



# WESLEYAN CHRISTIAN ACADEMY



## PROGRESS REVIEW

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## **Wesleyan Christian Academy Progress Review**

### **Introduction**

Wesleyan Christian Academy (WCA) is a private school situated in the district of West Bay. It is affiliated with the Wesleyan Holiness Church and follows the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) system. This education system utilizes an individualized curriculum for Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Students are not placed in individual classes as in traditional schools; they are grouped in rooms called 'learning centres'. They work at their own pace, and move independently through the curriculum under the guidance of supervisors. Students work in individual booklets known as PACEs (Packets of Accelerated Christian Education). These take the place of conventional textbooks and teacher-directed learning.

The school was last evaluated by the Education Standards and Assessment Unit (ESAU) in April 2009. The full report can be accessed on the Ministry of Education's website: [www.brighterfutures.gov.ky](http://www.brighterfutures.gov.ky). This is the progress check which follows approximately six months after an evaluation.

### **The purpose of this visit**

- To assess the effectiveness of the school's action plan in addressing the issues for improvement identified at the time of the last evaluation
- To provide an opportunity to discuss progress with the school's senior management and make further recommendations if necessary

### **The main areas for improvement from the evaluation in April 2009**

- The monitoring of the work of the school
- The management of time, so that students are always constructively occupied in their learning
- The provision for the development of students' speaking listening and writing skills
- The provision for learning in kindergarten

### **Other recommendations for improvement**

**ICT:** Consider ways of building students' computer and general ICT skills across the school

#### **English**

- a) Proceed with plans to reinstate the main school library
- b) Provide more opportunities for students to develop their speaking and listening skills
- c) Provide opportunities for students to plan, draft, redraft and proofread extended pieces of writing
- d) Provide opportunities and stimuli needed for students to write at length for 'real life' situations

## **Mathematics**

- a) Develop a numeracy policy that is agreed by all members of staff and will guide the type of support provided for students
- b) Encourage supervisors to use manipulatives such as tape measures, scales and counting blocks to ensure that students get a firm understanding of the concepts being taught and make learning fun and meaningful
- c) Provide practical and 'real life' situations where students are required to demonstrate their learning

## **Progress in addressing the issues for improvement:**

The school has made a start in addressing the issues for improvement. Good progress has been made in improving the provision for Kindergarten, but progress in the other areas ranges from adequate to unsatisfactory.

## **1. The monitoring of the work of the school**

### **The school's response:**

- Policies from the Procedures Manual are being used.
- Supervisors have recently undertaken training and know the procedures expected.

### **ESAU's observations:**

The Procedures Manual provides useful guidance. However, WCA would benefit from adapting some of the policies from the Manual to suit the specific needs of the school.

The Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) training sessions are also useful in ensuring that staff are familiar with the ACE procedures. Administrators now need to take responsibility for the consistent implementation by supervisors. Although learning centers are visited regularly, administrators need to be very clear as to what they want to see happening, and document areas of strength and what needs to be improved. This information can then be used for professional development sessions.

The monitoring of the work of the school still needs improvement.

## **2. The management of time, so that students are always constructively occupied in their learning**

### **The school's response:**

- Supervisors are checking that students have met their goals for the day.
- Staffing has been increased in some of the learning centers, so that students' work is more easily checked.
- Some supervisors are providing additional projects for students who finish their work early.

### **ESAU's observations:**

The evaluation report suggested that the goals for some students may be unrealistic – for example, too many or too few pages to be completed. While students are required to complete an average of 22 pages in their PACEs each day, this number may need to be

varied for different students. This aspect still needs to be addressed, especially in the case of those students who finish their work very quickly.

As recommended in the evaluation report, the school has provided additional staff in learning centres where the student / staff ratio was too high. The school's senior managers need to ascertain how students are benefiting from the additional staff, and whether they are now getting the support that they need.

The provision of additional, relevant and interesting projects is commendable but this needs to be a standard procedure throughout the school.

The issue of the management of students' time needs to be much more closely monitored.

### **3. Improve the provision for the development of students' speaking listening and writing skills**

#### **The school's response:**

- Students' speaking and listening skills are encouraged during devotional times.
- Some classes, notably Junior High, have afternoon sessions where there is discussion on a book.
- Copies of the Cayman Islands Social Studies text books (primary) have been purchased and teachers work through these with students as a group exercise.

#### **ESAU's observations:**

ESAU found during the school's evaluation that students were encouraged to interact with each other and with the supervisor during devotional times. However, the team did not find that this was sufficient to effectively develop students' speaking and listening skills. (Development of writing skills is addressed under the 'English' section.)

Also, although some classes did have the opportunity to talk about a book they were reading, this was not found to be a common occurrence in all learning centers.

Group exercises using the Social Studies books can provide more opportunities for speaking and listening while learning about Caymanian culture.

It is important that all supervisors understand what the ACE framework allows, and provide opportunities for students to develop these essential skills. This issue is still not being adequately addressed.

### **4. Improve the provision for learning in kindergarten**

#### **The school's response:**

- Kindergarten has been moved to a larger, downstairs room.
- There is now more interaction between the children and the supervisor.
- There is now a better equipped area for play.

#### **ESAU's observations:**

The new room provides a more effective and stimulating environment and the new supervisor seems to have an understanding of what is needed for this age group.

The school has made good progress in addressing this issue.

## Progress in other areas

**ICT:** Consider ways of building students' computer and general ICT skills across the school

**The school's response:**

- The school considers that students' computer skills are already being developed through their use of Readmaster, Word Building and Math Builder software for test taking and reinforcement of concepts learnt. Older students are encouraged to go online to research various topics.
- The school also reports that three Smart boards have been purchased.

**ESAU's observations:**

ACE provides some limited opportunities for older students to learn and use computer skills, but there are no opportunities for learning specific skills below Junior High level. The use of computers for Readmaster, Word building and Math Builder does not help students to learn and develop basic word processing skills.

The school needs to consider how the computer lab might be scheduled to accommodate the teaching of specific skills throughout the school.

More Smart board training will be required to ensure that best use is made of these, and their use will need to be regularly monitored.

**English:**

- a) Proceed with plans to reinstate the main school library
- b) Provide more opportunities for students to develop their speaking and listening skills
- c) Provide opportunities for students to plan, draft, redraft and proofread extended pieces of writing
- d) Provide opportunities and stimuli needed for students to write at length for 'real life' situations

**The school's response:**

- The school has submitted a proposal for government funding based on establishing a central library and is seeking ways to supplement the current selection of books – for example, taking students to the West Bay library and also purchasing second hand books.
- Students already have opportunities in some of their PACEs, notably English and Creative Writing, to plan, draft, redraft and proofread extended pieces of writing.

**ESAU's observations:**

The establishment of a library will provide the opportunities students need to read good children's books. This was one of the recommendations after the last evaluation.

The evaluation did not find that the exercises provided in the PACEs were enough to stimulate and develop students' writing skills effectively. No further action has been taken by the school to address this.

**Mathematics:**

- a) Develop a numeracy policy that is agreed by all members of staff and will guide the type of support provided for students
- b) Encourage supervisors to use manipulatives such as tape measures, scales and counting blocks to ensure that students get a firm understanding of the concepts being taught and make learning fun and meaningful
- c) Provide practical and 'real life' situations where students are required to demonstrate their learning

**The school's response:**

- More supervisors are working with small groups.

**ESAU's observations:**

Clarification was provided for the school on the development of a numeracy policy.

The fact that more supervisors are working with small groups of students is a useful initiative. All supervisors need to do this from time to time as required.

The school acknowledges that more practical and up to date manipulatives need to be purchased.

**The effectiveness of the school's action plan in addressing the issues for improvement**

The school now has a new principal and a new administrator. Very little monitoring of progress has taken place to date, as these two key people are still settling in. The previous principal is still on the staff and this provides some continuity.

The action plan as presented is limited in its usefulness in taking the work of the school forward.

- There is no indication that the issues for improvement have been prioritized
- The actions to be taken are not clearly defined
- No one has been assigned to take responsibility for monitoring or evaluating progress
- There are no timelines for accomplishing any of the actions
- There are no success criteria by which to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken

**The way forward**

The evaluation in April 2009 found that the education that the school provides is only adequate as the way the school implements the ACE curriculum restricts students' learning in some areas. The school has made a start in addressing the issues, but overall, progress after six months is minimal.

It is therefore important that the principal, administrator and all supervisors agree on what they want to see happening at WCA in terms of the support provided for students and the quality of learning taking place. Senior managers will need to develop a system for monitoring and evaluating the provision and practice in order to hold supervisors accountable.

**The school now needs to...**

- Look carefully again at all the issues for improvement and the recommendations provided in the report to ascertain whether there are any further improvements that can be made within the ACE framework.
- Consider the use of a planning template that can be used as a working document. This would be helpful in monitoring what is being done and evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken. It would also indicate the persons responsible for each action, thus increasing the degree of accountability.