



**SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT
PLAN
2007**

SAIS - SACS Dual Accreditation

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WESLEYAN SCHOOL

WESLEYAN SCHOOL

5405 SPALDING DRIVE

NORCROSS, GEORGIA 30092

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SACS/SAIS Executive Summary

The last five years at Wesleyan have continued to see tremendous change in our school, physically, programmatically, and fiscally. The most obvious change has been the elimination of the last trailers which originally comprised our campus and served us so well during our first eleven years in Norcross. The last were hauled away in early March, destined for Loganville Christian School, where they will be used again to help grow a fledgling Christian school. In their place have been added Yancey Gymnasium (2006), a new 58,000-square-foot Fine Arts Building (2007), and a new building to house our administration (Gillfillan Hall, 2007). Both arts and athletic buildings show the undeniable commitment that Wesleyan holds to support these programs at the highest possible levels. The successful realization of these facilities (plus Davidson Natatorium in 2003) represents the substantial completion of the master plan for the campus which began development in 1996.

Total acreage increased from 70 to 75 acres from 2002 to 2007, as land was acquired for adjacent faculty/faculty fellow housing and 7 new tennis courts. As a result of construction work completed since 2002, Wesleyan now enjoys two performance theaters, outstanding practice rooms for band and chorale, exceptionally spacious painting, drawing, computer, and sculpture facilities for the visual arts, two weight rooms, a 10-lane pool and diving well, a dance instruction area, and four gymnasiums, including 1500-seat Yancey Gymnasium, a one-of-a-kind independent school facility. In addition, since 2002, Wesleyan has completed construction of both Agape (softball) and Gaebelein (baseball) Fields, indoor batting cages for softball and baseball, visitor lockers for football, soccer, and track (Cooper Annex), and two new campus roads and has upgraded the surface of our 6-lane track at Henderson Stadium.

During this time, the student body has stabilized at a board-mandated maximum of 1075. The Class of 2007, our tenth, totaled 94 students. 102 and 95 comprised the two preceding classes. In 1998, we graduated 17 in our first class, then 24, 40, 80, and 80 in the ensuing years. Our largest class to date was 105 in 2004. In all, from 1998 to 2007, Wesleyan has graduated 730 students.

Wesleyan's central motivation is its mission as a Christian school. Developing in our students the ability to think critically and to know why they know what they know has been, and will continue to be, an emphasis here. This is as true in physics class as it is in Bible class. It is Wesleyan's desire for our children to be able to successfully answer the "Why?" questions in life. One way that we have improved upon this over the last five years has been the expansion of our missions program. We now go all over the world each spring vacation to spread the Gospel and to reveal God's vision for his children to our students and others. This past spring, faculty and students traveled domestically doing mission work in Virginia and Louisiana. Our children experienced orphanages in Brazil, the Ukraine, and Romania, delivered medical services along the Amazon River, and helped build schools in Guatemala and Tanzania. The entire school is involved in these missions in some way, as Wesleyan seeks to obey the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20.

Our faculty has grown to meet the needs of the student body. Faculty compensation and benefits are always a focus of our board, and the school is a leader in the Atlanta independent school

market in both areas. A significant faculty innovation since our last SACS study had has been the addition of the residential “Faculty Fellows Program.” Beginning with four, the program has grown over the last four years to six, with either a 4/2 or 3/3 gender mix housed in two, gender-specific school-owned houses. Providing a modest salary and a free place to live, we hire mostly single young men and women right out of college for a one year “fellowship” to teach, coach, and be mentored with an eye for the fellow to discern if a career in teaching is worth deeper pursuit. Although it is not our intention to hire these teachers-in-training beyond the fellowship year, faculty openings and successful fellowship performances have allowed us to promote several fellows to full-time teaching jobs. Five members of the 2007-2008 faculty came to Wesleyan through this program. Our internship program for teachers new to the profession continues as well.

In meeting the “writing across the curriculum” goal from the last school improvement process, teachers have been added in math and English in middle and high school to reduce teaching loads and to allow more time to grade the subjective questions required of additional writing assignments. We have strong leadership in our department chairs, and the Assistant Headmaster for Academic Affairs has done an outstanding job (along with the division principals) in steering and pushing the academic programs. The addition of a Testing Coordinator has made a tremendous difference in enabling Wesleyan to “dig into” the numbers produced by our standardized test program. Her analysis and in-depth study have brought about recommendations for improvement and change.

Our athletic teams are competitive in almost all fourteen sports we field, and our participation rates in sports and other extracurricular activities are high, as they need to be at a school of our small size. This past year, 58% of our 7th graders were involved in after-school sports or activities at Wesleyan in all three seasons of the school year. Our wrestling team’s state championship this past year was a singularly remarkable accomplishment in the eyes of many. Each year we compete for the Directors’ Cup given by the GADA for the most successful GHSA athletic programs by classification. We have never finished lower than 3rd, and we won the Cup in 2002.

Our counseling services have been expanded, and we now have two college counselors in the high school as well as a guidance counselor in each school division. Two years ago a Wesleyan graduate matriculated to Harvard (two had been admitted), and others have been attended Stanford, Columbia, Davidson, Rice, Duke, Northwestern, Emory, and the Air Force Academy. Georgia, Georgia Tech, Auburn, Vanderbilt, Alabama, Samford, and Wake Forest are among the most popular college destinations. A year ago, a Wesleyan student received our first Jefferson Scholarship to the University of Virginia, and the Class of 2007 produced two students with appointments to the Naval Academy, joining two Wesleyan graduates already in attendance.

As part of our counseling program, our Freshman Retreat begins the 9th grade year and uses this time of fun and congeniality to present the Gospel to the students at the start of their high school careers. We now take the seniors, after exams and before graduation, on a trip to a Young Life camp in Colorado to “download” their high school careers, present the Gospel to them one last time, and focus them on the next four years of college. This trip is one of the best things that we do at Wesleyan, bringing closure to the high school experience in ways that many never experience through the other

means provided and encouraged by our culture. These “bookend” events, Freshman Retreat and Senior Trip, help greatly in the making of a “Wesleyan Class.”

The current “Complete the Campus” capital campaign has received pledges totaling over \$37 million toward a 2009 goal of \$42 million. Ninety-nine percent of our parents contributed to our most recent annual fund. Although we are awarding more financial aid than ever before, only about 5% of the student body receives it. This percentage must increase if we are to adequately meet future needs. Now that campus construction is, for the moment, no longer the focus of our fundraising efforts, we are turning our attention to endowment for faculty salaries and financial aid for students. If Wesleyan is to reach its full potential as a school and become the greatest possible asset to our community, it must continue to attract gifts to create extraordinary value for our investors. We must convince parents and friends, new and old, to be generous so that the school can be what they want it to be for our children.

The past eleven years on the Wesleyan campus have been years of miraculous change and development. As we look to the future, we expect more change and more improvement for generations of students and families yet to come who want what we offer in Christian education. What the next wave of students will see is a school that remains focused on character development and student achievement. Three factors stand out as key to the successful achievement of this focus: an outstanding faculty to deliver daily the message and hope of Jesus, the financial resources to attract and retain this faculty, and the financial resources to provide for children and families for whom the school may be beyond their reach. Upon the completion of the SACS school improvement report, Wesleyan will enter into another in a series of five-year strategic planning processes that have brought the school to the position it enjoys today. Through this process that will begin in 2008, the Board of Trustees and the school community will address ways to meet these needs.



SCHOOL PROFILE

Introduction

The School Profile includes information on student performance, student and community demographics, school characteristics and stakeholder perspectives on the quality of education. Since the last report in 2002, the school has undergone much growth while continuing to fulfill its mission statements. The school's Student Profile Report reflects this progress and sets the tone for future developments.

School Characteristics

History

Wesleyan School was established in 1963 as an integral part of the Sandy Springs United Methodist Church. Originally known as Wesleyan Day School, it began as a preschool and was expanded to include an elementary school and a middle school. During the 1994-95 academic year, the Board of Trustees made the decision to extend beyond the middle school level and create a high school. With the addition of the high school, Wesleyan required a new campus to continue its desired expansion. Following divestiture from the Sandy Springs United Methodist Church in the summer of 1996, the school was relocated to its current 75-acre site north of Atlanta. Over the past nine years, the school has successfully raised almost 100 million dollars, resulting in stunning growth of facilities and grounds, which include additional acreage, Cleghorn Hall, Wesley Hall, Hoover Center, Davidson Natatorium, the Fine Arts Building, Don and Ida Yancey Gymnasium and Warren Hall.

Land Usage

Wesleyan now encompasses a total of 75 acres. Warren Hall, our lower school, completed in the fall of 2002, includes Dozier Library, Morris Chapel, Grace Gymnasium and Bowen Dining Hall and Drama Center. Specialty space includes classrooms for math, science, art, music, reading, Bible and computer. In addition, a kitchen laboratory/teachers' lounge also functions as a math and science learning center.

Davidson Natatorium is home to a 10-lane competition pool with a diving well and two one-meter diving boards. In addition to home and visitor locker rooms, there is both outdoor and indoor storage used by the cross country, swim/dive, soccer and lacrosse teams. Fourth grade and all middle school

physical education classes also use the natatorium for swimming classes in one unit of their course. Davidson Natatorium features an open-air porch as well.

The Fine Arts Building, completed in 2007, houses middle and high school chorus and band on its first and second levels. In addition to classroom space, there are soundproof practice rooms, a conference room, storage spaces, a faculty lounge, and faculty offices. The third floor houses middle and high school art and drama. In addition to classrooms and storage space on this level, there is a resource library, a black box theater with seating for 100, and a drama office.

Yancey Gymnasium, completed in 2006, features a performance area for basketball and volleyball with 1500 seats, a concession stand and hospitality room. It also has a 4000-square-foot weight room and cardio facility, visiting and home locker rooms for both students and coaches, a laundry room, storage space and administrative and coaches' offices.

Enrollment/Division Focus

Wesleyan operates under a trustee mandated enrollment cap of 1075 students with an enrollment for the 2005-06 school year of 1071. With 303 students in 2005-06, the lower school (grades K through 4) has the primary focus of providing a safe and nurturing environment that promotes a love of learning and positive view of themselves as children of God, while challenging students to fully utilize their unique talents. The middle school (grades 5 through 8), with a student population of 356 in 2005-06, acts as a bridge between the lower and high schools and is a time for students to begin to take responsibility for their own learning and to develop effective study habits. The high school (grades 9 through 12), with an enrollment of 412 in 2005-06, provides a challenging college preparatory curriculum to prepare each student in "mind, body, and spirit" for college and for life. Our school strives to give each student an opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities within the arts, athletics and fellowship groups in order to build the strongest foundation for the whole person.

Christian Life

Christian life is central to Wesleyan's mission. Opportunities to learn about and participate in the Christian faith abound through chapel services, Bible studies, and other activities. Each year the school focuses on a chosen Bible passage, which is used to enrich the spiritual growth of faculty and students. The faculty gathers once each month for corporate worship. Lower school, middle school, and high school students attend weekly chapel services. Boys and girls in 5th through 12th grades can participate in a Bible study group, and students in grades K through 12 take Bible classes. Currently two credits in Bible are required for graduation; effective with the Class of 2010, three credits in Bible will be required for graduation. A seminary series offers high school students an opportunity to expand their faith. An annual Veritas Day in the high school provides for faith-based exploration of Truth.

Wesleyan School offers many opportunities for students to serve the local and global communities. The opportunities for student participation in various programs progress from lower school into middle school and high school. Lower school students visit local nursing homes and collect books for children in developing countries. They also partner with the middle school and high school mission teams, supporting them with letters, monetary contributions and material goods.

Middle school students have monthly opportunities to tutor and reach out to less privileged children in Norcross and surrounding areas and to collect school supplies and food for the needy both in the local community and abroad. All middle school students have the opportunity to participate in Operation Christmas Child. The eighth graders and their teachers experience a half-day “service day,” reaching out to the community through a variety of service opportunities, both on and off campus, serving others through work and taking goods donated by the entire middle school to community action groups. Eighth graders may also participate in a mission trip to a location in the US during spring break.

High school students have weekly opportunities to tutor. In the fall, all high school students and faculty spend a school day at various sites serving the local community in multiple capacities, including working to improve the environment, serving at shelters and organizing books and clothing at community outreach centers. They also participate in annual events which include, among others, bringing Christmas gifts to inner-city children, collecting winter clothing for the needy, serving at soup kitchens, and participating in Hands On Atlanta Day. In recent years, high school students have “given up” school vacation time during spring break and the summer to serve on mission trips both nationally and internationally. In 2005-06, 146 students and 32 faculty participated in seven spring break trips and one summer trip. Although not all students go on these trips, the entire school participates in supporting the trip monetarily, through prayer, or by collecting needed goods. During the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years, Wesleyan’s students, parents, and staff made significant contributions to the Red Cross for tsunami and flood relief, here and abroad.

Athletics

The athletic program at Wesleyan is dedicated to encouraging and developing student athletics through participation, competition and sportsmanship. Fifth and sixth graders have the opportunity to play intramural basketball. Students in grades 7 through 12 have the opportunity to participate in 14 different sports during the course of the year. At least one “no cut” sport is offered each season, and approximately 90% of the 7th through 12th graders participate in at least one sport per year. The athletic program is strongly supported by the students, faculty and community.

Fine Arts

Wesleyan offers a comprehensive fine arts program for all grade levels that encompasses all forms of artistic expression, including performing and visual arts. Drama begins in the lower school with at least one production per class per year. The fourth grade Easter play, performed for each school division, is a highlight of the lower school drama program. The middle school troupe presents two productions per year, and the spring production is always a musical.

The high school troupe presents at least three productions annually.

All lower school students participate in weekly music classes. Individuals may take private lessons on campus during the day. The Choristers and the Tone Chime Choir perform during the Christmas and end-of-year programs. The music program expands in the middle school and high school. Students have multiple opportunities to choose electives and participate in extracurricular activities in chorus and band. These programs enhance school life through student performances at concerts, athletic events and special school functions.

The visual arts abound at Wesleyan School. Students express their creativity in art classes and after-school groups at all grade levels. The highlight of the fine arts year occurs on Fine Arts Day in the spring when the entire school celebrates the arts.

Stakeholders

Wesleyan School is supported by faculty, parents and the community as demonstrated by:

- the high percentage of parents giving to the annual fund and capital campaigns
- the monetary support of programs by the Parents Club, Arts Alliance, and Wolf Trackers
- the number of volunteers in the Parents Club, Arts Alliance, Wolf Trackers, and PALS
- the corporate sponsorship in the annual golf and tennis tournaments, Wolf Run, and the biannual auction.

Student Performance Data

Students are assessed at Wesleyan with local and national measures. The national assessment methods included in this report are the CTP4, the WrAP, the PSAT, the SAT I and II, the ACT, and AP Exams. Data on students receiving National Merit awards and AP Scholar recognitions are also included. Portfolios begin in lower school and are used through middle school. Portfolios for grades K through 3 include different genres, while the grade 4 portfolio includes the STAR testing, CTP4 and WrAP results, three spelling achievement tests, math scores from August and May, and an end-of-year literacy skills assessment. Instituting portfolios has begun in the middle school as a tool for teachers and students to track student progress. Each student will receive a folder to span fifth through eighth grades. During post-planning, teachers will pass off the folders to the next year's teachers and discuss student strengths and weaknesses.

CTP 4 and WrAP

Wesleyan has administered the Educational Records Bureau's (ERB) standardized reasoning and achievement tests (previous version, CTP III and current version, CTP 4) since 1997. For the past several years the test has been given each spring to students in grades three through eight; beginning in the 2007-2008 school year, fall testing of students in grades three through nine will take place instead.

Wesleyan's CTP results typically cluster in the fifth and sixth (middle) independent school stanines, as would be expected in a school of academically average to above average students.

In the first four years since the introduction of the current test version, CTP 4 (2003 through 2006), patterns have developed suggesting the need for further study. First, students perform better, on average, on verbal subtests than on quantitative subtests. Second, as students move through grades three through eight, their average performance relative to that of other students in the independent norm group, has a *tendency* to decline. Third, while the proportion of students in the lowest independent school stanines (1 through 3) has been in decline, scores are frequently statistically "overloaded" in the middle stanines (4 through 6) with fewer students than anticipated in the highest stanines (7 through 9). Finally, some differences in CTP 4 performance by gender occur, with boys generally scoring higher on the quantitative subtests and girls generally scoring higher on the verbal subtests.

Wesleyan administers ERB's Writing Assessment Program (WrAP) to children in grades 3 through 10. For several years testing has occurred in both fall and spring; in 2007-2008 a single annual administration in the fall will take place. Since adopting the WrAP four years ago, overall, sustained improvement has been observed in the student performance on the assessment, which measures the ability to write to a specific prompt.

PSAT, SAT, ACT

Since 1996, all students in grades 9, 10, and 11 have taken the PSAT in October. Beginning in October 2007, ninth graders will take the CTP4 instead of the PSAT. As expected, the students have shown an increase in performance on the PSAT with progression through the grade levels. A summary of PSAT mean scores is included in Appendix: Profile, 1.5 of this report. In 2005-06, five students were recognized as National Merit Finalists, five students were recognized as National Merit Semifinalists, and four students were named Commended Scholars.

SAT I scores since 2003 have been included in a three-year historical summary. The students also take the SAT II (subject tests), and a three-year historical summary of these scores may be found in the final report. ACT scores have also been presented in a three-year historical summary.

AP

Wesleyan offers approximately a dozen Advanced Placement (AP) courses. In May 2006, 120 students took 183 AP exams. Nearly 90% of the exam grades were "passing" scores, including 54 5s, 58 4s, and 50 3s. Additionally, in 2006 thirteen students were designated AP Scholars with Distinction, seven were designated AP Scholars with Honor, and fifteen were designated AP Scholars.

Graduate Statistics

All Wesleyan graduates are college bound, with 100% of the class of 2006 accepted to four-year colleges. A three-year historical record of college admission (2003-2006) is included. During the year 2005-06, alumni were included in school fundraising efforts, and there was 21% alumni participation in

the Annual Fund. The school hosts seven events for alumni ranging from Homecoming and Reunions to "College Night" visits by Wesleyan staff to college campuses.

Student and Community Demographic Data

The total enrollment of Wesleyan School in 2005-06 was 1071. This represents a 1% increase since 2004-05 and shows a steady enrollment. The largest geographic areas represented at Wesleyan in 2005-06 were Duluth and Alpharetta, with 14.8% and 14% respectively. The next largest groups were from Dunwoody (13.5%) and Norcross (12.9%). These four areas total 56% of the student population. The remainder of the student population represents 19 geographic areas in and around the Atlanta area. Progress has been made in the past five years to improve diversity among the student population. Approximately 7.4% of the student population and 3% of the teaching faculty are non-Caucasian.

The student daily attendance rate for the past three years has remained constant at 98%. During the 2005-06 school year, 88% of the boys and 84% of the girls in grades 9 through 12 participated in sports. Since 2003, athletic participation within each grade has increased. The percentage of high school students enrolled in non-athletic extracurricular activities has consistently been at least 30%. Since 2003, non-athletic extracurricular participation within each grade has increased. During the 2005-06 school year, 63% of students in grades 9 through 12 participated in a service project beyond the 3.0 hours required of Serve His Day. The total number of students who participated in service projects beyond the required hours has steadily increased each year as has the number of service hours performed by the high school student body.

Parent financial contributions to Wesleyan are significant. In 2005-06, 98% of the parents made financial donations to the annual and capital campaigns. In 2005-06 4.2% of the students received financial aid, with an average grant per child of \$7,680. Financial aid has steadily increased during the past five years, with \$330,260 awarded for the 2005-06 school year. These amounts do not include tuition discounts for faculty children attending Wesleyan.



Mission and Beliefs

Overview

The Mission and Beliefs Committee met on numerous occasions during the 2005-06 academic year. A survey was created for the faculty to assess whether they believed in the mission statement of the school and whether the beliefs still reflected the priorities of Wesleyan School. The second step for the committee was to determine whether the school continued to value each component of the mission statement and beliefs and then assess how well the school does in realizing those beliefs. Three surveys were created, one for each division of the school. The results of the survey were tabulated, looking for areas of particular strength and areas of perceived weaknesses.

Mission Statement

The results of the survey clearly reveal that the school's mission statement is well known to the faculty and furthermore, whether individually or collectively, the faculty overwhelmingly believes the school is fulfilling its mission. Additionally, each division overwhelmingly believes that the mission statement is prominently displayed throughout the school. One area of concern was expressed, primarily by high school teachers, that they are not able to adequately address the three components of mind, body and spirit in the students.

Beliefs

The survey results from the faculty clearly indicate overwhelming support for all the school's beliefs. In fact, when one looks at the all-school graphs, they reveal more than mere support: an overwhelming number of the faculty *strongly agrees* that Wesleyan should continue to value the 12 beliefs as originally defined. However, when it comes to implementing these beliefs, the survey results do not reveal such unanimity. A brief statement for each belief below pinpoints

the areas indicating concern on the part of the faculty. (See list of Beliefs at the end of this section.)

- Belief #1 – A number of faculty, primarily in the high school, believe there needs to be more teacher training and more opportunities so that we may fulfill our goal of exposing students to Christian principles.
- Belief #2 – A significant number of the high school faculty believes more attention needs to be paid in hiring proper role models.
- Belief #3 – A significant number of the high school faculty believes athletics currently take precedence over academics.
- Belief #4 – A significant number of middle and high school teachers believe that a heavy workload leads to excessive turnover and low job satisfaction.
- Belief #5 – Nearly one-half of the faculty believe we need to address admissions standards, paying less attention to athletic prowess and sibling connections and more attention to academic potential.
- Belief #6 – Though there were a number of comments made, there was no pattern, and the committee noted nothing of consequence.
- Belief #7 – Though there were a number of comments made, there was no pattern, and the committee noted nothing of consequence.
- Our committee had recommended separating two beliefs as they did not seem to belong together. Those beliefs pertained to instilling a lifetime love of learning in our students and maintaining contact with alumni. The survey revealed overwhelming support for separating the two.
- Belief #8 – Though there were a number of comments made, there was no pattern, and the committee noted nothing of consequence.
- Belief #9 – Though there were a number of comments made, there was no pattern, and the committee noted nothing of consequence.
- Belief #10 – Though there were a number of comments made, there was no pattern, and the committee noted nothing of consequence.
- Belief #11 – Approximately 10% of the faculty believe it is in the best interests of the school to advertise beyond Gwinnett County.
- Belief #12 – Though there were a number of comments made, there was no pattern, and the committee noted nothing of consequence.

Overall, the committee identifies three areas of concern indicated by the survey results. These three areas are: admissions standards, a perceived excessive emphasis on athletics, and the related issues of too many activities which lead to a heavy work load for students and teachers.

Conclusion

In summary, this committee was charged with assessing whether the mission statement and beliefs continue to reflect that which is most central to Wesleyan School, in addition to determining whether the faculty thinks these beliefs are being followed on a daily basis. The data from the survey indicates that there are some areas of concern among the faculty related to how well the beliefs are being fulfilled but not to the beliefs themselves. This should not

obscure the fact that, overwhelmingly, the members of the faculty also believe the mission statement and beliefs are, and should continue to be, the beacon lights, guiding Wesleyan to fulfill its calling as a Christian school.

WESLEYAN MISSION STATEMENT

Wesleyan's mission is to be a Christian school of academic excellence by providing each student a diverse college preparatory education guided by Christian principles and beliefs; by challenging and nurturing the mind, body, and spirit; and by developing responsible stewardship in our changing world.

WESLEYAN BELIEFS

We believe:

1. In exposing Wesleyan students to Christian principles and the Bible's teachings, through academic study, discussions, fellowship, service, worship, and missions.
2. In presenting role models (through board members, faculty and staff, guest speakers, and lay coaches) who are adult followers of Christ and who make practical integration of Christian faith relevant in their everyday lives.
3. In providing an integrated and sequenced curriculum in conjunction with a wide range of high quality extra-curricular programs in athletics, visual and performing arts, community service and fellowship. The program must support the Christian mission of Wesleyan, both directly and through the manner in which our teachers, coaches and staff interact everyday with students and families.
4. In retaining a qualified, enthusiastic, joyful and caring faculty and staff of high integrity and Christian faith, who are excellent teachers and role models and who are committed to the actualization of the Wesleyan mission.
5. In attracting, admitting, enrolling, retaining and supporting academically average and above average college bound students who enhance the life of the school and uphold its mission.
6. In encouraging students to develop initiative, curiosity and a lifetime love of learning.

7. In seeking to develop a strong identity among alumni to foster their continuing relationship with the school.
8. In building the Wesleyan community through active involvement among the parents, families and the school; and to promote widespread knowledge and support of the school's mission and philosophy.
9. In planning, developing, and maintaining the physical plant, grounds, and athletic facilities in order to support the mission and programs of Wesleyan.
10. In maintaining the financial integrity of Wesleyan, while aggressively growing our capital resources in order to achieve our mission.
11. In developing and maintaining a comprehensive strategy to increase awareness of the school, its profile, mission, philosophy, culture and goals, both internally and externally.
12. In maintaining an effective Board of Trustees, comprised primarily of Wesleyan parents, who will assure the welfare and continuity of the school by 1.) defining, preserving and promoting the mission of the school; 2.) setting policy; 3.) assuming full responsibility for the financial integrity of the school; 4.) taking the leadership role in fundraising, both as providers and solicitors; 5.) hiring, supporting and evaluating the headmaster; and 6.) assuming primary responsibility for creating and maintaining Wesleyan's physical plant.



Analysis of Previous Plan

Committee Charge and Methods:

The committee was formed during the 2005-2006 school year and charged with the responsibility of assessing the level of completion of the goals set forth in the Action Plan produced as part of the 2002 SACS report. Committee members met to review the indicators outlined in the action plan. The committee reviewed the 2003 Administrators' Status Report, in which principals and the Assistant Headmaster for Academic Affairs assessed progress on each individual indicator. It is important to note that all three division principals contributing to the report no longer fill the roles that they did in 2003. Mary Jane Ritchie provided lower school information; Chris Cleveland provided middle school information; and Brian Kennerly provided high school information. The comments of the 2002 department chairs regarding progress were considered. (Department chairs no longer in the roles include Kendra Morris (English) and Jim Edgar (Technology). No History Department representative completed the survey.)

The level at which Wesleyan has fulfilled the tasks set forth in the indicators was assessed, keeping in mind that timelines for implementation vary from the short term to the long term. Some indicators have clearly been met (documented as "completed"); others have been termed as "completed-partially" or "completed—not at all." Further, some indicators have been changed as the understanding of the goals for the academic program has changed. Faculty attrition during the last five years has affected the indicators related to professional development. Although training in a particular area may have occurred, it is unknown what percentage of current faculty participated.

Analysis of Goal 1 Completion:

GOAL 1: Students shall demonstrate writing proficiency at grade level across the curriculum.

With the creation of this goal, Wesleyan acknowledged a concern for writing, shared with schools across the nation. Prominent indicators for progress toward this goal are the use of rubrics, the use of portfolios, professional development, writing tests, and the lower school

literacy curriculum. The indicators also suggest a need for cohesion among grade levels and across disciplines and divisions of the school.

Departments have refined rubrics over the past years. These have been shared with students and, in some cases, parents. All parents and students have access to the WrAP rubric, which emphasizes the six traits of writing that Wesleyan teachers convey to their students. Across the curriculum, the lower and middle school teachers have collaborated on expectations for formal papers. High School teachers have been given expectations for out-of-class assignments as well. The Academic Council, consisting of department chairs and Assistant Headmaster of Academic Affairs, has put together a table of all writing assignments for middle and high school students. This process has been completed though rubrics are always evolving. Collaboration among teachers has begun and needs continual encouragement and monitoring.

Portfolios appear prominently in the report's indicators, and this area has been completed partially as well. Lower school students have writing and assessment portfolios of their work. Lower School students in third and fourth grades take pre- and post-tests in phonics and spelling, math, grammar, and different genres of written expression. Children's Progress assessment folders are maintained in grades K through two, containing assessment results from fall, winter, and spring. Assessment and writing portfolios are passed on to the middle school where they are shared with parents at the fall conference. Middle and high school students' WrAP tests are kept in the Writing Center, and results are shared with parents as well. Keeping classroom portfolios is listed as a long-term goal; it has occurred in the lower school, but the wording of the indicator does not clearly state whether other divisions will participate in this task. Teachers will need more clarification of the philosophy of keeping portfolios if expanded beyond lower school.

In the professional development arena, Wesleyan has met its indicators concerning teachers stressing the importance of writing in their classes and encouraging teachers to build skills in this area. In-services on writing (and one on critical thinking) have occurred. Posters on the writing process and handouts about writing topics have been prepared and disseminated; identification of which teachers need these and how all teachers should implement the writing process is recommended. Prominent in the indicators about professional development is the dedication of Wednesday meeting time to establishing and maintaining standards for writing. In the short term, one year after the 2002 report was finished, this was frequent. Upon its completion, the Academic Council's table of writing assignments per grade level will be a valuable tool for helping with teacher collaboration. One long-term indicator is that students will follow standard research practices by the spring semester of tenth grade; this is an area for continued growth. Writing tests have been implemented, with the WrAP now administered in grades three through ten. Middle and high school tests are expected to include a writing component.

The lower school has experienced perhaps the greatest degree of change within its literacy program. The curriculum devised in 2001-2002 has been implemented, assessed, and modified, with other assessments supplementing and in some cases replacing the Houghton-Mifflin theme tests referenced in the report.

Analysis of Goal 2 Completion:

GOAL 2: Students shall benefit from full implementation of an integrated, well-articulated curriculum that reflects Wesleyan's shared beliefs and mission.

Prominent indicators in this section of the report include the articulation of mission; the preparation of curriculum, timelines, and mastery assessments; and the analysis of standardized data to assess curriculum.

Seeing the mission statement and the JOY motto displayed prominently and reflected in school priorities, teachers are well versed in Wesleyan's mission. An in-service in fall 2004 allowed the faculty to hear ideas on Biblical integration from Mark Eckel.

Curriculum documents for each subject area are complete, indicating throughout where skills are introduced, expanded, or mastered. Unit timelines are completed for courses, and mastery items have been identified. Mastery items are being refined, and teachers are working with their department chairs and the Academic Council to establish appropriate mastery assessments. Teachers and department chairs are devising ways to share these items with parents and students, including listing these on syllabi.

With the addition of Sidney Tucker as Testing Coordinator and teacher training by Ann Harris of ERB, Wesleyan is addressing the indicators that stress analysis of standardized data while comparing the curriculum to that of other independent schools.



Stakeholder Survey Overview

In order to re-evaluate instructional programs and overall school progress, the Survey Committee, was charged with obtaining the opinions of the three stakeholder groups, defined as parents, teaching faculty, and students. The committee decided to use the Opinion Inventory Series surveys from National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE). Five years ago, the NSSE paper survey materials were used for this purpose. The survey results are designed to provide valuable information to guide decision-making processes relative to program development, policy formulation, administration, organization, staff development, and community relations.

The Survey Committee, in reviewing the results of the surveys, considered the following questions:

- 1) Are any of the results surprising? If so, were there any unanticipated findings?
- 2) Do any of the findings underscore key areas of strength or weakness/concern?

In addition, the Survey Committee reviewed the results of the surveys from the SACS Accreditation Committee Process conducted five years ago to determine if areas of concern are similar to those identified previously and to determine what new areas of concerns may have been identified.

The Survey Committee provided the survey results to the faculty in a presentation at an in-service meeting on November 6, 2007. The committee was pleased to report that in almost every category, the survey scores were above national norms and the results that ranked in Wesleyan's "bottom five" were typically still above the 2.5/5.0 scale, where 5.0 indicates "strongly agree." In particular, all stakeholders strongly agree that cheating is strongly discouraged at our school, the school's facilities are adequate to support students' learning and students have access to a variety of resources to help them succeed. In comparison to results from the surveys from five years ago, several areas showed improvement, most specifically the support for student learning with regard to the availability of counseling and advising; this had ranked in the bottom five and now is ranked at or above the national norm. All three stakeholder groups ranked highly the up-to-date computers and other technologies used to help students learn, an item that had been in the bottom five in the survey results of five years ago.

The areas for exploration identified by the Survey Committee from the examination of the survey results are listed below. These results were forwarded to the Vision Committee for review and determination of action items.

- Substance abuse was identified by students and teachers as a problem, but not identified by as such by parents.
- The survey results from parents and teachers placed bullying problems in the bottom five results, indicating that there are issues with bullying.

- The relationship between what students study and the students' everyday lives (critical thinking) was not successful, as identified by teachers and students.
- Math instruction was evaluated by our teachers as ten points below the national survey norm.
- Language arts instruction was evaluated by our teachers at almost ten points below the national survey norm.
- Communication regarding expectations and changes in school policy-is was evaluated as not flowing as effectively as possible between the school administration and parents; the school administration and students; the administration and teachers; and teachers and other teachers.

Upon review of the open-ended comments included in the survey, the concerns listed below were identified by stakeholders.

- Teacher workload;
- Emphasis on athletics;
- Admission of students who do not meet our academic standards.



Vision for Student Learning and School Performance

Introduction

The Vision Committee, comprised of sixteen members representing faculty, administration and parents, was charged with reviewing the following documents and identifying the commonalities among them: reports from the Analysis of Previous Plan Committee, Stakeholder Survey Committee, Mission and Beliefs Committee, and Profile Committee, the 2004 Strategic Plan, and the published mission and beliefs of the school. The committee was pleased to find that Wesleyan School has set and achieved numerous benchmarks over the past five years. Students, teachers, and parents are pleased with Wesleyan's tradition, its current position, and its outlook for the future in the areas of academics, athletics, arts, faculty, and facilities. The school has set forth and upheld its mission and continues to thrive. The following report highlights areas of improvement for which the committee has made specific recommendations.

Student Achievement Scores

A wealth of standardized test data allows Wesleyan to compare our student performance with that of other student groups nationwide. On national assessments such as the *PSAT*, the *SAT*, and *AP* exams, our average student performance regularly exceeds national means. On more stringent independent school assessments such as the Educational Records Bureau's (ERB) *CTP4* and *WrAP*, Wesleyan's average performance typically clusters in the middle percentile ranks and stanines, and this is consistent with our mission.

In the years since the last school improvement plan, ERB's *CTP* and the College Board's *PSAT* and *SAT* have all been rewritten. Further, the ERB's *WrAP*, a standardized writing assessment, has been added to the testing program for grades 3 through 10 and Wesleyan has recently adopted (in September 2006) the *Children's Progress Academic Assessment* for grades K through 2. These various measures add additional data to help determine emerging trends.

A first trend of note involves differential performance on verbal and quantitative measures. On the *CTP 4* (grades 3 through 8) and the *PSAT* (grades 9 through 11) Wesleyan students tend to perform better---sometimes only slightly and sometimes more significantly---on verbal subtests than on quantitative subtests. This is also true for the *SAT* for the Class of 2006, the first class to have taken the "new" *SAT* in the spring of their junior year and fall of their senior year. Nationally, math *SAT* scores have been significantly higher than verbal scores for many years, but Wesleyan scores do not reflect this trend. Wesleyan's emphasis on writing over the past five years could explain this disparity. While it is extremely rewarding that Wesleyan's overall *CTP*, *PSAT*, and *SAT* scores on both verbal and quantitative

subtests have risen over the past decade, it is of interest to look more closely at the verbal-math differential. Because of this trend, the committee recommends an emphasis on improving student performance in quantitative analysis.

A second trend involves differential performance by gender. Although there are certainly notable exceptions, the boys in the middle and early high school grades on average outperform the girls on quantitative measures and the girls outperform the boys on verbal measures. More boys than girls are National Merit Scholars, and boys somewhat outnumber and outscore girls in AP courses and on AP exams. The committee recommends further examination of these gender differences and how the school may mitigate them.

While students scored above the median on verbal portions of the CTP4 and have shown general improvement on the WrAP test over the past several years, further analysis of Wesleyan's language arts performance relative to national comparatives is needed. The committee recommends continued emphasis on writing across the curriculum and improving student writing ability. Decreasing teacher class/student load currently under way may ease some of the burden of increased writing assessments.

Admissions

The Wesleyan admissions process has, over time, enabled the school to fulfill its needs for new students while maintaining desired academic standards and necessary participation in extracurricular activities. However, changes in the private school marketplace, evolving needs of the school, and desire for ongoing review of new students being admitted necessitate evaluation of the admissions process.

First, Wesleyan should consider methods to increase the applicant pool while maintaining academic and extracurricular standards. This recommendation stems from faculty responses on the mission and beliefs survey. The opening of new private and public schools have increased competition in the market served by Wesleyan and have precipitated a decline in the number of student applications in many grades. Wesleyan should consider methods to increase the applicant pool while continuing to draw students who will maintain a high level of involvement in the school life while succeeding academically.

Second, the mission and beliefs survey indicates that faculty members desire additional input in admissions decisions in order to maintain Wesleyan's academic standards. Faculty members feel that new students, compared to returning students, tend to be less equipped for the rigors of academic life at Wesleyan. Increased faculty involvement in the admissions process will reinforce the matriculation of average and above average students, an objective stated in the school's mission and beliefs.

Third, Wesleyan must continue to strive for variety in the backgrounds and interests of students it selects and admits, in order to maintain the goal of "Identify[ing], attract[ing], enroll[ing], and retain[ing] college-bound students from diverse backgrounds who will contribute to the life of the school and uphold its mission" (2004 Strategic Plan). It is recommended that admissions decision-makers continue to strive for variety in the student population by considering students of various ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds while maintaining Wesleyan's Christian focus. Further, Wesleyan must continue to strive to admit students who can fill the diverse roles and interests called for at a full-activity school.

The committee feels that attention to increasing the size of the applicant pool, adding more faculty involvement in the admissions process, and increasing the focus on the makeup of the student population will enable Wesleyan to enroll the best new students to continually meet the school objectives.

Critical Thinking

The Wesleyan administration and Academic Council constructed a working definition of critical thinking from various published academic sources: "Critical Thinking: a set of skills used to process information to generate beliefs. This will result in the regular practice, based on intellectual commitment, of using those skills to guide behavior." Wesleyan teachers include elements of critical thinking in the curriculum, teaching not only the "what" but the "why" behind it. Faculty in-services over the past several years have focused on critical thinking and writing. The 2004 Strategic Plan also focused specifically on critical thinking in its recommendation to "offer opportunities for students to see and explore the relationship between their individual academic, spiritual, and physical growth within the larger, mostly secular world in which they live." However, NSSE survey results indicate that additional emphasis needs to be placed on critical thinking within each subject as well as across the disciplines. The number of students, parents and teachers that agreed with the statement "The students see a relationship between what they are studying and their everyday lives" was below the national average on the NSSE survey. Furthermore, teachers indicated that the students do not consistently "demonstrate effective critical thinking in their approaches to complet[ing] assignments."

The percentage of teachers agreeing with the statement "Teachers collaboratively develop instructional activities to help students learn across different subject areas" was fifteen points below the national average. Similar conclusions were reported by the Analysis of Previous Plan Committee: "Collaboration among teachers [has] begun and needs continual encouragement and monitoring." The committee recommends that faculty members be trained more effectively to promote, teach, and assess critical thinking in their own subject matter, as well as to develop a stronger link between their subject matter and other subject areas.

The 2004 Strategic Plan identified a more specific focus on critical thinking with its recommendation to "work to develop critical thinking skills through academics that enable students to analyze issues within the framework of a Christian worldview that recognizes God as Creator, Jesus Christ as Lord, and the Holy Spirit as the Divine Presence in the world." In the fall of 2004, the faculty participated in an in-service workshop on Biblical integration by Mark Eckel. Yet, according to the recent mission and beliefs survey results, teachers still need to better integrate the relevance of the Christian worldview into each subject: "A number of faculty . . . believe there needs to be more training and more opportunities so that we may fulfill our goal of exposing students to Christian principles." The committee recommends additional faculty training on concrete ways to incorporate Christian principles into the formal curriculum and beyond the classroom. Students need to be equipped to use knowledge to influence thinking and to guide their beliefs and actions. Specific areas of focus include morality, mathematics, science, English, history, economics, and philosophy/logic.

Inspection of the NSSE survey results reveals an apparent need to evaluate the following statements.

- Looking at critical thinking with particular regard to homework, students often reportedly miss the connection between homework assignments and their studies (NSSE survey).
- Similarly, teachers do not always see students making critical thinking connections on their assignments (NSSE survey).

Homework assignments should challenge students to demonstrate their critical thinking skills by raising pertinent questions and problems, requiring students to gather and assess relevant information, and communicate with others in solving complex problems. The committee joins the Mission and Beliefs Committee in recommending that the school's homework policy be reviewed to "ensure that 'busywork' assignments" are minimized and that critical thinking assignments are promoted.

Student Life

According to the NSSE Survey, Wesleyan students are satisfied with the quality and scope of education and activities offered. The school's facilities and resources wholly support their learning and growth as scholars, athletes, and artists. They feel both encouraged and challenged by their teachers. However, previous surveys indicated that students, parents and teachers had concerns regarding the balance between academics, activities and athletics. In order to function as a full-activity school, students must consistently participate in extra-curricular activities while balancing the demands of a rigorous academic curriculum. This challenges the students in mind, body, spirit, and time. As stated in belief #3, Wesleyan strives to provide "an integrated and sequenced curriculum in conjunction with a wide range of high quality extra-curricular programs in athletics, visual and performing arts, community service and fellowship. The program must support the Christian mission of Wesleyan. . ." For the students to fully benefit from this environment and for their extra-curricular participation to continue to support Wesleyan as a full-activity school, the committee recommends that the school more formally assist the students in learning how to manage their time, make decisions, and discern and use the talents that God has given them. Parents should also be equipped with concrete ways to encourage students in this endeavor.

Parent and teacher perception of student life is in line with that of the students regarding the quality and scope of education and activities, the quality and availability of resources and facilities, and the quality of learning environment created by the teachers. Nonetheless, almost half of parents and students and two-thirds of teachers did not fully agree with the statement, "There are no problems with bullies at our school." However, it is important to note that for parents and students, this was well above the national average; for teachers, this was slightly below the national average. While the term "bullying" was not defined on the survey, the committee, for the sake of discussion, defined bullying as "intentional meanness toward another." This includes actions such as exclusion, disrespect of another's property and intentional humiliation of other students. The committee recommends that the school put additional emphasis on applying the "JOY" (Jesus, Others, Yourself) motto and teach students to be encouragers of one another in an effort not only to improve students' behavior, but also, more permanently, to change hearts.

Teacher/Faculty Workload

As reported by the NSSE and mission and beliefs survey, the faculty of Wesleyan School believes in the clear mission and beliefs of the school that provide them with a common purpose and sense of

direction. They agree that the school's facilities and resources support their endeavor to create an ideal learning environment for students. In the areas of academics, athletics, and fine arts, the faculty takes pride in the quality curriculum they present both during the school day and beyond. While almost ninety percent of the faculty are satisfied with Wesleyan School, heavy teacher workload surfaced as a concern among teachers in both the mission and beliefs *and* NSSE surveys. The responsibilities of Wesleyan teachers are two-fold: curricular/academic and extracurricular. Class load, class size, and an increased emphasis on writing and critical thinking contribute to growing time demands during regular school hours. Beyond those hours, teachers are also expected to serve as the coaches, sponsors, committee members, and mentors needed to sustain Wesleyan's status as a full-activity school. The committee recommends that the demands on the faculty be more closely examined, especially with regard to equal distribution of responsibility amongst the entire staff. Realistic expectations should be set concerning the balance of academic and athletic responsibilities for each teacher, the average class size, and the quantity of activities being offered vs. student and faculty population---all of this in an effort to increase job satisfaction and efficiency.

Conclusion

As Wesleyan prepares for its 2007 re-accreditation, specific areas regarding student learning and school improvement must be highlighted. The committee suggests that the topics of critical thinking and student achievement scores be adopted by the Goals Committees for the development of an action plan.



Plan and Results Overview

After review of the various committee reports, it is apparent not only that the Mission Statement is well known to the faculty, but also that the faculty agrees that the school is fulfilling its mission. The curriculum and writing initiatives that Wesleyan has conducted over the past five years have been successful and the recommendation is for these initiatives to be continued. Stakeholders recognize improvement in student learning, expansion of hardware and software for technology and growth in the facilities.

During the school improvement process, certain issues suggest a need for further review. These include:

1. A perceived precedence of athletics over academics and the arts
2. Heavy workloads for students and teachers
3. Concerns about admissions standards
4. A need for increased attention to improving mathematics instruction
5. Critical thinking instruction: the relationship between acquiring knowledge, solving problems, and making applications to everyday lives
6. A gender discrepancy in performance on standardized tests

Steps have already been taken to address the first three issues. A standing committee, headed by the Assistant Headmaster for Academic Affairs, was created in response to the issue of athletics. The committee reviewed concerns and made recommendations for improvement to be implemented in the 2007-2008 school year. This committee will be reconvened as additional concerns arise. With regard to the issue of work load, a committee, headed by the high school principal, produced a White Paper with recommendations for improvement to be implemented over the next two school years. Further, admissions concerns are being addressed and plans are being formulated for improvement during the next admissions season.

Response to the fourth, fifth and sixth issues in the list above forms the crux of the school improvement plan for the new evaluation cycle. Analysis of pertinent data and research on best instructional practices and expectation for improving student learning have led to the selection of three goals with associated action plans and expected results. The specific goals are as follows:

- Students shall demonstrate math proficiency at grade level within and across the curriculum.

- Students shall demonstrate critical thinking in the learning process while reflecting Wesleyan's mission and beliefs.
- Student shall benefit from gender-based instruction.

Goal 1: Students shall demonstrate math proficiency at grade level within and across the curriculum.

As reported by the School Profile and Vision Committees regarding CTP 4 results, "Students perform better, on average, on verbal subsets than on quantitative (mathematical) subsets." The Vision Committee also reports a discrepancy in student performance with SAT verbal scores slightly higher in 2006, whereas, nationally "math SAT scores have been significantly higher than verbal for many years." The committee goes on to "recommend an emphasis on improving student performance in quantitative analysis." In response to these concerns, Wesleyan is setting as Goal 1: *Students shall demonstrate math proficiency at grade level within and across the curriculum.*

The Goal #1 action plan was developed by a committee comprised of three high school math teachers, the math lab coordinator, one technology teacher, one lower school teacher and one middle school non-math teacher. The committee met once a week for several months with much brainstorming and refining of ideas. Three surveys were created and were administered in February 2007 to the entire faculty. The surveys were specifically written for each group of teachers; one was given to math teachers of middle and high school, one was given to all middle and high school non-math teachers, and one was given to all lower school teachers. The respondents were asked about their current use of math and the grading of math within their classrooms as well as their comfort level with math. They were also asked about any noticeable weaknesses in the math level of the students. After the surveys were reviewed, the action plan was formulated and refined. The goal of the action plan is to communicate to all teachers the mathematical expectations of students at each grade level, to help broaden the use of mathematics in other courses of study, and to thoroughly examine and strengthen the current math program.

The following are the definitions for the time frames as stated in the action plan document: Short-term – completed in the first year; Mid-term – completed within 2 to 3 years; Long-term – completed in 4 to 5 years; and Ongoing- worked on all five years, but may not result in a finished product.

Goal 2: Students shall demonstrate critical thinking in the learning process while reflecting Wesleyan's mission and beliefs.

Based on the recommendation of the Vision Committee, Goal #2 has been identified as: "Students shall demonstrate critical thinking in the learning process while reflecting Wesleyans' mission and beliefs." In developing the Action Plan to achieve this goal, the committee used the working definition for critical thinking stated in the Vision Report: "...a set of skills used to process information to generate beliefs. This will result in the regular practice, based on intellectual commitment, of using those skills to guide behavior." A committee of teachers representing all three divisions of the school met once a month to develop the resulting action plan for this goal.

A survey was administered to the faculty to help identify detractors to critical thinking on the local level (in the classroom), regionally (connections among disciplines), and globally to explore the relationship of mind, body, and spirit. While many detractors were identified in this survey, it was decided that the action plan should focus on issues directly related to classroom instruction. The primary issues identified were ineffective instruction when critical thinking is expected, inappropriate assessment for critical thinking tasks, concepts taught within a single discipline when cross-discipline teaching might be appropriate, and disproportionate emphasis on content rather than critical thinking in the classroom.

The following are the definitions for the time frames as stated in the action plan document: Short-term– completed in the first year; Mid-term– completed within 2 to 3 years; Long-term – completed in 4 to 5 years; and Ongoing- worked on all five years, but may not result in a finished product immediately.

Goal 3: Students shall benefit from gender-based instruction.

The Profile Committee states in their report some notable differences in CTP 4 performance by gender, with boys generally scoring higher on the quantitative subtests and girls, on the verbal subtests. The Vision Committee further reports a trend involving differential performance by gender. The report states: "Although there are certainly notable exceptions, on average boys in the middle and early high school grades outperform girls on quantitative measures and girls outperform boys on verbal measures. More boys than girls are National Merit Scholars and boys somewhat outnumber and outscore girls in AP courses and on AP exams. The committee recommends further examination of these gender differences and how the school may mitigate them."

The gender differences on standardized tests were first noticed internally by the administrative team and substantiated by a report in fall 2006, by Wesleyan's Testing Coordinator. Investigation of current research revealed that boys and girls learn differently, and skills learned during separate gender instruction in the middle school carry over to mixed gender classes in the high school. Research, external trends and Wesleyan's internal data supported a need for separate gender education. Therefore, the administration made a recommendation to introduce separate gender instruction in the middle school

grades in math and English classes. This recommendation took place in early winter 2006-07, after further study internally and externally. Collaborative meetings took place with the school's leadership team, and a selected group of about 30 parents. Eventually, a presentation was made to the Board of Trustees in February 2007. A recommendation for separate gender instruction in the middle school was approved.

Therefore, it was determined that a third school improvement goal and action plan should be developed. The purpose of this goal and action plan is to address gender differences in learning and instruction at all grade levels and within all divisions. The Assistant Headmaster for Academic Affairs developed the action plan and presented the initial strategy to the full faculty in April 2007.

The following are the definitions for the time frames as stated in the action plan document: Short-term – completed in the first year; Mid-term – completed within 2 to 3 years; Long-term – completed in 4 to 5 years; and Ongoing- worked on all five years, but may not result in a finished product.



Southern Association of Independent Schools

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

SAIS-SACS Dual Accreditation

VISIT REPORT

for

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October 7 – 9, 2007

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The Self-Study

The History

Wesleyan School was founded in 1963 in the Sandy Springs United Methodist Church. It was originally named Wesleyan Day School and served preschool students. In 1970 the school expanded to include an elementary school. In 1988 it was decided that the school would grow to include a high school. In 1994 the school added its first 9th grade class. At that time the school incorporated and broke ties with the church. A search for land resulted in 53 acres in Peachtree Corners. The school opened with over 500 students.

In the winter of 1996, The Board of Trustees hired Current Headmaster Zach Young who is instrumental in building the school as it is today. Home to Wesleyan is seventy-five beautiful acres that include the Lower School, Upper/Middle School, main Library, fine arts and four gymnasiums, natatorium, and many playing fields as well as a stadium. The campus is lovely and is easily accessible to all faculty and staff. Today the school boasts an enrollment over 1000 students.

When the school relocated to its current location, a campus plan was created. Miraculously in ten short years the school has reached its objectives and has a campus that enhances the schools mission and is the envy of any independent school.

Current Statistics and Leadership Structure

The school is lead by Headmaster, Zach Young, who was hired by a Board of Trustees. The Board is comprised of parents who are very committed to the mission of the school. The school serves 1075 students in Kindergarten – 12th grades. The school has a leadership team of Assistant Headmasters of Academic Affairs, External Affairs and Development as well as principals of the Lower, Middle and Upper Schools. Directors of Christian Life, Athletics and Fine Arts make up the remainder of the administrative structure.

Of the 1075 students enrolled 7.4 of the students are non-Caucasian. Diversity of the student body is a priority of the parents, Board of Trustees and administration. 100% of the graduates attend four year college and university. The school offers 12 Advanced Placement courses.

The academic classes are small to allow the teachers to provide individual attention. The school is blessed with a tremendous support staff to aid the regular classroom teachers. The entire school population: students, teachers, parents, trustees and administration know the mission of the school and is committed to it. Though the

school has made incredible advances in their campus plan, the mission is clear, it is all about the children and their education.

The school approached the self study by using their most recent strategic plan, the School Improvement model and the 2002 report from the previous self study.

PROFILE

PROFILE: *Where is the school today?*

The profile of Wesleyan provides insight into the school lives of students and their families, faculty and staff, and school administration. The history of the school, on the current campus, details a ten year journey of building facilities, developing athletic programs, fostering the arts, and creating the academic plan. The commitment to the school's Christian mission permeates all facets of the school and its community.

Commendations:

The visiting team commends the school for:

- The overwhelming positive affirmation of the school's mission and beliefs by the students, parents, faculty, administration, and trustees.
- The development, support, and progress of the Fellows Program in providing future teachers with needed instruction and experience.
- Development and fulfillment of campus master plan. The facilities are first-rate and provide a wonderful backdrop for the school's mission.
- Extraordinary financial support by the school and community.

Recommendations:

The visiting team recommends that the school consider:

- In accordance with its mission to provide a "diverse college preparatory education guided by Christian principles and beliefs," consider expanding admission of students from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.
- Designing and providing an on-going support system for students of diverse backgrounds.
- Expanding the student profile to include a student ability index in standardized testing data.

VISION

VISION: *Where does the school want to go?*

The mission statement is clearly at the heart of the Wesleyan School community and drives the vision. It is prominently displayed in classrooms, hallways, publications, and the school's website. The committee comprised of faculty, administration, and parents highlighted critical thinking and student achievement scores as goals for the development of an action plan.

Commendations:

The visiting team commends the school for:

- The overwhelmingly positive affirmation from students and parents support the fact that while the buildings and facilities are outstanding, the heart of the mission has not changed.
- Acknowledging learning styles relative to gender differences.
- Its present position and outlook for the future in the areas of academics, athletics, fine arts and spiritual life.

Recommendations:

The visiting team recommends that the school consider:

- Exploring additional training for teachers in order to promote and assess critical thinking within their own subject, across the disciplines, and within the context of a Christian worldview.
- Further evaluation of student performance in the area of quantitative analysis.

PLAN

PLAN: *What is the plan to get there?*

The self study team divided itself into various committees for the purpose of identifying areas of strength and also areas that the school would like to emphasize for improvement.

After much data gathering and analysis from faculty, parents and trustees, the school was pleased with the overall progress that was made over the past five years in the areas of curriculum and various writing initiatives. Recommendations were made that these initiatives be continued.

During this process, certain issues suggested a need for further review. These include:

1. A perceived precedence of athletics over academics and the arts
2. Heavy work load for students and teachers
3. Concerns about admissions standards
4. A need for increased attention to improving mathematics instruction
5. Critical thinking instruction: the relationship between acquiring knowledge, solving problems, and making applications to everyday lives
6. A gender discrepancy in performance on standardized tests.

Steps have already been taken to address the first three issues. A standing committee has met, reviewed the concerns and has made recommendations for improvement in the 2007-2008 school year.

Response to the fourth, fifth and sixth issues in the above list forms the school improvement plan with the three specific goals being:

- 1. Students shall demonstrate math proficiency at grade level within and across the curriculum.**
- 2. Student's shall demonstrate critical thinking in the learning process while reflecting Wesleyan's mission and beliefs**
- 3. Students shall benefit from gender-based instruction**

Commendations:

The visiting team commends the school for:

- Creating an environment encouraging open, honest dialogue on the current state of the school and developing a consensus in developing the goals for a vibrant future.
- Involving the entire Wesleyan community in the overall process of creating a comprehensive community wide effort and the plan for improvement.
- Gathering and using data to identify and establish the goals and benchmarks to help achieved the desired results.
- Providing a comprehensive testing program that provides rich data to use as benchmarks to monitor both individual and group progress.
- Recognizing gender discrepancies in performance on standardized tests and in developing school goals and action plans to address the identified areas for improvement.

Recommendations:

The visiting team recommends that the school consider:

- Ensuring meaningful, planned meetings (all-school, department, and small group) with dedicated agendas and follow-up aimed at addressing the established goals.
- Developing a consistent and on-going plan to train teachers on extending their knowledge and understanding of current best practices in instructional pedagogy in the study of gender equity.
- Developing a plan to ensure cross-curricular strategies are implemented with regards to critical thinking.

RESULTS

RESULTS: *How will the school know when it has accomplished its plan?*

Results of the three goals are stated through appropriate actions steps, responsible persons, time frames, and measurements. While current testing provides needed information on individual students, alternate testing might be explored to provide both national comparisons and steps toward possible curriculum adjustments. It would seem that teachers will have the opportunity to participate in the use of data to implement these goals.

Commendations:

The visiting team commends the school for:

- Adopting a fall testing schedule to be used to guide instruction for the remainder of the year.
- Providing extensive professional development to implement gender specific education.
- A positive school commitment to an understanding of the need for achieving the specific goals.
- A particularly strong start in implementing gender specific education.

Recommendations:

The visiting team would like to recommend the school consider:

- Revisiting the definition of critical thinking skills.
 - Consider additional specific professional development in critical thinking instruction to include synthesis.
 - Establishing measurable objectives for the goals stated.
 - Peers visits between divisions to observe the methods utilized in gender education, especially math classes.
 - Examining methods to challenge the most able mathematics students.
 - Reviewing new initiatives to ensure they are user-friendly and efficient.
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Additional Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations:

The visiting team commends the school for:

- A strong commitment to the mission statement and the fact they truly know who they are
- A commitment of faculty to students with their generosity of time, energy, and effort
- A strong core leadership
- A commitment to excellent student-teacher ratio
- Embracing the unit K-12 structure
- A strong professional development structure and funding
- Strong technology instruction, support and equipment is evidenced
- The Parent University program dedicated to help parents with the job of raising good citizens
- Staff Development for new faculty is well developed
- A school wide commitment to building endowment for inclusion of families of diverse backgrounds
- Great strides have been made to strengthen the arts program
- Reverence for the heart of the institution rather than the physical plant
- A strong college counseling program that not only helps the students but the parents as well
- Seeing the value in developing a testing coordinator position
- Abundant support system in place – such as math specialists, reading specialists, technology staff, Lower School Science lab/teacher, testing coordinator, fine arts tech person, etc.
- The Faculty Fellows program that helps identify young people that are interested in independent education as a career path

Recommendations:

The visiting team recommends that the school consider:

- The recruitment of faculty of diverse backgrounds
 - Partnering with organizations such as “A Better Chance” to expand diversity
 - Collecting and utilizing data, in addition to test results
 - Evaluating current curricula to encourage and enhance critical thinking skills
 - Creating a program for faculty to visit other schools to examine best practices
 - Evaluating the student profile to include a student ability index in order to examine and possibly expand appropriate programs for high-achieving students
 - Taking a deep breath and celebrate what you have accomplished in ten years and now concentrate on developing programs to become the best school you can be.
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SUMMARY

Wesleyan spirit pervades the entire school. The mission “to be a Christian school of academic excellence by providing each student a diverse college preparatory education guided by Christian principles and beliefs; by challenging and nurturing the mind, body and spirit; and by developing responsible stewardship in our changing world” is lived by every member of the Wesleyan family. Without exception, every person we spoke with understands and are committed to the mission of this school. The entire population feels blessed to have made the incredible strides to become the school it is today after ten short years.

There is tremendous collaboration between faculty, staff, parents and administrators. Everyone understands the mission and is willing to do what it takes to make this school a success. Surveys were done to assess the satisfaction of the schools stakeholders and from the surveys they planned the goals for improvement.

The self study committees identified six goals that they felt that they should address. The first three goals have already been addressed so the remaining three goals were selected to be addressed over the next five years. These goals were: gender discrepancy in performance on standardized tests, critical thinking skills and improving math instruction. The self study identifies strategies to reach these goals. The peer review team has recommended they search for means to measure the success of the strategies that they have designed.

CONCLUSION

The Peer Review Team wishes to thank the entire school population for extending such a warm welcome. We have felt from the first moment, a spirit of excitement that pervades this school population. They have been working so hard to achieve the goals set out by the trustees and headmaster ten years ago. History has been made and we are honored to play a small part in the process. We encourage the school to take a deep breath and concentrate now on becoming the best independent school in northeast Atlanta.

The visiting team finds:

1. That Wesleyan School is in compliance with all standards of the SAIS-SACS dual accreditation process.
2. That the self-study conducted by the school meets the standard of quality and thoroughness required by the dual accreditation process and answers the four critical questions as outlined in the Guidebook.
3. That the school is unanimously recommended for SAIS-SACS dual accreditation.