

Evaluation Report

Westlake International Academy



May 7 – 8, 2009

**IB NORTH AMERICA
PRIMARY YEARS PROGRAMME
EVALUATION REPORT
Westlake Academy**

Visit date: May 7 – 8, 2009

Name of school: Westlake Academy

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1 Visiting team:

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- Lesley Stewart, The York School, Toronto, Canada
- Maxine Bone, Toronto, Canada

2 Description

Westlake Academy was authorized to implement the Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate Organization in 2006. This report documents the first evaluation of the school's implementation of the programme. Westlake Academy has also been authorized to offer the MYP and DP and thus, it now offers all three of the IB programmes.

| Changes in the school since authorization | |
|--|--|
| Administration/coordination | Since authorization there is a new Head of School at the school. There is also a new Head of Primary (the position was created after the authorization took place); and there is also a new full-time PYP Coordinator who was the G6 teacher during the school's candidacy stage and during the authorization process. |
| Student body/number of students | Enrollment has decreased by 8 students. |
| Organization of the school | Remains the same. |
| The primary staff | There has been some turnover in staff since authorization. New teachers have been trained to implement the program and or teamed with teachers with experience teaching the program. |

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|---------------------------------|---|
| The school facilities | A new playground as been added to the campus and at the moment an Art and Science Building is under construction. |
| School finances/auditing | Every year the school is audited by an independent company and all our reports have had no reservations. |

3 A Summary of the findings from the self-study

| Section | Standard | School Evaluation | IB Evaluation |
|----------------|-----------------|---|---|
| A: Philosophy | Standard A1 | The school believes that it is has shown satisfactory development in this standard. | The school has shown satisfactory development in this standard. |
| | Standard A2 | The school believes that it is has shown satisfactory development in this standard. | The school has shown satisfactory development in this standard. |

| Section | Standard | School Evaluation | IB Evaluation |
|-----------------|-----------------|---|---|
| B: Organization | Standard B | The school believes that it is has shown satisfactory development in this standard. | The school has shown satisfactory development in this standard. |

| Section | Standard | School Evaluation | IB Evaluation |
|----------------|-----------------|---|---|
| C: Curriculum | Standard C1 | The school believes that it is has shown satisfactory development in this standard. | The school has shown satisfactory development in this standard. |
| | Standard C2 | The school believes that it is has shown satisfactory development in this standard. | The school has shown satisfactory development in this standard. |
| | Standard C3 | The school believes that it is has shown satisfactory development in this standard. | The school has shown satisfactory development in this standard. |
| | Standard C4 | The school believes that it is has shown satisfactory development in this standard. | The school has shown satisfactory development in this standard. |

| Section | Standard | School Evaluation | IB Evaluation |
|----------------|-------------|---|---|
| D: The Student | Standard D1 | The school believes that it is has shown satisfactory development in this standard. | The school has shown satisfactory development in this standard. |
| | Standard D2 | The school believes that it is has shown satisfactory development in this standard. | The school has shown satisfactory development in this standard. |

4 Standard A: Philosophy

A1: There is close alignment between the educational beliefs and values of the school and those of the programme.

A2: The school promotes international-mindedness on the part of the adults and the students in the school community.

The IB agrees with the school that it shows satisfactory development.

The visiting team commends:

- The town of Westlake for its ownership and support of Westlake Academy, offering all three IB programs.
- The town's successful creation of a charter school format with unique organizational structure.
- The town officials for their continued hard work and support.
- The school community, for embedding the IB learner profile within the language and culture of the PYP at the school.

The visiting team recommends that:

- The school review and update written documents and displays to reflect recent changes in the PYP.
- The faculty continue to promote student inquiry and the development of critical thinking skills.
- The school implement ways to support parents and children for whom the school's language of instruction is not the mother tongue. One way would be by providing parents with terms for PYP elements in their first languages.

Matters to be addressed:

The visiting team finds no matters to be addressed in this section.

5 Standard B: Organization

The school demonstrates ongoing commitment to, and provides support for, the programme through appropriate administrative structures and systems, staffing and resources.

The IB agrees with the school that this standard shows satisfactory development.

The visiting team commends:

- The town council and community leaders who had the initial vision, and who provide governance and ongoing involvement with the school.
- The continuing financial support for the PYP from three sources: the town of Westlake, the families and the Westlake Academy Foundation.

- The school for the appointment of a full time PYP coordinator since authorization.
- The managers for their support of both the Head of the Primary Program and the coordinator, who are now IB volunteers.
- The head of the primary school and the coordinator for the creation of the Westlake Academy Self-Appraisal Process, based on the PYP standards and practices.
- The school for gains made in educational technology, including the recent acquisition of three smart boards, available to all teachers.

The visiting team recommends that:

- The school continue to make funding for the library a priority, recognizing its importance within the PYP.
- All staff participate in study groups to increase their familiarity with recently issued IB documents, e.g. The Learner Profile, the Basis for Practice and Developing a Transdisciplinary Program of Inquiry.

Matters to be addressed:

The visiting team finds no matters to be addressed in this section.

6 Standard C: Curriculum

C1: A comprehensive, coherent, written curriculum, based on the requirements of the programme and developed by the school, is available to all sections of the school community.

C2: The school has implemented a system through which all teachers plan and reflect in collaborative teams.

C3: Teaching and learning at the school empowers and encourages students to become lifelong learners, to be responsible towards themselves, their learning, other people and the environment, and to take appropriate action.

C4: There is an agreed approach to assessment, and to the recording and reporting of assessment data, which reflects the practices and requirements of the programme.

The IB agrees with the school that this standard shows satisfactory development.

The visiting team commends:

- The faculty for the development of concept and rubric maps which can be a tool for further encouraging the incorporation of the Key Concepts into the teaching practices.
- The specialists' fundamental role in the integration and development of the programme.
- The teachers for providing ample opportunities for student choice in the summative assessment tasks that foster student engagement.
- The teachers for the overall improvement of summative assessment tasks.
- The teachers for providing regular opportunities for the students to work collaboratively and independently in a range of contexts.
- The faculty for their collaboration; inclusive of the vertical planning teams.
- The faculty for utilizing the working programme of inquiry posted in the staffroom as a means for reflection and further development of the programme.
- The school for ensuring that planning at the school is based on agreed expectations for student learning and in the context of a coherent programme.
- The school for using writing and drawing throughout as a tool for thinking and making student understanding visible and integral

The visiting team recommends that:

- The school continue to further develop the transdisciplinary nature of the curriculum.
- The teachers seek ways to ensure that the curriculum clearly identifies the skills, concepts, knowledge and attitudes to be taught over time.
- The teachers continue to seek ways to ensure that the programme of inquiry allows for balanced inclusion of the subject areas.
- The faculty further develop understanding of the use of the planner.
- The faculty employ the sample programme of inquiry as a model for reviewing and revising its programme of inquiry to address the vertical and horizontal articulation of the programme.
- The administration continue to ensure that each teacher becomes a PYP practitioner and adhere to the stance of the PYP regarding departmentalization.
- The teachers continue to design and develop assessment strategies that address all essential elements of the PYP
- The teachers use the sample planners as models for the continued development and refinement of their own planners, so that they accurately and thoroughly record the best practices in the classroom.
- The faculty make certain that the planning at the school addresses assessment issues throughout each stage of the planning process.
- The teachers continue to study and explore strategies for the implementation of inquiry.
- The teachers continue to view assessment strategies as integral with planning, teaching and learning.
- The faculty continues to refine the process and facilitate opportunities for further student involvement in the development and use of the portfolios.
- The faculty consider creating essential agreements regarding technology, in order to enhance its role in the PYP.
- The PYP coordinator ensure that all teachers are provided with the most current PYP documentation and that they incorporate this into the planning and development of the PYP.

Matters to be addressed:

The visiting team found no matters to be addressed in this section.

7 Standard D: The Student

D1: Students learn to choose to act, and to reflect on their actions, so that they contribute to their own well-being and that of the community and the environment.

D2: In the final year of the programme, all students complete a programme-specific project that allows them to demonstrate a consolidation of their learning, in the case of the PYP and MYP, and to demonstrate the extension and development of their learning in the Diploma Programme.

The IB agrees with the school that this standard shows satisfactory development.

The visiting team commends:

- The Primary Program for developing the basic foundation for the other two IB programmes at Westlake.
- The variety of evidence which shows the high quality of individual and group efforts made by the students in all levels of the programme.
- PYP graduates, for serving as mentors for the 6th grade exhibition.
- The school for creating an environment conducive to action.

- The use of technology for student collaboration, especially the use of the wiki for information sharing.

The visiting team recommends that:

- The school continue to provide students opportunities to take action, reflection and implementation.
- The faculty continue to expand use of the transdisciplinary skills and essential elements of the PYP in self and peer reflection.
- The school use transdisciplinary skills and concepts as a means of assessment.
- Staff and students explore ways to deepen the connections between action and units of inquiry.
- The school consider sending teachers to official PYP exhibition staff development, both as contributors and participants.
- Teachers use the examples on the OCC of exhibition “globally” as a tool for reflection perhaps after the completion of the school exhibition.

Matters to be addressed:

The visiting team found no matters to be addressed in this section.

The team recognizes that a high degree of collegiality and commitment exists at Westlake. The self-study involved all of the staff, led by the PYP coordinator, and the Head of Primary. The documentation supporting the self-study was complete and comprehensive. The school has worked intensely on many aspects of the PYP during the self-study period. As understanding of the PYP deepens, the school community will need to reflect more, and, appropriately, will move more slowly while it continues to make improvements.

The school's self-study was based on a rigorous but fair consideration of the standards. At various points, the faculty emphasized the need to improve the library, focus on research skills and teach the study skills needed by the students in future years. The visiting team concurs with the faculty's emphases in these areas, but also points out that there are many instances where good work is in evidence. While the school also focused on the need for international mindedness, the multinational staff is an obvious strength. The school is staffed by a mix of teachers from many countries. This results in turnover, but also in an international community with shared values.

The team generally concurs with the school regarding the conclusions of the self-study. Since authorization, the school has continued to improve implementation of the PYP. We agree with the emphasis in the self-study on the value of shared planning time, and its effective use in developing the planners. The visiting team notes that planners have been improved greatly; nevertheless, teachers need to seek more ways to make their planners transdisciplinary, assisted by the format of the new planner. We encourage teachers to become more familiar with recent PYP publications, which should be used by the staff for shared study.

Westlake is in excellent position to ensure that students are well prepared for each level as they move from the PYP to the MYP to the DP. We recommend that attention be focused on these transitions, using backwards planning. For example, articulation in the foreign language program will be a challenge as the first cohort, who began the study of Spanish at age 5, moves up the continuum.

In summary, the visiting team commends the town of Westlake and Westlake Academy for the many ways the PYP has been strengthened and enhanced since authorization. The strong sense of collegiality, the provision of planning time for horizontal and vertical work together, and the extensive staff training which has taken place provide an excellent

environment for continued strengthening of the PYP. Furthermore, we commend the school for developing trainers within its own staff, whose involvement in other schools will expand their knowledge of best practice, and enrich the PYP at Westlake.

The IB would like to thank the administration, the board, the staff, the students and the parents for their welcome and hospitality extended to the visiting team during the visit.

The next PYP evaluation visit will take place in the spring semester of 2014.