

# STHS challenging accreditation report

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Unified School District officials are scratching their heads when it comes South Tahoe High School being put on a two-year probation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

The school board on May 10 received notification from STHS Principal Chad Houck. Houck got word from the WASC in late April and has already started the appeals process, which is likely to take a year.

“We believe the information WASC used was incorrect because of errors, bias or lack of evidence,” Houck told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The school’s accreditation is not threatened, Houck said. (Accreditation is good for six years.)

No one from WASC returned a call.

“It is big deal. When something like this happens it’s important we take it very seriously,” Houck said. “It definitely caught us off-guard.”

The only way to find out what led to the probationary status is to appeal the decision. Even though that process is under way, with the district challenging WASC on three out of four possible criteria, no word has come back from the Burlingame-based organization.

Accreditation starts with the school’s doing a self-analysis. This go-round more technology was involved, which allowed more staff participation. It’s about creating a plan for improvement. Action is already occurring, with the board on Tuesday approving additions for Common Core.

A WASC team made up of educators from throughout the state is assembled to help with the process and make recommendations.

That, in large part, is where things broke down, according to Houck. He said meetings were canceled, and that the committee never met with Superintendent Jim Tarwater. LTUSD also contends there was bias by one or more members of the team who came to visit, and that the evidence given the evaluation team was not complete.

When the committee left, Houck said, there was no indication the areas for improvement weren't routine and already being addressed.

"In our report we had an action plan. We have an action plan to address those areas of growth. We already know how to get better," Houck said.