example of the resilience and patience needed to build something great. Last night, downtown Beirut reminded us what can be accomplished when people have the vision and the will to develop greatness. Tom Sergiovanni, a successful writer and renowned educator, tells a story about a traveler who comes upon three stonecutters. He asks the first stonecutter ‘what are you doing” and the stonecutter who was only mildly attentive and rather annoyed by the traveler’s question simply answers, “why I’m cutting stone of course.”

The traveler found a second stonecutter who appeared a bit more attentive to his task and so the traveler asked him the same question at which the man responded with a little more enthusiasm than the last stonecutter, “I’m fashioning a cornerstone that would be the focal point of the building being constructed.”

The traveler, still not satisfied, found a third stonecutter who appeared animated and passionate about what he was doing and asked him the question yet one more time to which the stonecutter replied with enthusiasm, vision and a sense of purpose, ‘why sir I’m building a cathedral’.

If ACS attends to this report’s recommendations and continues its efforts to develop action plans for sections identified in its self-study as ‘significant areas for improvement’ it will build a great school which will rival any great institution in Lebanon but instead of using bricks and mortar it will use passion and action that will extend the reputation of excellence ACS already enjoys in the Lebanese community.

The MSA Visiting Team wishes ACS every success in achieving their goals. Thank you for allowing us to play a very small part in your journey to greatness.
MISSION STATEMENT

The American Community School at Beirut provides an American-style education for Lebanese and international families, and fosters a lively and stimulating atmosphere of learning in its community. ACS seeks to educate the whole person and to lay the foundations for life-long learning. The faculty sets standards of excellence and integrity in academic and co-curricular areas including the Lebanese, American and International Baccalaureate Programs, and prepares students to meet the rigors of university education. Students are challenged to reach their full potential.

ACS seeks to nurture the qualities of respect for self and for others and to cultivate the desire to serve the community. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their thoughts, words and actions, to act with honor and purpose, and to make a difference in our complex global society.

1. An “American style education” means that the learning process is as important as the content. Emphasis is placed on active and interactive learning. Students are treated as individuals and are encouraged to express their opinions freely and responsibly. Co-curricular and extra curricular activities are an integral part of the program. Parents are expected to be active participants in the process of their children’s education.

2. A “lively and stimulating atmosphere of learning…” can be described as engaging in critical thinking, responding to learning through Socratic methodology, problem solving, working cooperatively in groups, interacting with the community, appreciating diversity, using up-to-date technology, and learning through service.

“… in its community” is defined as faculty, staff, parents as well as students, the immediate community, other schools and institutions.

3. “To educate the whole person” means instilling confidence and adaptability in students to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. It means helping students learn to maintain emotional balance through supportive social relations, reflection, and introspection; to build on varied experiences, both achievements and errors; and to approach unfamiliar situations without anxiety. It also means that students are encouraged to engage in regular physical recreation, to maintain physical and mental fitness, demonstrate good hygiene, maintain a healthy diet, and avoid harmful substances.

4. The “foundations for life long learning” include being self-motivated and self-directed, demonstrating a passion for knowledge, working independently when appropriate, pursuing personal interests, seeing all experiences in life as potential learning experiences, developing a natural curiosity, and maintaining a sense of wonder and love of learning.

5. “Standards of excellence” means faculty set and model high expectations with the understanding that attainment of excellence is an internal process and not driven only by external rewards.
6. The “standards of integrity in academic and co-curricular areas” refer to being honest and setting high standards. It is also having a sound philosophical basis for decision making, taking responsibility for one’s own learning, and following principles of moral reasoning in the academic and co-curricular areas.

7. “Challenged to reach their full potential” means expecting commitment, perseverance, consistency, and self-motivation. This requires the ability to examine one’s learning and analyze personal strengths and weaknesses in a thoughtful, constructive manner.

8. The “qualities of respect for self and for others” include understanding and being comfortable with one’s culture, values and traditions, and feeling confident about one’s abilities. These qualities also include seeking, considering, and respecting a range of points of view, listening to and valuing what others say, as well as being fair and non-judgmental in response to others. Celebrating and appreciating cultural differences are the ultimate goals.

9. A “desire to serve the community” can be described as sensitive to the needs of the community, involved in community service, taking initiative, responsibility and commitment to action.

10. “Responsibility for thoughts, words and actions” means being a decision-maker, keeping one’s word, being accountable for words and actions, and having the ability to follow through.

11. To “act with honor and purpose”, one should demonstrate integrity, trustworthiness, fairness as well as equity in dealing with others, set goals, and stay focused.

12. “To make a difference in our complex global society” means to act locally and think globally. This includes respecting the environment and ecosystem as the legacy of the future, taking positive individual and community action, and becoming an aware, knowledgeable, and pro-active consumer.

**Philosophy Statement**

The Mission Statement clarifies the purpose of the school and underlines its philosophy, which is child-centered and humanist in approach.

**ACS is an international school.** Its philosophy regarding Student Development can be divided into three key areas:

The first deals with cognitive growth, beginning in the early school years, with concrete hands-on activities. As the child matures, symbolic, abstract concepts are incorporated, including situational problem solving. Meaning is implemented into the curricula by emphasizing the
process of learning. Intellectual development occurs naturally in an environment that stimulates curiosity, with a sensitivity to and awareness of each student’s uniqueness.

Secondly, ACS advocates personal and social growth in its population. The child develops through self-expression, self-acceptance, and self-actualization, all of which are integral to leading a meaningful life. Encouraged to make their own decisions, students glean a sense of independence. Students are given the freedom to explore yet they are required to remain responsible for their behavior. They learn to recognize and accept personal duty and responsibility. ACS students develop social responsibility; individuals become active members in the larger community, sharing with and learning from people in an international context. The school implements programs that advocate citizenship, tolerance and respect.

The third area in student development is in promoting physical well-being. Growth occurs naturally through play and interaction with others that is reinforced in structured, formal conditions in Physical and Health education classes. Students learn to maintain and respect their bodies. Their progress is monitored: adaptive exercise or remedial care is undertaken when necessary.
# IMPROVEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES

**Action Plans**

**Goal One:** By 2009, students at ACS will demonstrate a 10% ** improvement in their English writing skills as evidenced by an external norm-referenced test and internal criterion-referenced assessment that reflects the 6+1 traits.

The actions taken to achieve the goal will be archived annually

* Indicates a tie to professional development goal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Activity/Action Item Strategy</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
<th>Indicators of Completion/Success</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘04</td>
<td>Identify an external norm-referenced test and the categories for data collection</td>
<td>Academic Team and School Psychologist</td>
<td>Samples, Budget</td>
<td>Statement to the staff highlighting the test that will be given with a description of its benefits</td>
<td>June ‘04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘04</td>
<td>Develop internal writing prompts for N-12 and establish a committee for application</td>
<td>English Department</td>
<td>Resources from which to pull</td>
<td>A schedule of prompts and announcement of committee</td>
<td>June ‘04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘04</td>
<td>Identify internally standardized rubrics, for each grade level, that will assess the internal writing prompt</td>
<td>English Department and Academic Team</td>
<td>ASCD Content Knowledge and The Writing Continuum</td>
<td>Rubrics</td>
<td>Sept ‘04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘04</td>
<td>Focus school culture around good writing</td>
<td>ACS Community Publications, daily bulletin, etc</td>
<td>Professional accountability, Volunteer editors</td>
<td>All published documents meeting a standard</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘04</td>
<td>Identify, by grade level, common literacy standards that include all subject areas</td>
<td>Academic Team</td>
<td>Completed grade level subject standards</td>
<td>Grade level literacy standards on which to base subject area writing rubrics</td>
<td>June ‘04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘04</td>
<td>Review ESL Program – develop a task force</td>
<td>MS Principal</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Report on the ESL community of the school</td>
<td>October ‘04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
<td>Give external norm referenced test **</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Time in schedule;</td>
<td>Student baseline</td>
<td>Winter ‘04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
<td>*Have students write to a prompt and practice evaluating it with the rubric</td>
<td>English Department and Academic Team</td>
<td>Time, training</td>
<td>Sample writing to train teachers, sample writing to celebrate student writing</td>
<td>Winter ‘05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
<td>Generate a list of all reading &amp; writing programs that the school offers. Establish a timeline to adequately evaluate, align, and improve</td>
<td>Academic Team</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Timeline for evaluation and alignment</td>
<td>Spring ‘04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
<td>Begin a year-long review and study of current practices regarding SSR – strengths, weaknesses, recommendations, etc</td>
<td>Principals and teachers</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Aligned SSR program N-12</td>
<td>Sept ‘05 Implemented, continually under review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
<td>Collect samples of models of good writing (across disciplines). Use as both a chance to celebrate student writing and as teaching tool</td>
<td>Academic Team and Teachers, Led by English Chair</td>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>Climate that celebrates and displays student work, a data base of student work for student and teacher reference</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter ’04 – ‘05</td>
<td>*Identify proactive intervention measures regarding writing for all levels</td>
<td>Academic Team and sub committee</td>
<td>Educational Resources</td>
<td>Plan of intervention to raise all students to the standard</td>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter ’04</td>
<td>*Identify staff understanding of 6+1 and rubrics</td>
<td>Academic Team</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>More focused professional development</td>
<td>Before break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
<td>*Presentation of 4 Blocks language arts program (N-5)</td>
<td>Elementary and Early Years Principals</td>
<td>Scheduled Workshops</td>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
<td>Continue to collect samples of student writing – expand to all disciplines</td>
<td>Principals and teachers</td>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>Climate that celebrates and displays student work, a data base of student work</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>Status Description</td>
<td>Timeline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
<td>Identify good classroom practices in relation to writing methodologies (reflection)</td>
<td>Academic Team</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Professional development plan regarding good classroom practices in relation to writing methodologies</td>
<td>June ‘05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June ‘05</td>
<td>Reflect on year, adapt plan as necessary, revisit goal #1 first day back of Fall ‘04 to get everyone on board and outline plan for the year</td>
<td>Academic Team</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Everyone is on board and moving towards the same goal</td>
<td>September ‘05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘05</td>
<td>Administer internal prompt, Full faculty evaluation using 6+1</td>
<td>English Chair and Principals</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>More data</td>
<td>Winter ‘05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘05</td>
<td>*Implement 6+1 across all grade levels and disciplines to evaluate writing prompts and to assess student work</td>
<td>Academic Team</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Everyone is using 6+1</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘05</td>
<td>*Implement good writing practices from Spring discussions</td>
<td>Academic Team</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Better quality writing</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘05</td>
<td>Implement phase one of the intervention plan (immediate)</td>
<td>Principals and Teachers</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Improved student progress</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘06</td>
<td>Administer external</td>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>Time and budget</td>
<td>More data</td>
<td>June ‘06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June ‘06</td>
<td>Reflect on year, adapt plan as necessary, revisit goal #1 first day back to get everyone on board and outline plan for the year</td>
<td>Academic Team</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Everyone is on board and moving towards the same goal</td>
<td>September ‘06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘06</td>
<td>Implement phase 2 of the intervention plan (staffing, facilities, etc)</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Improved student progress</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘06</td>
<td>Internal writing prompt (2x year) Evaluated by all staff</td>
<td>Principals and English Chair</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>More Data</td>
<td>Winter ‘06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Goal Two: By 2009, all ACS students will be computer literate as measured by performance assessment to be determined Fall 2004 by the technology committee.**

The actions taken to achieve the goal will be archived annually

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Activity/Action Item Strategy</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
<th>Indicators of Success</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
<td>Identify skills needed to pass a performance assessment at the grade 5, 8 and 12 benchmark level</td>
<td>Technology department Admin</td>
<td>3rd party standards and documentation ACS documents MS Team leaders ES Homeroom teachers Time</td>
<td>List of skills and performance assessment</td>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
<td>Develop performance assessment based upon 3rd party resources and those currently kept with ACS (Grade 5, 8, 12)</td>
<td>Technology department Admin</td>
<td>3rd party documentation ACS documents Time</td>
<td>Finished document of assessment for the grade 5, 8 and 12 benchmark</td>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘05</td>
<td>Develop implementation plan for the 5th, 8th and 12th grade performance assessment document</td>
<td>Technology department Admin</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Completed document outlining procedures of implementation for the grade 5, 8, 12 level of assessment</td>
<td>Fall ‘05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘06</td>
<td>Implement performance assessment in reference to the agreed procedure (Grade 5, 8, 12)</td>
<td>Technology department and techmentors Admin</td>
<td>Completed procedural document Time</td>
<td>All grade 5, 8, and 12 students are assessed</td>
<td>Spring ‘06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘06</td>
<td>Post-assessment, compilation and analysis Technology education plan is developed (Grade 5, 8, 12)</td>
<td>Technology department Admin</td>
<td>Time and the completed assessments</td>
<td>Short report on the viability, validity, and measured results of assessment Tech plan adopted</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘06</td>
<td>Technology education plan is embedded in the curriculum</td>
<td>Technology department Admin Techmentors</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Built in the curriculum review</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Goal Three: By 2009, all ACS teachers will be using and developing varied assessment tools

The actions taken to achieve the goal will be archived annually

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Activity/Action Item Strategy</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
<th>Indicators of Success</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘04</td>
<td>Standards review/Development</td>
<td>All teachers principals</td>
<td>Time Early release in June</td>
<td>Adjusted standards per subject</td>
<td>July ‘04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
<td>Establish an assessment committee (subcommittee of the academic team)</td>
<td>Admin teachers</td>
<td>Meeting times once monthly</td>
<td>Committee formed Committee reports</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
<td>Study and review grades based on standards/consistency in grading</td>
<td>Teachers Department heads</td>
<td>Time – afternoon meetings</td>
<td>Revised grading policy 2nd reporting March 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
<td>Review of progress reports based on standards (N-5)</td>
<td>Teachers Principals</td>
<td>Time – afternoon meetings</td>
<td>Revised progress reports March 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
<td>Study and review grades based on standards/consistency in grading</td>
<td>Teachers Department heads</td>
<td>Time – afternoon meetings</td>
<td>Revised grading policy 2nd reporting March 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>respectful for grade 6-12</td>
<td>Curriculum director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
<td>Review of progress reports based on standards (6-12)</td>
<td>Teachers Principals</td>
<td>Time – afternoon meetings</td>
<td>Revised progress reports</td>
<td>Fall 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
<td>Develop general rubrics</td>
<td>Department heads</td>
<td>Biweekly meeting</td>
<td>Rubrics</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June - September ‘05</td>
<td>Establishment of an assessment bank</td>
<td>IT Teachers</td>
<td>Information from teachers on assessment</td>
<td>Database</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘05</td>
<td>Implement rubrics</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Database of rubrics</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘07</td>
<td>Implementation of student led portfolio conferences</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Study materials and training</td>
<td>Evidence in classroom</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ‘07</td>
<td>Implement portfolios and other alternative assessment</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Study materials</td>
<td>Evidence in curriculum documents and portfolios</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goal Four: By 2009, staff and faculty will receive professional development training based on defined needs which emerge from the school’s strategic plan.

The actions taken to achieve the goal will be archived annually

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Activity/Action Item Strategy</th>
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<th>Resources Needed</th>
<th>Indicators of Success</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Spring ‘04 | Review staff development policy to focus on school defined needs and goals | Admin | • Afternoon meetings  
• Strategic plan and related documents | Budget Completion of staff development policy | Ongoing Yearly reviewed |
| Spring ‘04 | Training in Understanding by Design (1-5) | Admin | • Training materials  
• Time - afternoons | • Evidence in classroom  
• Teaching strategies | Ongoing |
| Spring ‘04 | Initiation of focused study groups | Teachers Admin | • Materials  
• Once a month | Evidence in classrooms Improved team work | Ongoing |
| June ‘04 | Initiation of community reading | Admin | Books | Follow up study group | Ongoing |
| June ‘04 | Character education training Lickona Institute | Admin  
• Character education committee  
• Mrs. Branch | Funding | Character education action plan | July ‘04 |
| Fall ‘04 | Training in rubrics (using it as an assessment tool) and students self-assessment | Academic Team | • Time – afternoon  
• Trainer  
• Funds | Use of a variety of rubrics and assessment in the classroom | Spring ‘05 |
| Fall ‘04 | Training in Understanding by Design (N-12) | Admin | • Training materials  
• Time – afternoons | Evidence in classroom and curriculum | Fall ‘05 |
| Fall ‘04 | Training in the use of 6+1 Traits | Academic team | Time 6+1 Traits material | Evidence in classroom – Students’ work | Spring ‘05 |
| Fall ‘04 | Implementation of character education plan | Character education committee Principals | Character education committee  
Principals | Improved academic and social learning of students | Ongoing |
<p>| Fall ‘05 | Training in writing portfolios | Academic Team | Materials | Use of writing | Spring |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Responsibility of</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
<th>Indicators of Success</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time – Full day portfolios in all classrooms ‘06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evidence in classroom Feedback from faculty</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘05 Training in use of a variety of strategies to develop student writing</td>
<td>Academic Team</td>
<td>Resources to build teacher knowledge and skill</td>
<td>Evidence in classroom Feedback from faculty</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘05 Training new staff in the elements of the school’s improvement plan</td>
<td>Academic Team</td>
<td>Time – once a month meeting</td>
<td>Evidence in classroom Feedback from faculty</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘06 Training in use of general portfolios</td>
<td>Academic Team</td>
<td>Time – Full day Portfolios in use</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Spring ‘07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘06 Implementation of use of portfolios</td>
<td>Teachers Principals</td>
<td>Portfolios in use</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘06 Train faculty on education technology plan</td>
<td>Technology department Techmentors</td>
<td>Evidence in classroom Feedback from faculty</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ‘07 Training in other alternative assessments</td>
<td>Academic Team</td>
<td>Time – 2 full days Evidence in curriculum documents and classrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spring ‘08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goal Five: By 2009, the school will have a Board approved Master Plan**

Phase One: Confirmation of the Mission of the School – completed in Spring 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Responsibility of</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
<th>Indicators of Success</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2004 -</td>
<td>Updated Definition of Land Issues Pending</td>
<td>School Administration and Lebanese Board Members</td>
<td>Lawyer Deeds to the Land Letters of Agreement</td>
<td>Publication of Issues Pending and Plan for Resolving the Stated Problems</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2004 -</td>
<td>Establishment of School Planning Committee</td>
<td>School Community and Board</td>
<td>Announcements of the Committee Members</td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer ’04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Period</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Responsible Parties</td>
<td>Task Details</td>
<td>Planning Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2004</td>
<td>Collection and analysis of existing building feasibility studies as to their ability to meet the future needs of the program and vision</td>
<td>School Administration</td>
<td>All previous studies Statement of direction as to which old buildings will be used and which replaced</td>
<td>Summer ‘04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2004</td>
<td>Selection of Architectural Firm</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td>Contract</td>
<td>Spring ‘04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2004 -</td>
<td>Establishment of Board Planning Committee</td>
<td>School Community and Board</td>
<td>Board Members Announcement of the Committee Members</td>
<td>Summer ‘04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2004</td>
<td>Architect’s Focus Group Discussions – Pre-Planning &amp; Data Collection Phase</td>
<td>Architect and School Community</td>
<td>Campus Survey Study Space Utilization Plans Survey Materials Confirmed or revised statements about priorities and preferences</td>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2004</td>
<td>Program Analysis</td>
<td>Architect and Planning Committee</td>
<td>All Data Collected Master Plan Program of Requirements</td>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2004</td>
<td>Space Planning, Building and Site Utilization Study</td>
<td>Architect and School Community</td>
<td>Options for Master Plan</td>
<td>Fall ‘04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2004 -</td>
<td>Creating a New 5 yr. Strategic Plan Identifying the goals for a master plan</td>
<td>School Community and Board</td>
<td>Accreditation Reports, Old Strategic Plan Board Approved Strategic Plan</td>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2005</td>
<td>Master Plan Report</td>
<td>School Administration &amp; Board</td>
<td>Site plans presented to the Board</td>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2005</td>
<td>Fund Raising Plan</td>
<td>D&amp;A office School Administration &amp; Board</td>
<td>Presentation of a 5-10 yr. Fund raising plan to address the needs of the Master Plan</td>
<td>Spring ‘05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VISITATION TEAM ROSTER

CHAIRPERSON
Mrs. Mona Nashman-Smith / Superintendent
American British Academy
Muscat, Oman

CREATIVE SUBJECTS/ARTS
Mrs. Diane Al-Tukhaim / Art Specialist K-5
American School of Kuwait
Kuwait

FINANCE/FACULTIES OPERATIONS
Mr. Richard Katherman / Business Manager
Saint John’s International School
Waterloo, Belgium

STUDENT SERVICES/ GUIDANCE/ADMINISTRATION
Mr. Greg L. Von Spreecken / Middle School Principal
American School of Dubai
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

EARLY CHILDHOOD/ ADMINISTRATION/FRENCH
Mrs. Anissa Feghaly / Deputy Principal &
Head of French Section
Jeddah International School
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

COMPUTERS/IT
Mr. Rob Prescott / IT Teacher – Technology Coordinator
American British Academy
Muscat, Oman

MATH/MIDDLE SCHOOL
Mrs. Linda Sue Protopsaltis / Mathematic Teacher-
Middle School
American Community School of Athens
Athens, Greece

ELEMENTARY/MATH/
Mr. Peter Zeitoun / Director and Elementary Principal
International Program School
Dharan, Saudi Arabia

ELEMENTARY
Ms. Marie Suzanne Rita Neilson / Principal –
Director of the student
New International School
Toshima-Ku, Tokyo