

THREE-YEAR TERM RE-VISIT

Osaka YMCA International School

Osaka, Japan

Committee Report

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Midterm Visiting Committee

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. The School and Its Setting

The Osaka YMCA International School is the first and only accredited International School in Osaka City and is supported by both the YMCA and the Osaka City Hall. It is a small school (100 students) founded in September 2001 composed of 41% Japanese students, 37% Korean students, 6% other Asian students, 6% North American students, 4% European students and 4% New Zealand students as of February 2009. The student composition combined with the school's philosophy ensures a unique blend of Asian and Western perspectives. The school ranges from Preschool to Grade 6. The Junior High School, in response to concerns raised by the WASC Visiting Committee of November 2005, was closed as of the end of the 2006-07 school year. The school employs a well-rounded curriculum, based on the Province of Ontario, focusing on the mind, body and spirit of the students as drawn from the basic values of the YMCA.

The Osaka City Government supports the school as it views it as a tool to increase direct foreign investment in the area. As such, the city strives to attract new foreign residents to Osaka, and the long-term outlook for school growth is good.

B. Significant Changes or Developments

Most of the changes at the school have dealt with the academic program. The school feels that the most significant change in the school since its beginning has been a move to establishing an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IBPYP). The school has received significant approval by the staff and parents for such a program. Staff has spent much time at conferences and visitations to learn and implement this program.

Other focuses of the school, in addition to addressing the recommendations of the last WASC team included:

- Heightening general awareness of the school's core beliefs and overall strategic goals
- Providing a realistic assessment of progress to date
- Enhancing collaborative ownership of the school's growth and development
- Allowing for input into the new Action Plan 2009-2012

II. Follow up Process

The schools report has involved input from all administrative and faculty members. In the present 2008-2009 school year it was made mandatory for all full-time teachers to join one of the two OYISGB Subcommittees. Seven teachers joined the PR Subcommittee and five teachers joined the Curriculum Subcommittee, with one teacher joining both. The teachers have worked collaboratively on reviewing Action Items 1-4 of the Action Plan 2006-2009. The two ESS Department teachers joined a subcommittee each and also drafted the ESS section. The Administration reviewed Action Item 5 and other areas under their remit. A copy of the Report was sent to all stakeholders, i.e. administration, faculty and staff (full-time and part-time), PTA Chair and OYISGB. It should be noted that the Governing Board and the PTA have not been actively involved in the work of the focus groups per say but reviewed the draft report. The school appears to have the capacity to accomplish the critical areas for follow up and to continue to move in a positive direction.

The last WASC visiting team made three recommendations regarding communication with the staff, the YMCA board and the city government, involving the future growth of the school. The process is occurring, albeit slowly. The YMCA board is considering restoring the junior high school. The mayor is committed to having an international school in the downtown area as part of his plan to attract international businesses. The teaching staff has expressed frustration in the rate of progress. The rate of progress is being determined by the current recession and other local factors.

III. SCHOOL'S PROGRESS ON CRITICAL AREAS FOR FOLLOW-UP

A. Accomplishment and Successes of Schoolwide Action Plan

Item I: Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs)

This has been a focus of the site since 2006. Several times during the year staff meets to compare student work. This year the kindergarten report cards have been changed to include a listing of evaluated criteria and a corresponding rubric. Posters with the rubrics are in each kindergarten classroom and in selected areas in the school.

Item 2: Encourage and Financially Support Professional Development of All Full-Time Staff that is Driven by the Identified Needs of the Student

The school allows up to 50,000 yen (\$ 500) per year for each full-time teacher. This year's professional opportunities have included:

The Linguistic Society of Japan Summer course, "Introduction to the PYP for Administrators New to the PYP", the EARCOS Administrators' Conference 2008, EAROS Teaching Conference 2009, Osaka International School's Japanese Teaching Open Day, a whole-school visit to Kyoto International School, and the Tokyo Association of International Preschools annual conference.

The school also had a whole-school visit to the Osaka International School as part of its IBPYP feasibility study.

Item 3: Curriculum Evaluation Initiative

The school continues to review the curriculum and attempts to make the curriculum more relevant to its students. For instance this year the third grade course of study on social studies was modified. The fifth grade will adopt the Ontario (Canada) focus since there is no corresponding Japanese context.

In language arts emphases were placed on reading comprehension program. This year aspects of the "Teaching ESL Students in the Mainstream Classrooms", student writing self-evaluation guidelines and DOLCH words were implemented for preschool to grade 6. The Scholastic Vocabulary for Reading Success series was implemented in grade 3 through 6 and the Houghton-Mifflin Reading series was purchased for grades 1 through 6 with leveled readers for grades 3 and 5.

In mathematics, "Mathletics" an Australian based online mathematics program is being reviewed. A purchase of this program is planned for grades 1 through 6 for next year.

Item 4: Public Relations/Development/Fundraising

The elements of this program include:

- a) An advertising campaign
- b) Specific school events as public relations/fundraising opportunities
- c) Seek more corporate sponsorships (the school is limited in this area for it is unable to qualify for tax-exempt status on corporate donations)
- d) In-house events
- e) Saturday school and intensive courses
Opening a junior high expanded Saturday school. A preschool and kindergarten A & B classes were opened this year.
- f) Tuition strategies and scholarship policies
- g) Expanding organizational memberships

Item 5: Resource Areas

The school has made it a priority to provide up-to-date textbooks, multi-media, art, recreational and technology resources for the staff.

IV. Commendations Related to Progress

1. The staff and the principal are extremely passionate about the growth of the whole child.
2. The staff has embedded the ESLR's into the everyday instruction. Activities and evaluation are linked to specific ESLR's and in various grades there is a reward system for students demonstrating the ESLR's.
3. A reading program has been implemented throughout the school.
4. The YMCA for financially supporting the implementation of the IBPYP.