



ACE LEARNING
GUIDE and ECOSYSTEM 2.0



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
Commission on International Education

© NEASC 2024

Contents

Introduction	4
What is ACE Learning?	5
NEASC Accreditation Cycle	7
The Journey to Accreditation	8
NEASC Foundation Standards	9
ACE Preparatory Phase	10
Purpose	10
Process	10
The Report	11
Evidence	11
Foundation Standards Evidence	11
Evidence of Alignment to the ACE Principles	11
Visit Logistics	13
Schedule Elements	13
Staff Briefing	14
Internal Reflection Workshop (3-4 hours)	14
Internal Reflection	15
Purpose	15
Preparation	15
Process	16
The Role of the School's Accreditation Coordinator(s)	19
Instructions for the School's Internal Reflection Teams	20
External Review Visit	21
Purpose	21
Process	21
Arrivals and Departures	21
Visit Elements	22
Shadow a Student	22
The Lead Visitor and the Mentor	23
Decision on Accreditation Status	24
Synchronized Visits with Other Agencies	24
ACE Transformational Continuum	27
ACE Transformational Continuum Ratings	28
The 4 Cs	29

A Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning	32
ACE Learning Principles Structure	35
The Ten ACE Learning Principles	36
Learning Principle 1: Learning Purposes	37
Learning Principle 2: Dimensions of Learning	39
Learning Principle 3: Evidence of Learning	41
Learning Principle 4: Learning Perspectives	43
Learning Principle 5: Learner Engagement and Autonomy	45
Learning Principle 6: Research, Reflection, and Action	47
Learning Principle 7: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Belonging	49
Learning Principle 8: Governance and Leadership for Learning	51
Learning Principle 9: Learning Space and Time	53
Learning Principle 10: Learning Community Wellbeing	55
NEASC Acronyms	57
Key Terms	58
NEASC Mission Statement	63
Commission on International Education Statement	63
Resources	63
Contact us	63

ACE Learning Guide

Introduction

This guide offers essential details for both schools and Visitors engaged with the ACE Learning protocol, including schools following the Collaborative Learning Protocol (CLP) which blends elements of ACE Learning and IB standards and practices and programme review.*

The first half of this guide offers mostly practical information for schools and Visitors engaged with the ACE protocol while the second half, the “ACE Ecosystem 2.0”, provides an in-depth look at the ACE Learning model, including explanations of the 4 Cs, the ten Learning Principles, a glossary and more.

The NEASC Commission on International Education offers several Pathways to Accreditation: ACE Learning (the focus of this guide); the Standard Pathway; the ACE-aligned CLP approach with the IB; and a joint process with the Council of International Schools. All Pathways require that schools demonstrate alignment with Foundation Standards; please consult our separate [Foundation Standards Guide \(Doc 103\)](#) for details. For more information on our Pathways, see our [Overview of Pathways \(Doc 98\)](#).

Please note that this ACE Ecosystem and Guide guide effectively combines multiple (now outdated) guides in use since the launch of ACE 1.0 in 2016. The complete ACE Ecosystem is found in the second half of this guide rather than as a freestanding document.

Launched in 2016, ACE Learning gives schools the opportunity to earn NEASC Accreditation while focusing heavily on effective learning and teaching in the modern world. Schools address the Foundation Standards early in the process so that the ACE Internal Reflection process can focus primarily on creating a highly effective learning-focused community based on Learning Impacts. NEASC’s ten ACE Learning Principles give schools a framework for deep conversations about effective learning.

*Schools following the CLP Pathway should consult the [specific manual](#) and template for CLP schools. However, at the preparatory phase, CLP schools and Visitors will find this current guide (Doc 252) helpful and relevant given that the CLP Preparatory Phase is nearly identical to the ACE Preparatory Phase and uses the same Prep Report template (Doc 250). CLP schools also issue the same NEASC Learning Community Survey to their community as ACE schools. The workshop during the CLP Prep Visit prepares the community for the CLP Learning Community Reflection process rather than the ACE Internal Reflection process. After the Prep Phase, the CLP Learning Community Reflection template provided by NEASC and completed by the school and eventual CLP Peer Evaluation Team Visitors is also unique to the CLP and is not the same as the ACE Internal Reflection template.

What is ACE Learning?

ACE Learning offers a fundamentally different approach to school accreditation compared to prior accreditation protocols. ACE Learning offers a framework for schools to reflect deeply on their 1) foundational structures and processes, and 2) their effectiveness as a learning community.

ACE Learning entails several phases culminating in the External Review Visit (ERV) by a team of trained peer educators that typically leads to accreditation for candidate schools or re-accreditation for member schools. Schools undergo a re-accreditation process every five years.

- Foundation Standards Report and Visit
- ACE Learning Principles Preparatory Report and Visit
- Internal Reflection and Report
- External Review Visit and Report

Being accredited on the ACE Learning Pathway:

- strengthens both the school's Foundations and their approach to transformational learning
- focuses on the Impact of actions on student learning
- asks schools to work toward a "Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning" using the ACE Learning Principles as a catalyst
- utilizes a transformational continuum to help schools think about effective change processes in their school
- helps schools identify drivers of change and barriers to change utilizing the 4 Cs (Conceptual Understanding, Commitment, Capacity, Competence)

ACE Learning invites schools to reflect internally and with the assistance of accreditation Visitors on what actually impacts learning. This is easier said than done since we are all accustomed to listing the things we do versus measuring the impact of what we do.

At NEASC, we define **Impact** as a long-term transformational change we wish to see in learners over time. Some schools define impact through their Vision of the Graduate statements, IB Approaches to Learning (ATLs), and Learner Profile or their Transdisciplinary Transfer Goals (TTGs). NEASC encourages schools to look for ways to measure these aspirational statements and design programs and structures to do so.

NEASC also uses Impact statements to help schools measure the result of their efforts through the accreditation process. NEASC Visitors and the schools themselves look for evidence of the impact statements for each of the ten Learning Principles.

Schools have often gauged their success as **outputs** such as standardized test scores, university admissions, summative assessments, or similar forms of traditional academic achievement. We encourage schools to expand their understanding of success to include impacts that describe the school's highest aspirations for its learners — learners who are prepared to tackle 21st-century challenges.

Example: Learning Principle 4.1

Learners demonstrate insights gained through mistakes.

Notice that impacts typically start with the subject “Learners.”

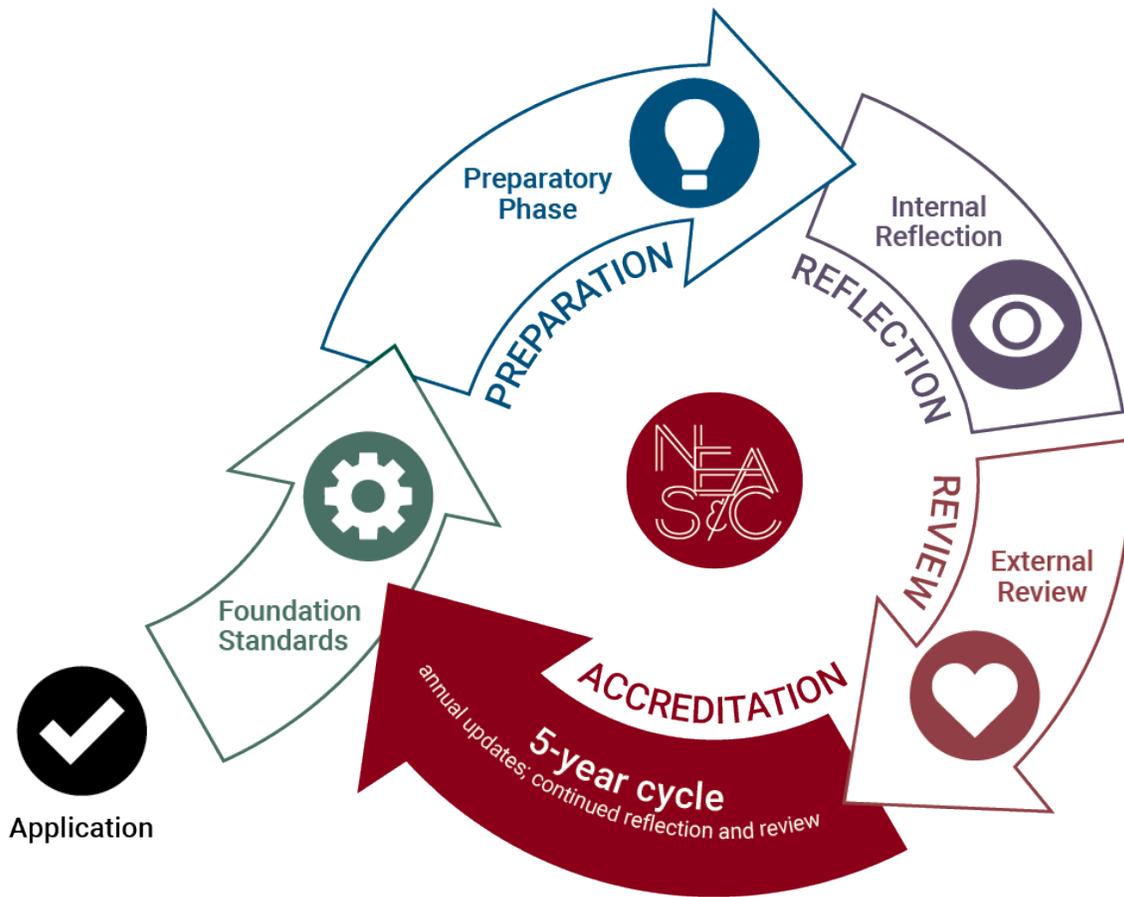
The term **inputs** describes the resources that schools use to impact student learning such as specific pedagogies, programs, curriculums, policies, resources, or learning spaces. These inputs do not necessarily guarantee impact. That is why we encourage schools to stay focused on their chosen Impacts to gauge whether the inputs are having the intended result. Impacts are developed by focusing on the role of the student and the role of the teacher in the learning process, and the type of learning tasks that students engage in. School’s Major Learning Plans should be grounded in the Impacts the learning community desires to see.

Example of Input: *The school has a revised assessment policy that allows for students to redo assessments to attain mastery.*

Note that inputs typically start with “The school” or “The learning community.”

NEASC Accreditation Cycle

ACE Learning is as much a developmental process as an evaluative one. NEASC meets schools where they are in their process of building greater effectiveness as impactful learning communities for all learners. Having demonstrated compliance with Foundation Standards, schools move on to imagine new ways of supporting deep learning, using the ACE Learning Principles as both guide and provocation. While exploring each of the Learning Principles, schools are asked to indicate where they are on the dynamic ACE Learning transformational continuum as they help shape impactful learning inside and outside the classroom.



4 Cs

Another key element in each school's reflection is how the 4 Cs support or hinder the realization of a learning community's vision:

- Conceptual Understanding
- Commitment
- Capacity
- Competence

The Journey to Accreditation

Application

School completes application with required documentation.

Foundation Standards

School submits a Foundation Standards Report and then hosts 1-2 Foundation Standards Visitors (2-3 days).

ELIGIBILITY awarded after successful Foundation Standards Visit.

Pathway agreed between school and NEASC.

Preparatory Phase

Schools submit Preparatory (“Prep”) Report and hosts a Prep Visit that leads into a year-long Reflection period. Schools up for “re-accreditation” also complete the abbreviated Foundation Standards report for this visit.

CANDIDACY awarded for new NEASC schools.

Internal Reflection

School conducts a 12+ month Internal Reflection following guidance offered in the Preparatory Phase, beginning with a Learning Community Survey to gather input from stakeholders.

External Review

Schools host a visiting team for 5+ days to review school’s Reflection and to prepare a detailed report with recommendations and guidance. Team reports are reviewed by relevant agencies and then sent to the school, with outcome decisions and next steps.

ACCREDITATION awarded.

Accreditation

School enters ongoing 5-year accreditation cycle.

All schools who have been granted NEASC candidacy or accreditation will submit an Annual Update to NEASC to report on Foundation Standards, Major Learning Plans, and other relevant data.



NEASC Foundation Standards

The **Foundation Standards** are the compliance-oriented guidelines that indicate essential, transactional relationships, structures, policies, and systems without which a safe, effective, and sustainable learning community cannot exist. All NEASC schools must evidence strong foundations at the start of their accreditation journey and provide Annual Updates. A thorough review, supported by documentation and a Visit, is conducted every four to five years. The Foundation Standards template contains indicators to rate alignment with each of the six Foundation Standards.

Learning Structure

The school has in place clear statements that express a shared understanding of learning and objectives that shape and drive its programs and practices. A curriculum articulating learning outcomes, expected teaching practices, and principles of assessment exist.

Organizational Structure

The school has in place a clear governance and leadership structure with defined roles and responsibilities, and a faculty and staff qualified for the roles to which they are assigned. Expectations defined in policy are carried out and observed in practice. Mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness and functionality of the school's organizational structures have been developed.

Health, Safety, and Security

The learning environment is healthy, safe, and secure for all members of the school community. Effective and well-established policies and procedures exist and are acted upon to protect children, adults, and visitors alike.

Finance, Facilities, and Resources

The school has in place policies, practices, and procedures that ensure financial health and economic sustainability. The principles governing financial management are designed to provide the resources (in personnel, equipment, and facilities) required to support the school's learning program and objectives. The school facilities are fit for purpose.

Ethical Practice

The school has well-established, transparent policies and practices in place to ensure that employees, learners, and parents are treated fairly, equitably, and ethically.

Boarding/Residential

The boarding/residential program, if offered, effectively supports the wellbeing, and enhances the learning experiences of all boarding students and staff.

ACE Preparatory Phase

For schools who are seeking re-accreditation or those deemed eligible to pursue the ACE Pathway during their first accreditation cycle, the ACE Preparatory Phase is the likely next step in the journey, when the focus in the report and subsequent visit shifts from the compliance-focused Foundation Standards to the developmentally focused core of ACE: The ten Learning Principles. As this shift occurs, the language of accreditation mirrors the shift by emphasizing a developmental and transformational process with learning at the center.

Purpose

The ACE Preparatory Visit — sometimes called the Learning Principles Visit or LPV — typically features 2-3 Visitors who will spend several days with the learning community engaging in a series of structured conversations, observations, and learning activities with all constituencies while completing the Visitors section of the school’s Preparatory Report. The Preparatory Visit for schools seeking re-accreditation will include an extra day in the visit schedule to incorporate a review of the Foundation Standards for which the school also prepares an abbreviated Foundation Standards Report.

The purpose of the ACE Preparatory Visit is:

- To check on the Foundation Standards and verify that any identified deficiencies have been remedied/addressed
- To observe learning and provide initial feedback on evidence of alignment to the ACE Learning Principles
- To assess the learning community’s conceptual understanding of and commitment to the ACE Learning ecosystem as well as the community’s capacity and competence for implementing change
- To introduce the Internal Reflection process and discuss a timeline for submitting the Internal Reflection Report and hosting the External Review Team
- To introduce tools and strategies to support the school during their Internal Reflection process.

Process

In keeping with the NEASC philosophy that “one size does not fit all,” there are several varieties of visits at the preparatory phase, such as whether the school is seeking accreditation for the first time and has recently successfully completed a Foundation Standards Visit or if the school is seeking re-accreditation. The size of the school community may affect the number of days, number of Visitors and type of report(s) that the school will submit. Furthermore, though most visits will be face-to-face, conditions may warrant a virtual visit, adding some additional complexity.

Schools and visitors can find additional information via links in the Universal Checklists. Some key resources include:

- [Accreditation Visit Schedule Components for ACE Standard and CLP Pathways \(Doc 09\)](#)
- [Visit Logistics](#) (flights, hotels, workrooms and other logistics of the visit)

The Report

The ACE Preparatory “Prep” Report (doc 250) – sometimes called the Learning Principles Report — is a fillable Word document to be completed first by the school and then by the NEASC Visitors. Our office staff will notify each school and Visitor which documents must be completed and by when. Schools who are seeking re-accreditation will also complete an abbreviated version of the Foundation Standards Report template. The ACE Prep Report template is primarily intended to 1) familiarize the Visitors with your school’s approach to learning so they can ask good questions on the visit, and 2) support and accelerate the school’s understanding and engagement with the ACE Learning Principles. As schools may use AI ethically and effectively to support brainstorming or editing of the school’s report, it should be appropriately referenced in the report.

Evidence

The Prep Report can be completed by a small group of leaders rather than the entire staff. It should not take more than 4-6 weeks to prepare the Report and to gather the relatively limited amount of evidence and documentation expected. The Prep Visit will be the kick-off to the schoolwide Internal Reflection process. The NEASC Visitors may request additional evidence on-site, in addition to the evidence submitted prior to the visit.

Foundation Standards Evidence

At this Phase, new schools who recently hosted a Foundation Standards Visit should provide new or updated evidence and commentary addressing any remaining recommendations from the Foundation Standards Report that the school received. For schools seeking re-accreditation, the Foundation Standards evidence should be presented along with the Abbreviated Foundation Standards Report, completed alongside the Prep Report. NEASC generally recommends that the school maintain folders for each of the Foundation Standards that can be updated and provided at all future visits.

Evidence of Alignment to the ACE Principles

At the Preparatory Phase, the school is not expected to collect a significant amount of evidence. However, the school should include evidence that explains or demonstrates the school’s approach to teaching and learning.

Evidence already provided for a Foundation Standards Report need not to be provided again. However, the school may wish to provide some of the school’s general information (organizational chart, major teaching and learning policies, access to curriculum documentation) which will aid the ACE Prep Visitors in understanding the school community. In any case, if a school has outstanding Foundation Standards recommendations from the previous visit, evidence should be provided to show plans and progress in meeting the relevant indicators, which may include an Action Plan documenting the school’s progress.

Evidence to support the Prep Report might include:

- Strategic plan which includes focus on improving teaching and learning
- Video describing the school to prospective parents
- Short videos or photographs showing Learning Principles in action
- Sample report cards

- Examples of student work
- PowerPoint describing the school's focus on improving teaching and learning or similar
- School publication with examples of the school meeting its Mission and Vision

Please note that the ACE Preparatory Report and supporting documentation must be submitted via email at least four weeks in advance of the Prep Visit. Visitors may request additional evidence before and during the visit to aid in their understanding of the school.

FAQ

Do we need to involve the whole community in preparing for the Prep Report and Visit?

The report is not meant to be a mini self-study so answers can be relatively brief, and evidence provided should be limited to a few good examples. The Prep Report is typically completed by the school's leadership team, whereas the full Internal Reflection will involve the wider community.

Can AI be used in the self-study?

Yes, AI can be used ethically and effectively in the self-study process. When AI is used to support a self-study report through brainstorming prompts or editing report sections, AI should be appropriately referenced in the report.

Can we collect all of our evidence in shared folders and just share the link with NEASC?

Yes, you can either attach a Zip folder along with your report or you can organize evidence into a shared folder that is linked within your report. Please make sure to label all evidence clearly.

Will the Prep Visit give us a thorough review of our entire school?

No, the purpose of the Prep Visit is to review the Foundation Standards briefly and to begin the conversation about the Learning Principles. The Visitors will offer some good feedback both in conversations, during the debrief and in the written report that will help your Internal Reflection process to be more successful.

How many people should be invited to a meeting during the visit?

The school is encouraged to invite people that represent the topics or stakeholder group involved. For example, the meeting with Inclusion will typically involve the school's SEN, EAL, Counseling, Admissions representatives. Meetings are usually most effective with no more than six individuals.

What should the Leadership Team present at the meeting on Day 1?

The Leadership Team presentation to the Visitors typically provides an overview of the school's history, guiding statements, leadership structure, curriculum and key opportunities and challenges. Following the presentation, the Visitors will ask the team some questions.

What will the Visitors be looking for when they observe classes?

Visitors use the ACE Learning Principles as a lens for observations. They are looking for evidence of learning: what learners are doing, what kind of tasks they are engaged in and how does the teacher facilitate learning. Individual teachers are not observed or rated in any way. The only time Visitors would share what they have seen in an observation directly with the school's leadership is in the event of a child safety or child protection concern.

Visit Logistics

The NEASC office and the school will agree on dates well ahead of the Visit. Once the Visitors are assigned, the school and the lead Visitor will communicate to arrange the visit logistics.

The Visit schedule and all logistics should be arranged no later than three weeks before the Visit.

Once the visit format has been determined (usually onsite, possibly virtual), the school and Visitors should view the appropriate guides accessible through the links provided by the NEASC office.

Schedule Elements

The ACE Preparatory Visit can range from two to three full days to five partial days, depending on the size of the school, whether the visit is onsite or virtual and whether the visit is for re-accreditation (which then involves a Foundation Standards review as well). Some of the elements are listed below but see [Accreditation Visit Schedule Components for ACE Standard and CLP Pathways \(Doc 09\)](#) for the full details on suggested schedule elements.

The general elements include:

- Observe classes (approximately 2 hours per day)
- Meet with learners, teachers, support services, leaders, parents, and the Governing Body
- Meet with leaders in operational areas related to the Foundation Standards (for re-accreditation only)
- Tour the school
- Present a brief overview of the accreditation process and next steps to the entire staff (**a recorded version is available for virtual visits)

- Conduct a 3–4-hour workshop for the members of the Internal Reflection steering committee (a virtual version of the workshop is 2 hours)
- Meeting with the Accreditation Coordinator to support and answer questions about the process
- During an exit meeting with the leadership team share perceptions, recommendations, and conclusions regarding the community's Candidacy for Accreditation.

Staff Briefing

At the Preparatory Visit, the Lead visitor will present a short introduction to ACE Learning to the school's faculty, called the Staff Briefing. In the case of a virtual visit, this session can be arranged on Zoom. The Powerpoint for this session can be found in the [Visit Padlet](#).

Internal Reflection Workshop (3-4 hours)

On the last day of the visit, or possibly divided across 2-3 days, the Visitors will present a session to the leadership team and those who will lead aspects of the Internal Reflection process. This session will explain the next steps in the accreditation cycle and give insights into how to organize a successful Internal Reflection. Lead Visitors can find the most updated version of the workshop materials in the [Visit Padlet](#) under the ACE Preparatory Stage section. Lead Visitors will send out materials in advance of the visit so the school can share them with participants or print things as necessary. The Lead Visitor and the school's accreditation coordinator should work together to determine logistics for the workshop which may include table arrangements, materials needed, refreshments, etc.

FAQ

Who should attend the Internal Reflection Workshop?

The Leadership Team and those who will lead the committees for the Internal Reflection should attend this important session. Because of this, the school should determine who key committee leaders will be so they can block off their schedules in advance.

How many days will a Preparatory Visit last?

If the visit is onsite, we typically schedule three full days. If the school is up for "re-accreditation" a fourth day is added to accommodate a review of Foundation Standards. Virtual visits typically span more days for less time per day to reduce screen time. Small schools of less than 100 students follow an abbreviated two-day visit. The NEASC office will confirm which visit type relates to your visit.

Who builds the visit schedule?

The school leadership should construct the first draft of the visit schedule so that it can accommodate the school's other events, time constraints and participant availability. The

school should send a draft schedule to the Lead Visitor 3-4 weeks prior to the visit. The Visitor may suggest changes or additions to ensure a successful visit.

What kinds of questions do Visitors ask during the meetings?

Visitors develop questions based on their review of the school's report and evidence and their understanding of the ACE process.

What happens after the visit?

NEASC will review the report submitted by the Visitors which includes both school and Visitor sections. The eventual outcome letter, final report and particular guidance on next steps and timing will be sent to the school about a month after the visit. If successful, the visit results in the school receiving approval to advance to the next phase of (re)accreditation. For a new school, a successful Prep Visit also leads to "NEASC Candidate" status.

Internal Reflection

Purpose

The school's Internal Reflection represents the core of ACE Learning. Following a successful ACE Preparatory Visit, the learning community commits to a year of self-reflection, which culminates in the learning community's completing an Internal Reflection Report.

Approximately 6 weeks after the Internal Reflection Report has been submitted to NEASC, a team of 3+ trained peer reviewers (depending on the learning community's size) will spend one week on site to conduct the External Review. The visiting team's report includes a recommendation on whether (re-) accreditation should be granted. No recommendation is shared during the visit; the school will receive official communication from NEASC about six weeks after the visit. In most cases this visit is conducted onsite, but in special circumstances it may be conducted virtually.

Preparation

In preparation for the Internal Reflection, the learning community:

- Prepares to administer the NEASC Learning Survey (see below) which are available for staff and parents in several languages
- Reviews the Preparatory Report
- Constitutes an ACE Design Team as a Steering Committee for the Internal Reflection. The ACE Design Team should include the Chairs of the Internal Reflection Teams as well as other members representing the various constituencies (e.g., Teachers, Leadership, Governance, Parents)
- Creates Internal Reflection Teams responsible for specific Learning Principles. All full-time teachers and leadership members should participate in one of these teams or be involved with the Internal Reflection in some direct way. This means that, depending on the size of

the faculty and if the school is engaging with ACE for the first time, there may be ten teams (one for each Learning Principle) or smaller groupings that suit the school's size and situation. For example, Learning Principles 5 and 9 may be combined as well as Learning Principles 1-3. Please note: Schools previously accredited using ACE Learning will focus on only five Learning Principles and will likely have a team for each of those LPs. Learners, parents, other non-teaching staff and Board members may also be invited to join these Teams as appropriate. The schools may also wish to integrate Teams into pre-existing committee structures of the school.

- Sets up shared folders or similar system to coordinate the collection of evidence
- Drafts the report sections
- Determines a timeline with milestones along the way to give all participants a clear understanding of steps in the process and deadlines

Process

1. The Internal Reflection begins with the administration of the NEASC Learning **Surveys**. We have designed Learning Surveys aligned with the ACE Learning Principles for Learners, Teachers, Parents, and Leadership/Governance members. The learning community will be provided with access to the survey links shortly after their Preparatory Report has been accepted and the Preparatory Phase is complete.

FAQ

What age students school participate in the survey?

We typically recommend having students in Grade 5/Year 6 and above complete the survey. Most schools have students do the survey during a classtime to ensure high rates of participation.

Can we add our own questions to the survey tool?

Unfortunately, the software we use does not allow for schools to add additional questions at this time.

How should we use the survey data that we receive?

We recommend identifying someone at the school who has a background or interest in survey analysis. This person can help summarize the survey findings for all of the Teams to use. Additionally, we recommend that all Team Leaders have access to the raw data and the crosswalk so individual teams can look at the data through the lens of the Learning Principle they are focused on. We recommend that the survey data be considered one source of evidence to help the school understand where it is currently in relation to the Learning Principles. For a deeper dive in use of surveys, view our October 2022 Webinar, "Listening and Leading: Using Surveys to Guide Impactful Learning in Schools" available [here](#).

2. The Committees will spend approximately nine months reviewing and analyzing the Survey results, discussing the Learning Principles and their implications, gathering evidence of Impact, responding to the template prompts, suggesting actions aimed at greater alignment with the Learning Principles, and completing draft reports— under the guidance of the ACE Design Team.

The various Team draft reports should be submitted to the ACE Design Team. During the final three months of the Internal Reflection process, the task of the ACE Design Team is to:

- a. Complete the *School Overview* section
 - b. Summarize insights and understandings gained from the ACE Learning Surveys
 - c. Collate and integrate the various Team reports, eliminating duplication and repetition
 - d. Compile and prioritize a list of high impact learning plans suggested by the various Teams
 - e. Agree on evidence of Impact that is considered relevant for the final report — including videos, artifacts, photos, student performances, student data trends, etc. Choose up to 3 representative examples for each Learning Principle that both bring your school’s learning to life and demonstrate where you are today and/or where you hope to go in the future
 - f. Arrive at a consensus with respect to an overall “rating” (on the ACE Learning Continuum) for each Learning Principle (i.e., Not Evident, Thinking About It, etc.)
3. Once these tasks have been completed, the ACE Design Team is encouraged to organize a Community Workshop involving teachers, leadership members, learners, parents, and the Governing Body focused on:
 - a. Presenting overall conclusions reached during the Internal Reflection for each of the Learning Principles
 - b. Presenting the key pieces of evidence that will be submitted with the Internal Reflection Report
 - c. Identifying the 4-6 Major Learning Plans (fewer or more as deemed fit) which, in the opinion of the learning community, will have the most significant future impact on learning
 - d. Completing the Internal Reflection process and celebrating the work that has been achieved
 4. The Workshop is intended to create a shared understanding of and commitment to the learning community’s future direction and purpose and to ensure that the Internal Reflection submitted to NEASC enjoys the support of all learning community constituencies. The goal is to seek consensus rather than unanimity of opinion and conclusion. (NEASC recognizes that some learning communities may also have one or more Community Workshops early in the Internal Reflection period to gather input and to begin to build consensus.)

5. The completed Internal Reflection Report must be submitted to NEASC at **least 6 weeks** ahead of the scheduled External Review Team Visit.

FAQ

How should we get to a small number of Major Learning Plans since each committee has their own ideas about how to reach the future vision for their individual Learning Principles?

Many good ideas will emerge from the individual Teams. If the school is to be able to focus on just a few (4-6) major areas, there will need to be some combining, prioritizing the most important focus areas. The Design Team has representatives from each of the smaller Teams and can represent their ideas to the Design Team. NEASC recommends that the Design Team schedule a full-day session when all of the individual committees have completed their drafts. During this session, the Design Team is tasked with finalizing the Major Learning Plans to present.

How do we finalize the school’s Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning?

The Design Team should also consider how the work of the Internal Reflection has informed what the school wants to finalize as their Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning. Do current statements about effective learning need to be adjusted now that the community has done this Internal Reflection work?

What are the best ways to present evidence for each of the Learning Principles?

The Teams may have collected many pieces of evidence as they did their work throughout the year. This evidence collecting is a critical part of the process and will help the Team more fully understand how the school’s current systems impact learning. For the NEASC report, the Team leaders will need to select a representative sample of evidence to include with the report. Remember that NEASC Visitors are peer volunteers, and they will spend over a month preparing for your visit. Please don’t overwhelm the visitors with too much evidence that they can’t review before the visit. Instead, select key evidence of how your students are being impacted in their learning. Please label all evidence clearly so that the visitors can easily navigate through what you have provided.

What format should the Major Learning Plans be presented in?

We leave this open for the school to determine how their plans can best be presented so that they can fit into any other strategic planning or action planning that the school has in place. Once the school receives the External Review Visit report from NEASC, the school is encouraged to consult the feedback and make appropriate adjustments to the details and timelines expressed in the Major Learning Plans.

The Role of the School's Accreditation Coordinator(s)

Usually starting at the Preparatory Phase, the school should decide who will lead or co-lead the Accreditation process at the school. Typically, the school identifies individuals who are willing to dedicate time and energy to overseeing a successful process for the school. Many schools choose to identify two individuals who can work together to plan out the year and keep the committees on track. The role of the Accreditation Coordinator(s) is to:

- Set up structures to collect and share information
- Share basic school information with all Team members (organizational chart, policies, guiding statements, previous NEASC reports, etc.)
- Set timeline and due dates
- Lead ACE Design Team meetings
- Monitor progress of Learning Principles Teams
- Collect report sections, monitor for clarity, cohesion and completeness
- Ensure ACE Design Team sign-off on report sections
- Facilitate any other sign offs that are required (owners, governors, etc.)
- Oversee the process to plan for Community Workshop or other way to engage community in the findings and the Major Learning Plans
- Serve as support and reference point for NEASC visitors
(see also [Visit Logistics - Doc 42](#))

Some elements that support successful Teams include:

- Effective leader and co-leader with adequate release time
- Good background information, data, relevant readings
- Essential agreements and norms
- Equitable participation
- A system to organize evidence and prioritize input for the report
- Timelines and deadlines
- Enough time and people to do the work
- Time built in to get the report written, revised, vetted and approved
- Documentation of minutes of meetings
- Honest, healthy debate
- Strong support of leadership and governance
- Thoughtful committee structuring, including sign-ups for committee leadership and membership

Instructions for the School's Internal Reflection Teams

For each of the ten Learning Principles (or minimum five LPs for schools conducting their second ACE Internal Reflection), the groups of representative stakeholders should:

- **Ensure Understanding:** Review and discuss the examples, the guiding questions and the optional resources. The Guiding Questions provided for each of the Learning Principles are intended to serve as “conversation and discussion prompts/starters.” Teams are not expected to respond to them in writing. The Resources (<https://cie.neasc.org/resources/suggested-reading>) include articles, videos and publications that the Team may wish to engage with to deepen the conversations. The Team members should understand the structure of the External Team Report Template before starting the work. Example reports are also available in the [Visit Padlet](#).
- **Envision the Future:** What is your committee’s vision for how your school could more fully embrace this Learning Principle?
- **Assess the Current Reality:** How far is your school from realizing its vision for this Learning Principle? Evaluate how well your existing programs, resources and practices create the deep learning you seek. Ask stakeholders through focus groups and surveys, observe learning in action and gather artifacts of learning to determine your rating. You will indicate your self-rating on the Developmental Continuum for each Learning Principle that you review. Choose a few (3-5 max) pieces of evidence for each Learning Principle. The evidence should represent where your school is today regarding one or more of the Impacts of that Learning Principle. Please label each piece of evidence and indicate why you chose it.
- **Plan to Achieve the Vision:** How might current and future actions, resources and/or programs help you close the gap between the current reality and the future vision?
- **Identify Impacts:** What evidence will you look for to suggest that you are closing the gap between the current reality and the future vision?
- Finally, **discuss drafts with other ACE Committees** to look for synergy and conflicts. Share draft report versions with the ACE Design Team. NEASC recommends that the Design Team organize a community event to share the findings of each ACE Committee and work together to determine which of the suggested actions should be combined or prioritized into 3-4 Major Learning Plans. The Major Learning Plans may be a synthesis of several LPs' work or be more specific to certain LPs. The responses below should be finally agreed and submitted by the ACE Design Team.
- Ensure that the learning from the Learning Principles committee is used to inform/influence the community’s Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning.

External Review Visit

A Team of 3-6 External Review Visitors will spend a week with the learning community, engaging in a series of structured conversations and learning observations involving all constituencies. NEASC will appoint the members of this Team, subject to approval by the school.

Purpose

The purpose of the External Review Visit is:

- To verify Internal Reflection conclusions and validate the process used to arrive at these conclusions.
- To observe learning (shadowing learners and observing classes, including several full day student shadowing experiences).
- To understand where the school currently is in its progress on the Transformational Learning Continuum.
- To review the school's Foundation Standards recommended actions from previous visits.
- To assess the learning community's conceptual understanding of and commitment to the ACE Learning ecosystem as well as its capacity and competency for implementing change.
- To write a report that summarizes the Team's perceptions and observations and offers further advice and recommendations to the learning community.
- To determine follow-up actions and processes designed to support the learning community in implementing its major Learning Plans.
- To reach consensus on a recommendation regarding accreditation (see Accreditation Status below)

Process

The Lead Visitor will contact the learning community approximately 2-3 months ahead of the External Review Visit to begin the process of designing a visit schedule and discussing visit logistics. The school is responsible for developing a schedule that accommodates the Visitors while minimizing disruptions to learning.

Arrivals and Departures

Arrivals	Departures
Lead Visitor arrives on Friday of the week preceding the External Review Visit (Middle East: Thursday)	Lead Visitor departs on Friday evening or Saturday morning of the External Review Visit week (Middle East: Thursday evening or Friday morning).

<p>Team Members arrive on Saturday of the week preceding the External Review Visit (Middle East: Friday).</p>	<p>Team Members depart on Thursday evening or Friday morning of the External Review Visit week (Middle East: Wednesday evening or Thursday morning).</p>
---	--

Visit Elements

The External Review Visit is scheduled over 6 days, usually starting Sunday — the day before the school’s first workday.

Some of the elements are listed below but see [Accreditation Visit Schedule Components for ACE Standard and CLP Pathways \(Doc 09\)](#) for the full details on suggested schedule elements. The Lead Visitor and Accreditation Coordinator collaborate in finalizing the External Review Visit schedule approximately 4-6 weeks in advance of the visit.

- Brief introduction of team to the community
- Tour of facilities (including boarding and online environment with LMS as appropriate)
- Observe classes, shadow learners (Approx. two hours per day Visitors’ time will be dedicated to observing learning).
- Learner Shadowing: The school chooses learners to be shadowed for at least a half day (one in each division) and the school obtains permission from the students’ parents.
- Introductory meeting with Head of School and School level leadership
- Meet with learners, teachers, support staff, leaders, parents, operational leaders, nonteaching staff and members of the Governing Body.
- Conclude with an exit meeting with the leadership during which the Visitors share their perceptions, conclusions, and chief recommendations. The school may choose who will attend the exit meeting, but typically it involves members of the senior leadership team and mid-level leaders as appropriate. Note: The Visitors do not approve accreditation, so they will not share their recommendation with the school.
- Provide a brief Visit summary and farewell/thank you to the school on the last afternoon.
- The Team may wish to schedule additional meetings with other members of the learning community but should be mindful of the ACE mandate to focus heavily on observing learning. Special events, observing afterschool activities, observing evening events in the residential facilities, etc. are good additional elements to be added depending on the situation.

Shadow a Student

During the week, a student in each school section (e.g., Primary, Middle, Secondary) may be shadowed for a half of a day or several hours. The school should choose the students but should ensure that all sections of the school are covered. The purpose of the shadow visit is to provide the Team in-depth insights on the experience of a learner throughout their school day and to help the Team assess the extent to which the school’s Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning is understood and observable in practice. Alternatively, the team may block off observation blocks of

3-4 hours when all members of the team go observing at the same time. During this time, no meetings are scheduled. Many teams like to put the bulk of observation time into the first few days of the schedule to ground the visit in the student experience.

FAQ

Who chooses the student to be shadowed?

The school leaders should identify the students to be shadowed, ask them to participate and coordinate permissions from their caregivers. Students who will be excited to share about their learning are good choices.

What does the visitor do during the shadowing day?

Visitors will follow the students' schedule including recess, lunch and breaks. The Visitor will ask the student questions about their learning, as about projects and work products they are engaged with and speak with their teachers when time permits. Visitors will be respectful not to interrupt learning too much during the day, but rather experience what a typical day of learning is like for students.

What if our visit is virtual? How do we shadow a student virtually?

While it's impractical to shadow a student for an entire day during a virtual visit, shorter virtual shadowing experiences can be quite helpful. We recommend two three-hour shadowing sessions per visitor to allow adequate observation time. For situations where the students are onsite and the visitor is online, the students typically carry an iPad and explain to the virtual visitor what is happening in their learning. If the school itself is virtual, the visitor will virtually join a few classes with the student and then also schedule a time to discuss learning with their assigned student.

The Lead Visitor and the Mentor

The Lead Visitor will be the single point of contact with the school. This includes coordinating with the school on the visit schedule and the visit logistics. The Lead Visitor will also meet daily with the Head of School to discuss any sensitive issues and monitor the progress of the visit. The Lead Visitor is responsible for ensuring that the final report is submitted in a timely manner. The Lead Visitor should refer to the appropriate [Guide for Lead Visitors](#).

The Lead Visitor is supported behind the scenes by the Mentor. A NEASC staff member or other experienced visitor is assigned to each visit to support the Lead Visitor as needed before, during and after the visit.

Decision on Accreditation Status

NEASC's Commission on International Education will review the Team's External Review Report and Accreditation Recommendation, and the learning community will be informed of the outcome approximately six weeks following the External Review Visit, along with any specific guidance beyond what the Report includes. The possible outcomes from the External Review Visit include:

- Award Accreditation; or
- Award Accreditation with Qualifications; or
- Defer/Postpone Accreditation, with indicated issues to be addressed; or
- Withhold/Deny Accreditation.

Please note that while Accreditation is valid for a period of five years, Annual Updates must be submitted and a school's accreditation status may be altered in mid-cycle, due to shortcomings in a school's alignment with Foundation Standards, non-payment of annual dues or failure to submit the Annual Update. In the Annual Update, due December 15 each year, the school indicates key leaders, enrollment figures, significant changes to the Foundation Standards, progress on the school's Major Learning Plans, and any other required updates. Failure to submit Annual Reports can result in adverse actions such as probation or termination of accreditation.

Synchronized Visits with Other Agencies

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE ORGANIZATION (IB)

The Collaborative Learning Protocol (CLP) blends the best of ACE Learning with the IB evaluation process in a streamlined approach. The CLP leverages the alignment between the two organizations and benefits schools by reducing the burden and duplication of effort. Schools using the CLP receive ongoing support from both the IB and NEASC, host one collaborative visiting team of highly trained IB and NEASC team members and receive one report after the Peer Evaluation Visit. To qualify, schools must offer two or more IB programmes (e.g., PYP and DP) and align timing of the two agencies' five-year cycles. Contact cie@neasc.org for more information.

KHDA

Contact our office for more information about visits to US curriculum schools in Dubai.

CIS: COUNCIL OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

NEASC offers joint accreditation with CIS (www.cois.org/) that utilizes the CIS framework and is not connected to the ACE Learning protocol. Schools and visitors are advised to follow CIS guidance for joint NEASC/CIS visits.

FAQ

Do we complete all ten Learning Principles or just five?

Schools utilizing the ACE Learning Principles for the first time will review all ten Learning Principles. Schools who are using ACE for the second time are invited to choose the five that are the most important and relevant to them.

How should we select people to serve on or lead our ACE committees?

NEASC encourages you to create committees that represent diverse parts of your school and diverse viewpoints. Typically, schools invite staff to sign up for a committee of their choice and then the Design Team can make sure there is proper representations, asking a few people to switch groups to make it more representative. Some Teams can benefit from student and parent voice on the team or at specific meetings. Although it is nice when everyone can be involved in a Team, that isn't always possible in very large schools. In this case, some staff members may participate in other ways such as filling out the survey, helping collect evidence, participating in the final workshop.

Can the school organize their evidence in Microsoft Teams or Google Drive and share links with the Visitors instead of attaching a ZIP file?

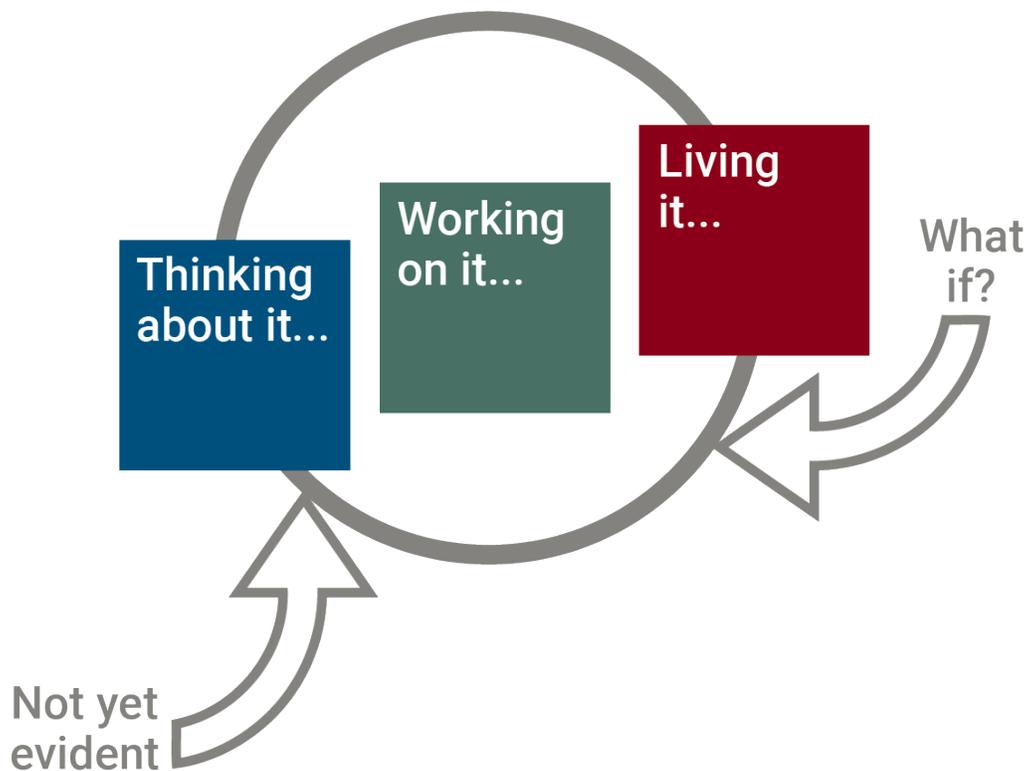
Yes, many schools share their evidence in this way. As long as the Visitors can access the site, it makes the process easier for both the school and the Visitors.

The ACE Ecosystem 2.0

ACE Transformational Continuum

In the ACE Learning 2.0 version, NEASC has moved away from rubrics that are tied to individual Learning Principles. Instead, Learning Communities use the same set of rubric statements and apply them to each of the ten Learning Principles.

Learning Communities use the ACE Learning Principles and their own **Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning** to continually reimagine their future. NEASC Visits give schools an outside perspective about where the learning community may be in its transformational process. The continuum is not a judgment on the school's quality or worth, but rather a way to understand its own process as it relates to working with the ACE Learning Principles. We visualize the continuum as a fluid process that may not always proceed in clear, linear fashion. The statements that describe the parts of the continuum can be applied to the school's work on any of the individual Learning Principles.



ACE Transformational Continuum Ratings

Not yet evident

The learning community has not yet begun to reflect on this Learning Principle. It may be committed to improving its programs, structures, practices, and conceptual understandings, but has not yet embraced or recognized the need to shift toward transformational approaches to learning.

Thinking about it...

The learning community has begun to think about the need to shift toward approaches to learning that are aligned with the ACE Learning Principles and its chosen future vision. The learning community is having initial conversations about its aspirations compared to what is currently observed in practice. An understanding of the implications for teaching and learning is developing.

Working on it...

The learning community has embraced the shift that is needed and begun to plan *how* to bridge the gap between its aspirations and current reality. The learning community has decided on what learning Impacts it is targeting; systems and structures are being designed; approaches are being trialed, and the community is gathering early feedback to inform the next phase.

Living it...

The learning community is aligned with this Learning Principle and that alignment is evident across the learning community. The learning community has structures and systems in place that are leading to the desired Impact on learners. The learning community is gathering evidence, artifacts, and stakeholder feedback to ensure that all learners are benefiting.

What if?

The learning community and its practices represent a transformational shift that is innovative in design and reshapes the structure, purpose, and practice of schooling.

The 4 Cs

Conceptual Understanding | Commitment | Capacity | Competence



CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING of ACE Learning begins with being able to explain the meaning of each Learning Principle and Impact. To be effective, however, this understanding must then extend to the ability to transfer the meaning of each ACE Learning Principle to new situations, to apply it to new contexts, and to be able to describe what the Learning Principles and Impacts look like in a transformed, student-centered learning experience. Definitional understanding is required to begin the journey, but deep conceptual understanding is a prerequisite for the transformation of learning.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

ACE asks schools to reflect on their current practices relative to the ACE Learning Principles and Impacts and to choose a path forward using them as a guide on that journey. A deep, collective understanding of the Learning Principles and Impacts allows a school community to establish a shared language that is grounded in research and best practice and anchored in real life examples and experiences. It also helps a school community create authentic learning plans that will enhance their learning and teaching in a way that will contribute to a school’s transformation. When the Learning Principles are understood through examples of what they look like when implemented by learners and teachers, they become a useful tool to help a school move toward an exciting future with clear direction and shared purpose.



COMMITMENT is a measure of determination to proceed on the pathway framed by the ACE Learning Principles and Impacts and described in the school’s Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning. It is premised on an understanding that ACE Learning depends on student-centered learning and teaching and is grounded in a 21st century context. Additionally, it requires the learning community to recognize the gap between where it is today and where it is headed. Once the gap is identified, the community must be willing to take on the realignment and disruption of current patterns and the creation of the new systems and practices that may be needed to change the trajectory of learning and bend it toward the vision contained in the school’s foundational documents.

Commitment to the transformational journey is most powerful when it exists in all parts of the organization and among all stakeholders, but it often begins with a smaller group that has both the influence and opportunity to bring the learning community along on the journey.

Commitment is visible when learning communities are thoughtfully reflecting on how systems and patterns need to be changed to achieve the Learning Principles and desired Impacts and there is evidence of processes and behaviors that have been adjusted to create those realities. This might not mean immediate changes in performance, but rather indications of action — overcoming the status quo and engagement in purposeful movement.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Without Commitment, deep systemic change is not possible. Communities that lack commitment may, at best, see ritual compliance to activities that superficially align with the desired transformation but are not producing the desired results. Commitment to ACE Learning harnesses the imagination, the creativity, and the energy of the community because it is done in service of a shared purpose that is embraced by the community. It causes all members to continually reflect on their actions to seek a better result. Commitment helps to generate will behind the learning community’s transformation.



CAPACITY is the ability and willingness of a learning community to commit resources (financial, personnel, institutional) to support the ACE Learning journey. Added resources such as increased budgets and new positions may be needed, but capacity does not necessarily mean adding resources. It often means reallocation of resources to focus them away from the systems that represent the status quo to

critical changes that must be made to enhance the school’s ACE Learning journey. Capacity also means that the Governing Body understands the community’s direction and is willing to shape the organization’s Strategic Plans, including the school’s Major Learning Plans, operating budgets, facilities plans, and other capital improvements to align with ACE Learning.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Building organizational capacity for ACE Learning is one way that a learning community demonstrates both its Conceptual Understanding of ACE and its Commitment to the journey. When the learning community shifts its resources to build capacity, it says to everyone that this work is important, and that the organization is behind the effort. When an organization grows its ACE Learning capacity, it is building the muscle to do the heavy lifting required to transform student learning. Most importantly, it sends a message to every individual that the work is important and that it will be safe to stretch and innovate both individual practices and organizational systems such as the professional learning system that support learning and growth.



COMPETENCE is the presence of the individual and institutional abilities required to convert Conceptual Understanding into action and progress toward the Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning and the community’s Major Learning Plans. Competence is built through sustained opportunities for educators to engage in learning that builds their capacity to transform learning.

Competence exists in learning communities that possess a growth mindset characterized by a focus on effort, learning from mistakes, and embracing challenges.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Competence is the engine that drives change. When developed collaboratively, competence quickly grows throughout the organization. Successful learning communities have a broad base of competence and have developed systems to create iterative change. Members of the community grow their competence by engaging in this process. With committed and knowledgeable leadership at the helm, members of the community can describe their current state, design their desired future state, and create plans to move the organization toward transformation.

A Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning

A Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning includes:

- a definition of the characteristics, skills, and attributes desired of the learners/graduates (which is the ultimate Impact)
- a description of the type of pedagogy and conditions that result in learners developing in those ways
- a statement/story to illustrate what learners will be doing, what teachers will be doing, and what the learning tasks expect from learners

One of the key products for schools engaging with ACE Learning is the development of a Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning. NEASC previously referred to this as a Definition of Learning. Our initial years of experience supporting ACE journeys by schools around the world have helped us clarify the process.

A school's Shared Understanding is supported by a description of the specific pedagogy, chosen by the school, that is used to achieve the desired goals. For example, if a school's Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning includes language and/or graphics that focus on self-directed learning, learner agency, and autonomy, then the school would likely be using some form of open inquiry or co-created inquiry, rather than teacher-directed inquiry.



In ACE Learning schools, the **Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning** is grounded in the ten ACE Learning Principles and Impacts, as well as other Impacts a school might have chosen. As the community develops its shared understanding, it can more easily identify the Major Learning Plans that are designed to close the gap between what the school aspires to and its current reality.

<p>Major Learning Plans</p> <p>Toward the end of the Internal Reflection, the learning community is ready to prioritize a few Major Learning Plans (MLPs) that will create lasting Impacts on its learners. Plans may take many forms and may be individualized to contribute to the school’s own strategic objectives.</p>	<p>Why is it important?</p> <p>The Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning is the school’s North Star that will guide the rest of their reflection and their choice of plans to help the school on its transformational journey. Without a clear future direction, schools often lose focus on what is essential. The Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning holds everyone accountable for focusing on learning.</p>
<p>When is it developed?</p> <p>Shared Understanding is generally developed and expressed at the beginning of the school’s Internal Reflection, following the school’s work to “unpack” the Learning Principles. A draft may be developed which is then reconsidered as the community goes deeper into their Internal Reflection work. The Visitors at the Preparatory Visit provide a workshop for the school to guide the school’s work to develop a Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning. On occasion, and when a school already has a firm grasp of the ACE Learning Principles and Impacts, the school may choose to develop its draft Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning before the Preparatory Visit. If a school has a clearly defined Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning before the accreditation cycle (or as a result of previous cycles), the school is invited to review its Shared Understanding and revise as needed to stay current.</p>	

**A Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning
can improve learning and teaching:**

- when it is influenced by the ACE Learning Principles and other relevant research and thinking in education
- when it is co-created and well understood by the stakeholders in the community
- when it is observable in everyday learning and teaching
- when it promotes collaboration among faculty and school leadership in service of High-Quality Learning
- when teachers feel empowered and safe to try new ways of teaching to meet the expectations of the school's understanding of High-Quality Learning
- when it creates a vision of learning that people feel inspired by
- when it becomes the central focus of teacher development and appraisal
- when it is used as a hiring tool for new faculty and staff

ACE Learning Principles Structure

While the Foundation Standards are compliance-oriented and transactional in nature, the ACE Learning Principles (LPs) are aspirational statements, more transformational than transactional, and intended to encourage schools to be reflective learning communities able to design learner-focused futures that may transform both learners and schools.

Each LP includes the following content:

NAME AND STATEMENT OF THE PRINCIPLE

The core guiding statement of the Learning Principle.

RATIONALE

A statement to help explain the Learning Principle in narrative form.

IMPACTS

An Impact is a usually long-term transformational change in a learner. Impact statements can help schools measure the result of their efforts through the accreditation process.

PROMPTS AND PROVOCATIONS

These essential questions can be used by the school's ACE Committees to prompt reflection and engage the community in conversations. Answers are not meant to be shared with NEASC.

EXAMPLES

A few select pieces of evidence one might find in a school well aligned to the Learning Principle.

KEY TERMS

Important terms and their meaning as related to ACE Learning are linked to a glossary of terms located at the end of this document for your reference.

RESOURCES

We have posted a curated list of resources related to the ACE Learning Principles on our website. Make sure to bookmark the link and check back for updates and additions. [\[view resources online\]](#)

The Ten ACE Learning Principles

1 Learning Purposes	Learning builds understandings, competencies, knowledge, and dispositions that can be applied across different situations. Learners become responsible and successful global citizens by actively engaging with complex real-world issues.
2 Dimensions of Learning	Learners grow through regular engagement in creative, ethical, interpersonal, technological, environmental, physical, and entrepreneurial experiences. Learners explore ideas and develop solutions that may have impact beyond themselves.
3 Evidence of Learning	Learners engage with feedback that promotes self-awareness, improvement, and mastery. Learners demonstrate growth and development in a variety of forms.
4 Learning Perspectives	Learners face complex problems, challenges, and issues that promote deep learning. Learners consider multiple perspectives and take informed risks in the pursuit of knowledge.
5 Learner Autonomy and Engagement	Learners have age-appropriate, goal-oriented autonomy over their learning and make informed choices supported by guidance within and beyond the classroom.
6 Research, Reflection, and Action	The learning community applies current research, connects with other learning communities, and uses future-oriented thinking to improve learning for all. The learning community evaluates the results of its actions and pursues questions about future innovations, including Artificial Intelligence tools that prepare learners to shape their present and future. Likewise, learners analyze the results of their efforts and collaborate with peers to improve and extend their learning.
7 Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Belonging	The learning community exhibits a culture of inclusiveness that enables the diverse needs, identities, and interests of all learners and community members to be acknowledged, actively celebrated, and proactively addressed. Differing viewpoints and opinions are invited in pursuit of an informed and welcoming community.
8 Governance and Leadership for Learning	The roles of leadership and governance are aligned with the school's learning goals, unified through a common mission, and organized through well-aligned structures that allow informed analysis, communication, and decision-making in support of learners.
9 Learning Space and Time	The learning community optimizes physical environments, virtual opportunities, and time to support learning and wellbeing for all.
10 Learning Community Wellbeing	The learning community is a healthy environment where all members thrive. Respectful, healthy, ethical, and honest relationships create a true sense of community. Community values are clearly stated, actively lived, and define a distinct, sustained identity.

Learning Principle 1: Learning Purposes

Learning builds understandings, competencies, knowledge, and dispositions that can be applied across different situations. Learners become responsible and successful global citizens by actively engaging with complex real-world issues.

Rationale

Learners will be faced with a future in which memorization of content will be less important than the ability to analyze and assess complex information, find novel solutions, work across disciplines, apply tools of artificial intelligence and learn how to learn new things, communicate well, collaborate, and to live with an understanding of the impact of their behaviors and decisions on the world.

Experiences that emphasize interdisciplinary learning (connecting the disciplines in challenging tasks) and transdisciplinary learning (such as collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking) are more representative of the real world now and in their future.

Experiences that emphasize interdisciplinary learning (connecting the disciplines in challenging tasks) and transdisciplinary learning (such as collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking) are more representative of the real world now and in their future.

Learning Principle 1 asks schools to reflect on how the school's curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices as well as written and unwritten priorities promote learners' ability to use their knowledge and skills to engage in authentic work in various real-world contexts.

Impacts

- 1.1 Learners use critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, technological, and research skills, and transfer their learning across disciplines to solve local and global problems within real-world contexts. They do so with increasing autonomy over time.
- 1.2 Learners develop an ethical mindset and a global perspective when they engage with real-world problems and issues.
- 1.3 The learning community has clearly defined goals for student growth in understandings, competencies, knowledge, and dispositions, which contribute to each learner's ability to become responsible global citizens.
- 1.4 The learning community has clearly defined expectations for the appropriate use of artificial intelligence tools to support the development of its most critical goals for learning.

Learning Principle 1: Learning Purposes

Prompts and Provocations

- What are our desired goals (understandings, competencies, knowledge, and dispositions) for our students? To what extent are those goals challenging, and require the use of transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary skills?
- Do our desired goals reflect the intercultural understanding necessary for a globally connected world?
- To what extent do teaching and learning practices facilitate the shift from traditional content acquisition to transdisciplinary learning, interdisciplinary learning, and real-world problem solving?
- What role does technology including artificial intelligence play in preparing learners for a globally connected, high-tech future?
- What local and regional issues are important to our community? How well do we integrate these into learning experiences?
- How do our learning goals reflect and include people from historically marginalized groups?
- Are our chosen teaching practices aligned with our learning goals?

For example, you might see...

Learners explain what they are learning and why it is important.	Learners explain which transdisciplinary skills they are using, how their learning is interdisciplinary.
Learners describe how they came together as a class to try to clean up a polluted lake on campus. They describe with passion how they identified sources of the pollution and its negative effects, while raising awareness and convincing the local government to address the issue.	Elementary learners join a discussion group to nominate each other for exhibiting the learner profile traits of kindness, risk-taking, etc. Learners describe in detail how these examples helped impact others in the learning community.
Learners connect to others around the world to consider the impact of a global issue, e.g., global warming.	Students notice a lack of minority viewpoints in assigned reading and question whether the learning goals could be accomplished through more diverse perspectives.

Learning Principle 2: Dimensions of Learning

Learners grow through regular engagement in creative, ethical, interpersonal, technological, environmental, physical, and entrepreneurial experiences. Learners explore ideas and develop solutions that may have impact beyond themselves.

Rationale

Learners thrive when they are given challenging opportunities to develop the many dimensions of who they are as human beings. As adults, learners will have to navigate work and personal lives that combine many dimensions sometimes simultaneously. Successful learners and adults will be those who can solve important, real-world problems creatively, find new ways to do things, and work in an inter-connected, highly technological world with diverse partners.

Students need to understand the impact their choices will have on others and themselves. They need to learn to be ethical, respectful citizens of a multiracial, multicultural world and to understand inequality and bias as it exists in societal norms, laws, structures, practices, and beliefs.

Students thrive when they are given opportunities to impact their world by tapping into these dimensions of learning to become changemakers for a better world.

Learners leverage digital tools for learning, including artificial intelligence to develop their work across these dimensions and they use technology to share their work with others.

Impacts

- 2.1 Learners develop and use higher-order thinking skills in the creative, ethical, interpersonal, physical, technological, environmental, and entrepreneurial dimensions of learning.
- 2.2 Learners actively inquire into and document their development based on a profile and definition of success in creative, ethical, interpersonal, physical, technological, environmental, and entrepreneurial dimensions of learning.
- 2.3 Learners engage with mentors inside the school and in the local and global community to support their efforts to engage with the dimensions of learning in a way that creates local or global impact.

Learning Principle 2: Dimensions of Learning

Prompts and Provocations

- What existing opportunities are there for learners to engage in challenges that promote creative, ethical, interpersonal, physical, technological, and entrepreneurial development within the curricular program? How do we continue to strive for balance across these dimensions within the curricular program?
- What existing opportunities are there for learners to explore the complexities and interdependence of contemporary issues using the dimensions as a lens?
- How well do our curriculum, assessment practices, and teaching methods support learning goals that span cognitive, creative, moral, experiential, entrepreneurial, technological and social dimensions?

For example, you might see...

On one day, a learner might be grappling with an academic challenge, navigating an interpersonal situation during group work, expressing themselves in dance, and leading a meeting of a student club they helped start.	Students on service-learning trips are called upon to examine the systemic and historic factors that perpetuate the inequities between themselves and the people they are serving.
Learners use technology to set goals for physical development and track progress toward those goals	Learners in a High School math lesson are examining a theme they explored during a recent Theory of Knowledge course.
Report cards and learner profiles show evidence that the school community values multiple dimensions of learning, including but not limited to academic achievement.	Learners determine how to schedule their day in a way that ensures they have time for physical activity, creative pursuits, academic challenges, and building connections with others.
Students identify a social justice cause within their community, research the impact on the community, identify actions to address the needs, and connect with local officials to advocate for the actions.	Learners engage with digital and interpersonal feedback that promotes self-awareness, improvement, and mastery. Learners demonstrate growth and development in a variety of forms.

Learning Principle 3: Evidence of Learning

Learners engage with feedback that promotes self-awareness, improvement, and mastery. Learners demonstrate growth and development in a variety of forms.

Rationale

Growth in understandings, competencies, knowledge, and dispositions are tracked over time by the learner, their parents, and the school. The community understands that learners' strengths vary according to the subject, the task, and the circumstances surrounding assessment activities. Assessment of learning is modified as needed to meet individual learner needs. Assessment is viewed as an opportunity to provide feedback so that appropriate support and challenge can be provided. Learning Principle 3 focuses on assessment practices that support a learner's growth across multiple domains. It supports the notion of a growth mindset through which students learn to persist with difficult tasks knowing that learning and growth are not a product of fixed ability but rather of focused effort. Schooling has traditionally been characterized by high-stakes external testing that may not match the curriculum or culture as the school begins to transform toward a deeper focus on growth versus achievement. Learners, teachers, and parents use evidence to support learners' growth in both disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge and skills.

For assessment to be growth-producing, learners need ongoing formative feedback that is aligned to their personal goals. They need clarity on what is going to be assessed, and they need to know what "quality" looks like in a work product. Reflection on learning helps students and adults become confident about their personal strengths and potential for growth.

In schools that are aligned to this Learning Principle, learners talk confidently about what they are learning, how they are demonstrating their learning, and what they need to learn next. Learners have choices about how to demonstrate their learning, and often assessment tasks are shared with authentic audiences. Assessment is never used to compare or rank students or teachers. All stakeholders, including parents, talk about the importance of growth and learning over test scores.

Impacts

- 3.1 Learners reflect on and document their learning relative to academic, creative, ethical, interpersonal, physical, and entrepreneurial goals. The school has systems in place for ongoing student reflection, goal setting, and acknowledgment of growth in all areas.
- 3.2 Learners play a central role in determining areas of strength, areas for growth, identifying appropriate evidence of learning, and ways in which they will share their learning journey.
- 3.3 Learners understand and can articulate the current state and progress of their learning.
- 3.4 Formative and summative assessment activities are routinely used by students and teachers to synthesize learning and gain deeper insights into a student's learning process.

Learning Principle 3: Evidence of Learning

Prompts and Provocations

- To what extent are we using well-designed and varied assessment methods to give learners maximum opportunities to show their learning?
- Do we encourage and value student exploration work that is not measured or assessed?
- To what extent do we involve learners in determining the measures of their success?
- To what extent are we providing opportunities for learners to personalize assessment (process and product) to make it more meaningful, relevant, doable, and achievable? What degree of autonomy is developmentally appropriate at various stages?
- To what extent are we empowering our learners to examine and revise their work based on timely and impactful feedback from mentors, teachers, or pertinent artificial intelligence tools in relation to quality indicators?
- How often do learners get feedback on their work from real audiences?
- How are the quality indicators derived? Are they anchored in the learning goals discussed in Learning Principle 1?
- How do we balance consistency and fairness with personalization across our assessment practices?

For example, you might see...

Portfolios document a learner’s growth in understandings, competencies, knowledge, and dispositions.	Student-led, parent/teacher/student conferences have a central role in determining a student’s goals for the upcoming term.
Learners are heard saying, “I don’t know how to do that YET.”	Learners are heard talking about how their portfolio showed how they learned from earlier mistakes.
The school has stopped highlighting the Top 3 Grades for each class level and has begun to give awards for personal growth in academics, skills, and character development.	Primary School teachers explain that self- and peer assessment builds in complexity as students move through the Primary School, quickly evolving from teacher-led assessment, using checklists and “traffic lights” (self-assessment), to the regular use of peer and collaborative assessment.

Learning Principle 4: Learning Perspectives

Learners face complex problems, challenges, and issues that promote deep learning. Learners consider multiple perspectives and take informed risks in the pursuit of knowledge.

Rationale

Learners must demonstrate appropriate risk-taking in the pursuit of learning as they explore a range of approaches and consider multiple perspectives when tackling a problem or challenge. This includes considering the perspectives of others as they continue to reflect and refine their work.

Learning communities have a unique opportunity and responsibility to cultivate a learning environment where all learners develop intercultural competence, as well as the ability and desire to consider different viewpoints. Adults in the learning community must both model this mindset and purposefully create opportunities for learners to see the world through the eyes of others. Learners think more deeply about complex challenges when they use a wide variety of tools to extend their thinking, including, where appropriate, AI tools. Communities where trust and empathy are pervasive typically exhibit a greater capacity for appropriate risk-taking in learning.

Impacts

- 4.1 Learners demonstrate insights gained through mistakes.
- 4.2 Learners adjust learning strategies and processes as they integrate new information and multiple perspectives.
- 4.3 Learners develop an understanding of cultures and life experiences different from their own through ongoing exploration, reflection, action, and feedback.

Learning Principle 4: Learning Perspectives

Prompts and Provocations

- To what extent are learners learning from their initial attempts, errors, and/or misunderstandings?
- To what extent do our learners exhibit an understanding of diverse perspectives and an interest in becoming more interculturally competent?
- To what extent do learners feel supported as they try things and fail?
- To what extent do teachers use probing questions to guide thinking, broaden perspective, and encourage action?
- Does our learning community value good questions as much as we value the right answers?
- How are we growing learners' capacity to critically examine sources to seek out opinion, truth, and fact?
- How do learners gain experience examining the source of information, and analyzing how it may play a role in the perspective taken or the angle in which it is presented?
- How does school leadership identify and make transparent the perspectives and biases that they use in decision-making?
- How prevalent are opportunities to develop empathy evident in the community?

For example, you might see...

<p>Learners participating in a fishbowl activity where two sides debated a hot topic; three “jurors” listened and questioned, and then the “audience” had a chance to ask questions.</p>	<p>Learners using language such as “That’s an interesting perspective, tell me more...”</p>
<p>A school actively recruits faculty from underrepresented and minority backgrounds, knowing that diverse perspectives make a school stronger.</p>	<p>Students in a Year 9 French class participate in a humorous role-play activity in which they engage enthusiastically, accept mistakes in good spirit and keep trying.</p>
<p>Grade 3 learners practice their poster presentations about how the media uses images and words to impact an audience.</p>	<p>Throughout the learning community, words and actions evidence a culture of understanding, curiosity, and interest in the opinions and viewpoints of others.</p>

Learning Principle 5: Learner Engagement and Autonomy

Learners have age-appropriate, goal-oriented autonomy over their learning and make informed choices supported by guidance within and beyond the classroom.

Rationale

Learning Principle 5 asks learning communities to build experiences that allow learners to become more active, independent, and autonomous in their learning journey. As the world of work is changing, careers are becoming much more self-regulated, self-directed, and often entrepreneurial. Individuals need to know how to decide what, where, and how to learn and how to pursue their own passions and interests. Independent and autonomous learners are confident when dealing with uncertainty and crisis. They approach challenging situations with resiliency and self-efficacy using a wide variety of tools and resources to support their learning journey. They understand how learning proceeds through a cycle such as an inquiry cycle.

Learners are also more motivated and engaged in learning when they can follow their intellectual curiosity and make choices about what to learn, how to learn it, and how to demonstrate their learning. To cultivate autonomy and engagement, learning communities must become adept at moving among teacher-directed, co-created, and student-directed learning experiences. Over time, learners should demonstrate an increased capacity to direct their own learning. In learning communities that promote learner autonomy, adults can shift from the provider of content to that of coach and mentor, and they are skilled at co-creating learning experiences with students. In such learning communities, even the youngest learners are trusted to pursue their own interests.

Impacts

- 5.1 Learners demonstrate the skills and dispositions of self-directed learners, such as the ability to ask thoughtful questions, to design a plan to pursue an area of interest, to assess the state of their progress, and the ability to seek help when it is needed.
- 5.2 Learners pursue their personal strengths, challenges, interests, and passions in a variety of ways.
- 5.3 Learners exercise voice and choice in what they learn, how they learn it, and how they demonstrate what they have learned.
- 5.4 Learners develop through self-initiated exploration, research, and discovery.

Learning Principle 5: Learner Engagement and Autonomy

Prompts and Provocations

- To what extent are learners encouraged to plan their learning according to their own strengths, interests, and challenges as they work toward school expectations?
- How has the teacher’s role changed to provide time and opportunity to co-create learning experiences with students?
- What are the necessary dispositions and skills for learner autonomy, both from a coach/mentor and student perspective?
- To what extent are we encouraging learners to access coaches, mentors and appropriate tools of artificial intelligence beyond the walls of the school to support their learning?
- How do autonomy and self-directed learning look at different developmental stages?
- How are students coached on selecting resources to support their learning goals that will include underrepresented voices and perspectives?
- When do direct teaching methods have the greatest positive impact?
- What training/experiences do our teachers need to feel comfortable in adapting pedagogical practices and releasing control of learning to students?

For example, you might see...

<p>Students in Grade 7 are creating their own children's books. Students were at different stages in the design and production process that had been co-constructed between teacher and students.</p>	<p>Self-directed learning was seen in a biology lesson in Year 6 and in Secondary School languages when learners self-assessed their progress and knew how to move on to the next stage of learning.</p>
<p>Pre-K learners move confidently from space to space as they choose the tasks that interest them.</p>	<p>High School students shared personal websites they created to curate the work they are the proudest of.</p>
<p>Learners are explaining how they planned their time to complete a complex project over several weeks.</p>	

Learning Principle 6: Research, Reflection, and Action

The learning community applies current research, connects with other learning communities, and uses future-oriented thinking to improve learning for all.

Rationale

In schools that are strongly aligned to Learning Principle 6, there is an evident curiosity in understanding what improves learning, what can be learned and adapted from research, and how members of the community can work together to further refine approaches to learning.

The learning community's collaborative reflection, review, and revision processes ensure that its pedagogy, programs, structures, curriculum, and assessment practices remain relevant and serve the current and future needs of learners. Teachers routinely engage in action research to promote their own development as well as that of the learning community. There are structures and processes in place to frequently seek and act upon feedback from all stakeholders. This includes stakeholder surveys, focus group interviews, considering relevant educational research, and seeking inspiration from other forward-thinking learning communities. The learning community strives to connect with other learning communities around the globe to gain insights, share findings, and work together to transform learning. Distributive leadership permits innovative ideas to surface and be acted upon by the learning community.

Just as the community is encouraged to use action research or design thinking in its continuous improvement, so too are learners taught to use a design cycle in their projects. Learners need ongoing opportunities to engage in a design cycle such as study, design, act, reflect to become increasingly able to direct their own learning. Learners, peers, and the adults who support their learning play a key role in learning through collaboration and analysis. While much can be learned from studying the learning community itself, the members also understand the need to build understanding about current research and look to experts and other learning communities to deepen and challenge the school community's thinking.

Impacts

- 6.1 The learning community has an approach to design thinking and inquiry which is understood by all members of the community
- 6.2 Learners make connections with experts beyond the school environment to aid in their pursuit of solutions to problems that have meaning to them.
- 6.3 The learning community engages with complex issues and future trends by developing its own inquiry, trying out novel ideas, and applying design-oriented approaches to addressing complex questions and opportunities.
- 6.4 The learning community develops and communicates relevant ideas and conclusions supported by insights gained from observation, current research, and collaboration both within and outside the learning community.
- 6.5 The learning community regularly tests ideas and solutions in order to assess their suitability and usefulness and refines them based on understandings developed through the process.
- 6.6 The learning community collaborates with external partners leading to opportunities for learners to connect to real-world experiences.

Learning Principle 6: Research, Reflection, and Action

Prompts and Provocations

- What are the embedded structures and processes for collaborative reflection, review, and revision for faculty and for students? To what extent do the processes encourage refinement of learning experiences?
- To what extent has the learning community refined its Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning? Has the learning community provided visible examples to illustrate what High-Quality Learning looks like in practice?
- To what extent does the learning community have respectful, trusting relationships that cultivate an environment where people are excited to try new ways of doing things and learn and grow from those experiences?
- Does the language of communication within the school reinforce the school as a growing, changing learning community that is trying new ideas and ways of improving learning?
- To what extent is the learning community committed to looking at external research, insights from AI and examples to generate innovative ideas?
- Is there evidence of real change and improvement in learning across the community?
- To what extent are community members empowered to question the rationale for new or existing programs and initiatives?

For example, you might see...

<p>The traditional appraisal system was replaced by professional learning communities. Groups of teachers identify an area for growth and use collaborative research and self-reflection to explore new perspectives and innovative ideas they can apply in their classrooms.</p>	
<p>Teacher training and a book study over a one-year period focused on promoting student reflection.</p>	<p>Learners play an active role in providing feedback to their teachers and to the school community on a routine basis.</p>
<p>Board members engage in reading and dialogue on educational and fiduciary practices.</p>	

Learning Principle 7: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Belonging

The learning community exhibits a culture of inclusiveness that enables the diverse needs, identities, and interests of all learners and community members to be acknowledged, actively celebrated, and proactively addressed. Differing viewpoints and opinions are invited in pursuit of an informed and welcoming community.

Rationale

Inclusive schools prioritize a culture where students and adults feel physically and emotionally safe, supported, and respected in their development, regardless of their race, background, disability, or status. Inclusive schools consider challenges and issues through multiple lenses, and practice “cultural humility”. School communities hold themselves accountable for examining and reforming policies, practices, and school climate factors so that all learners feel included and can thrive.

The Learning Community has adaptable and effective processes and purposeful programs that promote inclusion and belonging. School communities that embrace inclusion, equity, diversity, and belonging not only say the right things but act proactively to root out racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of abuse among all stakeholders.

Transparent communication and respectful interactions contribute to an inclusive community where all members feel they belong and that it is safe to challenge practices that do not fit the community's values. When seen or heard, racism and divisive actions are addressed.

Impacts

- 7.1 Access to learning is equitable.
- 7.2 The learning community actively supports the value and integrity of each of its members.
- 7.3 Individual and community success is supported through a variety of structures and processes.
- 7.4 The intended and taught curriculum is rich with opportunities for learners to engage with issues of inequity, disability, racism, poverty, and injustice.
- 7.5 All members of the community act ethically with respect for all others in the learning community.
- 7.6 All community members feel like they belong in this learning community.

Learning Principle 7: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Belonging

Prompts and Provocations

- How well do we understand the various needs of all our learners? To what extent do we act upon those needs and continually assess our effectiveness?
- To what degree do our policies and practices support individuals and fight against discrimination?
- To what degree do our diversity and anti-bias initiatives truly impact the experiences of our community?
- How do we account for systemically and historically marginalized groups, and explicitly work to correct these exclusions?
- How do we audit our curriculum and library resources to identify opportunities to celebrate and integrate diversity into how and what we teach?
- What implications do tools of artificial intelligence have on accessibility and equity?
- How do we put into action meaningful and responsive plans to meet the wide range of differences in learners (e.g., language learning, social-emotional, physical issues, learning difficulties)? How do we know if the plans are meeting the needs of the learner?
- Have we mapped the ways that racism, homophobia, and sexism operate in our community? (Policy, curricula, discipline practices.)
- To what extent do our leaders represent the diversity of our staff and student populations?
- To what extent do we encourage community spirit to create a welcoming, nurturing environment? How does this environment contribute to the learner’s sense of belonging and the possibility of growing in the community?

For example, you might see...

Recent focus groups were conducted to get the opinions of non-teaching staff such as office staff, operations staff, security, and facilities staff about their experience as an employee.	
Members of the community mention that non-discrimination policies are easily accessible and explicitly protect historically marginalized groups by name (i.e., race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity and presentation, sexual orientation, ability.) Stakeholders are aware of the process to report discrimination.	
Teachers are able to describe how recent training in cultural competency content (e.g., implicit bias, privilege, and marginalization) has promoted their personal understanding of equity in the learning community.	Learners share how their own journey toward becoming a better advocate for social justice has impacted their understandings in social situations.
Several parents described how their own child had grown with the support of the SEN Department or EAL Department’s support.	The native language teaching team expressed that they felt integrated into all of the important committees and meetings of the school.

Learning Principle 8: Governance and Leadership for Learning

The roles of leadership and governance are aligned with the school's learning goals, unified through a common mission, and organized through well-aligned structures that allow informed analysis, communication, and decision-making in support of learners.

Rationale

A learning community that is unambiguous in its goals, unified through a common mission, and organized through well-aligned structures of communication and decision-making can have a lasting impact on learners. Clarity, transparency, and follow-through are hallmarks of a well-led and well-governed learning community. Organizations that are living this principle have a common understanding of the learning Impacts sought by the school and a common language to describe how to reach those Impacts. Leadership for learning is often shared by stakeholders who serve in various roles that extend beyond management into learning-focused leadership.

Good ideas can emerge from all areas of the school and be acted upon. Leadership traits and skills are cultivated and supported at all levels including among the students themselves. Leadership is distributed and there are multiple opportunities for teachers to lead from their classroom positions. Learners themselves are also developing leadership skills through authentic opportunities to influence and lead within the school itself and in the local community. Leaders and the governing body seek feedback from stakeholders on a regular basis and use appropriate measures to determine the school's success at achieving the desired learning Impacts. The learning community has systems and structures that guide the community toward its common values and mission and protect members of the community when its values are not adhered to. Learning Principle 8 asks schools to look at how well their leadership structures serve and governance their mission and their stakeholders and what could be improved further.

Impacts

- 8.1 Decision-making is grounded in the learning community's core values, agreements, and desired goals.
- 8.2 Governance, leadership, and management structures are aligned with, or guided by desired Impacts.
- 8.3 The learning community systematically utilizes evidence of Impact to direct future plans and actions.
- 8.4 Progress towards achieving learning Impacts is regularly monitored, communicated to all stakeholders, and used in ongoing planning and implementation.
- 8.5 Governance, leadership, and management demonstrate a generative mindset, a focus on the future, and a strategic outlook when envisioning how best to support learners.
- 8.6 Governance, leadership, and management regularly collaborate to explore the future, articulate desired Impacts, and design appropriate approaches and innovations to achieve a common vision.

Learning Principle 8: Governance and Leadership for Learning

Prompts and Provocations

- What is our decision-making process? To what extent is it designed to grow ideas and consider possibilities rather than preserve what already exists? Who has a voice in decision-making that impacts the whole school community?
- How are students invited into the school's decision-making processes, and do they have a voice in setting the school's future direction?
- To what degree is there appropriate separation between school operations and governance?
- How well does our learning community adapt to change?
- How well do we communicate with all stakeholders about the school's direction, initiatives, and decisions?
- How effectively do we cultivate leadership among all staff, and what structures and opportunities exist to cultivate leadership and promotion within the learning community?
- To what extent do our governance and leadership teams reflect the demographics and/or perspectives of our learning community?

For example, you might see...

<p>Students describe examples of how they are meaningfully involved in school improvement efforts and have been given opportunities to lead in authentic, impactful ways.</p>	<p>Leadership is distributed across many layers of the learning community. Teachers, coordinators, senior leaders, and students describe contributing to decision-making organized around key school initiatives/goals.</p>
<p>The school's strategies are documented and understandable. Members of the community can describe how strategies and priorities have meaning for them.</p>	<p>School-based leaders describe a supportive, interactive relationship with the leaders at the school group level.</p>
<p>The Board, Senior Leadership Team, and faculty describe the school's purpose and direction using similar language. There is a strong alignment among all stakeholders about where the school is heading and how it will get there.</p>	<p>The senior leaders represent the diversity of the student body with leaders from various countries, language backgrounds, gender identities, and cultural and ethnic backgrounds.</p>

Learning Principle 9: Learning Space and Time

The learning community optimizes physical environments, virtual opportunities, and time to support learning and wellbeing for all.

Rationale

Learning is organized and happens in a variety of ways, spaces, and times. Being flexible with space and time allows for greater learner autonomy and self-navigation. Learning Principle 9 asks learning communities to consider how time and space can be organized to contribute to the school's overarching goals and priorities.

Learning communities who embrace Learning Principle 9 see space and time as factors that can be manipulated to serve learner-centered approaches rather than barriers to such. How does the virtual learning environment, coupled with the learners' home environment, work together to create optimal learning time and space? This principle also asks the learning community to consider the broader environment, community, and global context as aspects of the child's learning environment.

Impacts

- 9.1 Learning space (physical and virtual) and the structure of learning time contribute to the achievement of learning goals for learners.
- 9.2 Learners and teachers have the autonomy to manipulate learning space and time to maximize learning. Learners are given time to pursue interests and passions within the framework of the core curriculum.

Learning Principle 9: Learning Space and Time

Prompts and Provocations

- How does the learning community consider flexible use of time and space to achieve learning goals?
- Does our use of space and time promote or inhibit realization of our Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning?
- To what extent are learners empowered to move purposefully and/or change location according to learning requirements?
- How do learners have appropriate autonomy in deciding on the pace of their own learning?
- How do we reimagine the use of space and furnishings to create opportunities for collaboration, independent work, creation, and design?
- To what extent do the online learning platforms facilitate the intended learning impacts?
- How well does the use of time and organization of the school day allow for meaningful and rich thinking, investigation, and creation?
- How does the learning space reflect the school's values in terms of social, economic, and environmental impact on the greater community?
- How does the learning community use its online environment to expand the time and space?
- How well do the physical spaces and time constructs contribute to the wellbeing of the entire community?
- How does the school account for inequities in home resources when assigning and assessing home learning tasks?
- How do the schedules of teachers facilitate their own professional learning and collaboration with others?

For example, you might see...

New buildings are designed with spacious classrooms and substantial central, open, collaborative spaces, as well as spaces for individual work with a lot of natural light.	
Students have given input into the school's schedule and building/renovation projects.	Decision-making about building renovations is tied to intended learning Impacts.
Theme weeks and "in-depth days" that provide opportunities for multi-disciplinary learning and other activities that are widely valued by the community, including parents.	A digital platform is designed to enhance collaboration and community building, two of the learning community's intended Impacts.
Students' developmental needs when determining divisional start times, and the number of hours children are at school.	The learning community has adapted all its programs to be interchangeable so they can run a face-to-face, <u>blended</u> , or fully online program.
One room is designated for learners to take a "no-questions-asked time out" when they feel emotional or need to be alone.	Timetables finish slightly earlier on Tuesdays, enabling staff to meet and collaborate, share PD experiences, best practices, and discuss learning themes.

Learning Principle 10: Learning Community Wellbeing

The learning community is a healthy environment where all members thrive. Respectful, healthy, ethical, and honest relationships create a true sense of community. Community values are clearly stated, actively lived, and define a distinct, sustained identity.

Rationale

Learning communities that are aligned with Learning Principle 10 are characterized by respectful interactions and broadly accepted values that contribute to a sense of community. The community members can articulate what makes the learning community unique and what the community is striving to achieve through its Guiding Statements.

In these communities, members' voices are encouraged, and their opinions are heard and acted upon. The well-being of all members is highly valued and expressed through opportunities for members to attend to their physical, emotional, spiritual, and social needs. The understanding of wellbeing includes an understanding of specific experiences of members of historically marginalized groups.

Members feel appropriately challenged by work or study, but also express that they are able to maintain a work/life balance. Members of the learning community are constantly learning new skills to improve their social-emotional wellbeing. Channels of communication are considered to be effective, timely, and facilitate the community's sense of togetherness. Parents and staff express that they know what is happening in the community, what the major initiatives and goals are, and that they generally feel well informed.

Impacts

- 10.1 Members of the learning community express satisfaction with the ways in which they are treated and included as members of that community.
- 10.2 The community demonstrates an understanding that voice, choice, and self-directed learning are fundamental underpinnings of an individual's sense of engagement and wellbeing. The community is acting upon that understanding by increasing opportunities for voice, choice, and self-directed learning.
- 10.3 The learning community members are engaged, informed, and supportive of the community's goals.
- 10.4 Community members experience high levels of personal and professional wellbeing and a sense of belonging.
- 10.5 Learners use appropriate skills to enhance their own social-emotional wellbeing.
- 10.6 Learners transition successfully from grade to grade, between divisions, and into and out of the school community.

Learning Principle 10: Learning Community Wellbeing

Prompts and Provocations

- How well do various stakeholder groups understand and support our identity, values, and desired goals?
- How were these values developed; Are they still relevant or should they be revisited?
- How is feedback from stakeholders gathered and analyzed? How is it used?
- When people describe our learning community, what do we hope they say? What do they actually say?
- Do members of the community express that they can find a home/work balance?
- How well does the school support learners developing a healthy relationship to technology including harnessing AI in responsible ways and in preventing the spread of misinformation and bias?
- How safe is it to speak your opinion at this school?
- To what degree are staff members able to succeed in their roles as defined? Are workloads appropriate and conducive to creative, innovative collaboration?
- To what degree are learners experiencing well-thought-out, developmentally appropriate social-emotional learning experiences?
- To what extent does the culture of the community contribute to or hinder the school's achievement of its goals for learners?
- To what extent would various stakeholders describe decision-making as effective and well communicated?
- How well does the community deal with conflict?

For example, you might see...

Learners expressing their ideas about how to revise the school's schedule and teacher leaders are listening respectfully and acting upon their suggestions.	Many members of the community describe the culture of the school as one of respect for diverse ideas, globally minded, and caring.
Parents share that their children come home happy from school and can't wait to go back each day.	Learners and adults report having time in their schedules to relax, reflect, and consider their goals.
School values are reinforced throughout learning experiences; e.g., learners are heard saying, "That's okay. Sometimes we will fail, but that's how we learn."	
Teachers using positive behavior management techniques that result in a caring and supportive learning environment.	Teachers meet in groups to discuss how a recent crisis at school has impacted them personally.
Two students are observed working through a conflict using skills they learned during their morning meeting.	Learners and adults are observed using respectful interactions, such as "I never thought about it that way, tell me more..."

NEASC Acronyms

FSV

Foundation Standards Visit (for schools new to accreditation)

POLICY 1.6

Visit (for schools new to NEASC but currently accredited by another agency; mirrors the FSV process)

ACE LPV

ACE Preparatory Visit or Learning Principles Visit (for schools on their first accreditation cycle, who recently hosted an FSV, on the ACE Pathway toward NEASC Accreditation)

ACE LPV + AFSV

ACE Preparatory Visit with Abbreviated Foundation Standards Visit (for schools entering re-accreditation with NEASC). This visit combines a review of Foundation Standards with the ACE Preparatory Visit.

DUAL VISIT

The Dual Visit combines a full Foundations Standards visit with a Preparatory Visit (ACE, Standard or CLP).

CLP PREP VISIT

Collaborative Learning Protocol Preparatory Visit which mirrors the ACE LPV process and uses the same template, while blending elements of ACE and IB, for schools on the CLP Pathway.

STANDARD PREP OR SPV

NEASC Standard Pathway Preparatory Visit.

ACE ERV

ACE Pathway External Review Team Visit using the ACE Learning protocol

CLP PEV

Collaborative Learning Protocol Peer Evaluation Team Visit using the CLP protocol.

STANDARD ERV

NEASC Standard Pathway External Review Team Visit

Key Terms

NB: The definitions provided are not intended to be comprehensive or ‘final’; they are offered to stimulate further discussion and conversations about the nature of learning.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Applications that MIMIC behaviors and processes exhibited by humans, including but not limited to generative AI and Large Language Models.

- Generative AI - systems that continue to learn from examples to generate content
- Large Language Models - models trained on massive amounts of text data

BLENDED LEARNING

A style of education in which students learn via electronic and online media as well as traditional face-to-face teaching.

DESIGN THINKING

Learners utilize the design cycle such as study, design, act, reflect to become increasingly able to direct their own learning. There are many different versions of the design cycle.

ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING

Yong Zhao defines entrepreneurial learning as “an individual’s ability to turn ideas into action”. Entrepreneurial learning promotes creativity, innovative thinking, and problem solving. The Aspen Youth Entrepreneurship Strategic Group defines an entrepreneurial mindset as “a critical mix of success-oriented attitudes of initiative, intelligent risk-taking, collaboration, and opportunity recognition.” In other words, entrepreneurial learning should not be confused with “business studies.”

FUTURE DESIGN VS. STRATEGIC PLANNING

Traditional strategic planning often begins with an analysis of the learning community’s current situation, proposes goals intended to improve upon the present, and leads to the development of a set of actions over a period of three to five years. On the other hand, Future Design begins by examining the drivers of change, then imagines a preferred future and articulates goals aligned with the learning community’s *raison d’être* — learning. Future Design eschews long-range action planning in favor of more agile, nimbler strategies that are refined and adapted regularly based on evidence of success, stakeholder feedback, and desired modifications of the organization’s preferred future.

GOVERNANCE VS. LEADERSHIP

Across NEASC membership, there are various governance and leadership models, including not-for-profit, proprietary, government-affiliated, and for-profit (including family-owned or part of a school group.) The governance of the school may look different across the various types of schools from a traditional non-profit Board to a management structure that is affiliated with a corporate entity. The key is to have a governance and leadership structure that prioritizes educational impact, in which roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated so there is appropriate separation between school operations and oversight, allowing those who are accountable to have appropriate authority, autonomy, and support to ensure success.

GROWTH MINDSET

A growth mindset, proposed by Stanford professor Carol Dweck in her book *Mindset*, describes people who believe that their success depends on time and effort. People with a growth mindset feel their skills and intelligence can be improved with effort and persistence.

HIGHER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS (HOTS)

Higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) is a concept of education reform based on the concept that some types of learning and thinking are more complex than others. While more difficult to teach and difficult to learn, higher-order thinking skills such as critical thinking and problem solving are associated with complex judgment skills that are necessary for adults to thrive.

IMPACT VS. INPUT/OUTPUT

Impacts

An Impact is a long-term transformational change we wish to see in learners over time. Some schools define Impact through their Vision of the Graduate statements, IB Approaches to Learning (ATLs), and Learner Profile or their Transdisciplinary Transfer Goals (TTGs). NEASC uses Impact Statements to help schools measure the result of their efforts through the accreditation process. NEASC Visitors and the schools themselves look for evidence of the Impact Statements for each of the ten Learning Principles.

Notice that Impacts typically start with “Learners...”

Outputs

Schools have often gauged their success as Outputs such as standardized test scores, summative assessments, or similar forms of academic achievement. We encourage schools to expand their understanding of success to include Impacts that describe the school’s highest aspirations for its learners – learners who are prepared to tackle 21st — century challenges.

Example: Learning Principle 4.3, Learners demonstrate insights gained through mistakes.

Inputs

Inputs describe the resources that schools use to impact student learning such as specific pedagogies, programs, curriculums, policies, resources, or learning spaces. These inputs do not

necessarily guarantee impact. That is why we encourage schools to stay focused on their chosen Impacts to gauge whether the inputs are having the intended result. Impacts are developed by focusing on the role of the student and the role of the teacher in the learning process, and the type of learning tasks that students engage in.

Note that Inputs typically start with “The school...” or “The teachers...”

Example: The school has a revised Assessment Policy that allows for students to redo assessments to attain mastery.

INCLUSION

The inclusion and celebration of diverse stakeholders and varying perspectives, anti-racism and anti-sexist policies and actions, equity, and the building of belonging for all are hallmarks of an inclusive learning community. An inclusive school is also one that successfully educates the students with disabilities whom they have admitted according to their Admission Policy. ACE Learning challenges schools to review the ways and means in which all stakeholders feel included in shaping the culture and direction of the community.

INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING

This type of learning involves connecting the academic disciplines via challenging, relevant, and engaging tasks.

INTERNAL REFLECTION

The school’s Internal Reflection represents the core of ACE Learning. Following the award of Candidacy for Accreditation (or Re-Accreditation) status, the learning community commits to 12-18 months of self-reflection, which culminates in the learning community’s Internal Reflection Report.

NEASC LEARNING SURVEYS

To launch the Internal Reflection, the school issues surveys to gather input about learning. Students, parents, staff, and leaders/Governing Body members complete a survey. The ACE Design Team and individual committees analyze the results of the survey as one set of evidence.

LEARNING GOALS

The long-term understandings, competencies, knowledge, and dispositions that the learning community has prioritized for its learners. Learners will build skills and experiences toward these goals throughout their years at the school so they can transfer this learning to real-world situations. Learning tasks will be designed to support growth and competence in these areas. Learning goals are not to be confused with the individual outcomes of a lesson, unit, or course, but rather the overarching, transdisciplinary goals that can be applied across disciplines.

MAJOR LEARNING PLANS

Toward the end of the Internal Reflection, the learning community is ready to prioritize a few Major Learning Plans (MLPs) that will create lasting Impacts on its learners. Plans may take many forms and may be individualized to contribute to the school's own strategic objectives.

SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF HIGH-QUALITY LEARNING INCLUDES:

- a definition of the characteristics, skills, and attributes desired of the learners/graduates (which is the ultimate Impact)
- a description of the type of pedagogy and conditions that result in learners developing in those ways
- a statement/story to illustrate what learners will be doing, what teachers will be doing, and the learning tasks expected from learners

The school's Shared Understanding is supported by a description of the specific pedagogy, chosen by the school, that is used to achieve the desired goals. For example, if a school's Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning includes language and/or graphics that focus on self-directed learning, learner agency, and autonomy, then they would likely be using some form of open inquiry or co-created inquiry, rather than teacher-directed inquiry.

In ACE Learning schools, the Shared Understanding of High-Quality Learning is grounded in the ten ACE Learning Principles and Impacts, as well as other Impacts a school might have chosen. As the community develops its Shared Understanding, it can more easily identify the Major Learning Plans that can close the gaps between what the school aspires to and its current reality.

SELF-DIRECTED/PERSONAL(IZED) LEARNING

Personal(ized) learning places the learner at the center of the learning process. Learners have choices in what they want to learn, how they want to learn it, and the ways in which they want to demonstrate their learning. The resources of the learning community are dedicated to supporting learners in achieving their goals, following their passions, and developing their knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Personal(ized) learning as conceived by ACE goes well beyond differentiation and accommodating diverse learning styles.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

TECHNOLOGY

Methods, systems, and devices, including artificial intelligence tools which support learners in the present and future.

TRANSDISCIPLINARY LEARNING/SKILLS

Learning that aims to develop skills that rise above the traditional disciplines, and which will transcend the school years and serve learners into adulthood, such as collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. These skills are defined by the learning community and are often referenced as a learning community's desired Impacts for learning.

TRANSACTIONAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING

Transactional learning is often defined as the formal relationship between the teacher and learner, between learning content and learner, between learning environment and learner. It is focused on achieving specific, common learning goals defined by the school. Transformational learning focuses on nurturing holistic learning, expanding the learner's potential, and promoting deeper engagement with making meaning. As such, transformational learning changes lives. Transactional learning produces transcripts.

About us

NEASC Mission Statement

NEASC partners with schools to assess, support, and promote high quality education for all students through accreditation, professional assistance, and pursuit of best practices.

Commission on International Education Statement

The NEASC Commission on International Education evaluates, accredits, and supports international educational institutions and programs from early childhood through secondary school in accordance with standards of best educational practice. The Commission leads educational discourse and action, is a catalyst for innovation, and advocates for ethical conduct in education.

The NEASC Commission on International Education...

- *aspires to be the leading accreditor of international Pre-School–12 international educational institutions and programs*
- *develops Standards and Indicators that are aligned with best educational practice and validated by research*
- *supports member institutions committed to self-reflection, critical review, and continuous improvement*
- *promotes transformative approaches to teaching and learning*
- *models its Mission by inviting peer review and externally moderated evaluation*
- *initiates and participates in future-oriented educational forums and discussions*
- *develops joint projects, accreditation protocols, and services in collaboration with other NEASC Commissions*

Resources

Accreditation resources are available on our website at www.neasc.org/international

Contact us

New England Association of Schools and Colleges
 1115 Westford Street, Third Floor
 Lowell, MA, 01851 USA

Phone 781-425-7700 | Toll free (US) 855-886-3272

Staff directory: www.neasc.org/staff-directory

Email: cie@neasc.org

