

**Qingdao International School of Shandong
Three Year Revisit Visiting Committee Report
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Visiting Committee

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Introduction

Qingdao International School of Shandong (QISS), founded in 1998, serves the educational needs of children of the expatriate community in Qingdao. Currently, the school has 213 students in pre-K through grade 12. QISS became a candidate in spring 2003 and fully accredited in spring 2005 with the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

QISS has had a major change in governance structure; the school previously was owned by private investors. Due to an internal family situation, there was an extreme threat during the summer of 2007 regarding the continued existence of the school. Therefore, the school was taken over by the Chinese municipal education division, the Qingdao Education Bureau. The school had to relocate in August 2007 to a temporary site in the new International Building at the No. 2 Middle School in Qingdao. During the first three weeks of operation the government spent over \$600,000 to update the facilities to international standards and provide the appropriate instructional resources. All but three administrators, faculty, and support staff accepted the newly offered contracts from the Qingdao Education Bureau. The school opened on August 16 with a higher enrollment than in previous years. The administration has seen an increased involvement of the stakeholders and enthusiasm for the program. The mayor and the Municipal Government of Qingdao have made a commitment to relocate the school to a new site to ensure there is a modern, international school campus able to serve the international families living in the Qingdao area.

In November a substantive change was conducted due to this change in governance and relocation; the Accrediting Commission of Schools, WASC, supported the findings of the visiting committee that the school be fully accredited under this change. The school has been working with the Qingdao Bureau of Education to develop new Articles of Association to establish a more definitive governance structure.

This current three year re-visit had the express purpose of reviewing progress made on the critical areas for follow-up since the full visit and the resulting programmatic changes; in addition the visit reviewed further progress in the development of the newly formed governance structure as of August 2007 and proposed future planning for the school.

Follow-up Process

Since 2005 the school has been moving forward on its critical areas for follow-up using the schoolwide action plan as a guide; this has been overseen by the leadership team with

input from teachers. Annually, the school has completed the expected interim reports for WASC.

School's Progress on Critical Areas Areas for Follow-up through the Schoolwide Action Plan

Project: Develop an organizational structure to integrate the WASC Self- Study Process into the culture of the school.

Critical area: The director of QISS should establish an organizational structure to integrate the WASC process into the culture of the school, thereby assuring program continuity and continuous school improvement.

NOTE: The Visiting Committee has emphasized this area due to the change in governance and major impact it has had on the school. In July 2007 the leadership and staff were locked out of the original school building due to the family-owned school's internal turmoil. Thanks to Mayor Xia, the Qingdao Municipal Government, took over the school , establishing the official name as Qingdao No. 1 International School of Shandong Province. The government has pledged political and financial support for QISS; the Qingdao Education Bureau did find a temporary site for the school and provided the necessary infrastructure needs and the instructional resources. The school is now moving forward in systematizing structures in light of the change in governance. In addition, the Qingdao Municipal Government has committed itself to the school's relocation to a permanent site worthy of an international school for Qingdao.

During this visit, the WASC Visiting Committee met with and applauded the Vice Mayor of Qingdao, Zhang Hui, and the government she represents for the support and understandings of the needs of internationalism and education in the international school system. The Visiting Committee found that the Vice Mayor clearly understood the need for a student and learning focused international school in Qingdao.

Furthermore, the Visiting Committee found an active and committed parent and staff community who have been willing to rethink and reconstitute the governance and foundation of the international school to ensure the continuance of a quality international program. The leadership of the school has persevered through this extremely difficult time to ensure the continuity of the international school. The entire school community has demonstrated total dedication to sustaining the viability of the school's management throughout this entire period of change. This was also clearly evident in the dedication and commitment of the staff to move forward with a quality instructional program in spite of the major disruption and turmoil created in July.

Since the spring of 2005, the QISS leadership and staff have designed and adjusted the school's organizational structure to integrate the WASC process. More work is needed with the emphasis on how all aspects of the school program and operations support high quality learning and the needs of the students served. With the change in ownership in the summer of 2007, one of the major focal areas has been to establish a new governance structure. The school leadership has appointed a special task force of parents and staff to draft an Articles of Association and present this to the Bureau of Education. Since the

substantive change visit in November, the school and Bureau have been working on revised drafts; there is greater agreement and the goal is to ensure that the WASC criteria on governance and leadership guide this work.

The Visiting Committee did find that there is evidence of progress made in the reorganization of the school due to the changes the school has undergone since the November visit. The school should be commended for the preparation of the initial "Articles of Association" document and the resulting consultation and cooperation with the Qingdao Education Bureau as it is being further refined. This document is envisioned as the foundation of a strong and sustainable system of governance empowering the school and its administration to control and manage its affairs as permitted within the Chinese law. The Visiting Committee learned that the school hopes to have an agreed upon "Articles of Association" that will define the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and the leadership of the school by June 2008. This will facilitate a smooth transition into the upcoming 2008-2009 school year under the new governance structure.

The school leadership, the teachers, parents, and students value and understand the importance of WASC accreditation and meeting the international WASC criteria regarding all aspects of the school's program and operation. This includes the areas of organization, governance, leadership, staff, resource management and development, curriculum, instruction and assessment and support for student learning. There appears to be understanding and commitment from the governing authority, school leadership and stakeholders regarding the WASC criteria concepts and indicators that must be addressed in all areas; this is critical as the Articles of Association and the roles of the Board of Trustees' and leadership are further refined.

Clarity is also still needed in several areas: 1) the role of the leadership team and how it will continue to serve as part of the WASC process of continuous improvement; 2) the roles of the curriculum leaders in the school's work to establish a K -12 curriculum articulation; and 3) the specific role of the proposed Board of Trustees (BOT) and what its relationship will be to the other groups in the school, i.e., the administration team and the leadership team. There is isolated progress within these areas but there will be a greater impact on student learning if there is an integrated and united approach.

The administration is currently exploring various options to restructure and redefine the leadership team in light of the change in governance and the recognition of a greater systemization in areas such as curriculum, assessment and ESL. The administration recognizes the need to clarify and create policies and procedures in a codified manner as a result of these changes. The defining of the roles and responsibility of the leadership team and communication within the organizational structure is important for the establishment of systems in the school and will facilitate a culture of learning.

Systems need to be established to allow continuous school improvement within the resulting governance structure. Possible systems could include: data collection and review and analysis of that data; planning and implementation of programs in the school that can be sustained and developed, e.g. supervision and control at an administrative level of the implementation, assessment and review of effective curriculum; systems for decision making of additional programs offered for which credit would be awarded in the

high school; systems for the regular monitoring of the use of ESL strategies as outlined in the action plan of 2007-2008.

Most important to the school's continued growth and development will be the clarification of the budget in relation to future hiring, support of a future campus and all associated costs, and expansion plans based on sustainable development within realistic budgetary terms.

Finally, based on the revised critical areas of growth, QISS leadership in collaboration with the staff will need to update their school wide action plan in order to have a viable roadmap for the next three years. This will include a review of the mission and schoolwide student goals with respect to the proposed movement into the IB Primary Years Program and the IB Learner Profile. Integral to this will be the revision and refinement of a "user-friendly" student/community profile.

Project: Pursue and Implement a Variety of Staff Development Activities

Critical Area: The administration and staff should pursue a variety of professional development opportunities that will enable teachers to keep abreast of current educational trends and utilize research-based findings in the classroom.

The Visiting Team found that the school has supported professional development through a 50% matching basis with the plan to increase this to 100% in the 2008-2009 school year. The school has used experts on the staff to train teachers in areas such as 6 + 1 Traits of Writing, the use of formative and summative assessments, and the use of the software program Atlas Rubicon for curricular documentation.

The school recognizes that the student achievement data and the supervision and evaluation process need to be correlated to ensure that there is a schoolwide coordinated effort on the professional development and coaching that is necessary to address more specifically the needs of the students, i.e., English acquisition. Therefore, professional development needs to be scrutinized and collapsed into support for the major areas of growth in the school.

Project: Develop a means to assess the Expected School wide Learning Results (ESLRS)

Critical Area: The administration and staff should put in place means of assessment to determine the extent students are accomplishing the ESLRs.

The school has done some work on greater assessment of the schoolwide learning results, especially in the area of character development. However, the data gathered for the three year revisit report reconfirms that more work needs to be done with clarifying the schoolwide student goals and ensuring student and community understanding of what it means to accomplish these. QISS has embraced moving into the Primary Years Programme and the development of the units will commence in the 2008-2009 school

year. The IB Learner Profile with its ten student outcomes will need to be discussed and analyzed in light of the school's current expected schoolwide learning results. The result should be a refinement of the school's student goals; it may result in the school adopting the IB Learner Profile student outcomes as its schoolwide student goals.

Project: Articulate the Written Curriculum

Critical Area: The QISS leadership team should establish a long-range plan whereby measurable learning objectives are specified throughout the curriculum and a process is instituted for measuring student attainment of the objectives.

Critical Area: The administration and staff should establish a curriculum which flows sequentially through the grade levels.

QISS has adopted the Atlas Rubicon as the tool to record and update its curriculum. Since the full visit in 2005, progress has been made in revising standards and units, emphasizing key assignments that serve as summative performance assessments.

Work with Atlas Rubicon is proceeding and the leadership and staff have recognized that a review of the long-term curriculum development plan now needs to occur to ensure quality progress is being made in all areas in light of student achievement and learning needs. (Note: The effect of the change in governance and having to move to a new site and obtain new instructional materials and equipment has been a major disruption during this school year.)

The WASC visiting team commends the actions taken since 2005-2006 in evaluation and implementation of aspects of the defined action plan. Work in organization of structures and focused areas such as key assignments, departmental reviews, analysis of standards and benchmarks is all to be singled out for recognition, including the beginning use of assessment tools especially in elementary ESL. Although the slowdown in work done on curriculum is understandable due to the critical changes in the governance and ownership of the school, there is an apparent need to focus on this ongoing curricular improvement work of the curricula improvement.

Project: Develop a Language Development Program that meets the Needs of All Students

Critical Area: The administration and staff should ensure the effectiveness of the ESL program by standardizing educational delivery methods, utilizing assessment tools for screening English competency and establishing ESL exit policies.

The ESL program at QISS is separated into a lower school and an upper school program. The lower school is emerging as a sheltered immersion program. Essentially, almost all the students are non-native English speakers. Since the full visit in 2005, careful thought has gone into addressing this area, especially during the 2006-2007 school year. The original plan that was developed in spring 2005 has been the basis for the work undertaken. The school leadership did form a committee in August 2006 to "collect data,

consider current practice, and investigate options for improving English acquisition at QISS.” This committee was called Quality Instruction for Students learning English Committee. By January 2007 a formal proposal for each of the steps was presented to administrators and other stakeholders with a final document prepared by May 2007.

For the 2007-2008, the lower school now has a specialized ESL department with four full time teachers who are experienced in teaching ESL; three out of the four have a TESOL certificate. Therefore, there is greater work with English learners in the lower school, including a “differentiated learning” period that is assisting students in grades 1-5 with focus on targeted reading and writing skill development. One of the four teachers is designated the head of department.

At the upper school there is now a English language development coordinator. In grades 6-12 the school has added a “Communication Skills” to provide students additional time for English language development. Students have been grouped by English proficiency levels and teachers throughout the upper school have been assigned this class that emphasizes communication skills through a thematic approach. The overall idea has been received as very creative; however, in reality the teachers do not feel qualified to address ESL issues and that the English language arts department should be addressing these areas. There appears to be a major need for further training and coaching of the teachers, such as engaging staff in ESL training.

Based on the progress report and dialog during the visit, the school leadership and staff recognize that there still is a need for a more formalized schoolwide framework to address the need of English acquisition of the students. This includes a staff model that includes a schoolwide coordination role that oversees short- and long-term professional development to assist teachers in differentiation of instruction and scaffolding the instruction. In August 2008 QISS will host Virginia Rojas, a worldwide consultant on ESL issues.

The Visiting Committee emphasized with the school that the administration and staff should ensure the effectiveness of the ESL program by standardizing educational delivery methods utilizing assessment tools for screening English competency and establishing ESL exit policies.

Summary:

- The Visiting Committee overall commends the school for its continued growth forward in spite of the extremely difficult circumstances and applauds the dedication of the entire school community. Furthermore the Visiting Committee honors the Qingdao Bureau of Education for its willingness to be the new governing body of QISS and work collaboratively with the QISS leadership and school community in providing a quality sound international education for the students.
- The Visiting Committee commends the school leadership, faculty, support staff, parents, and students for their dedication to the school’s program and viability.

- The Visiting Committee commends the work of the school leadership and members of the school community in the initial development of the “Articles of Association” and the collaborative work with the Qingdao Education Bureau as these are being refined.

The Visiting Committee recommends the areas below as the major focal points in the ongoing school improvement of QISS; note that these are further explained throughout this visiting committee report.

- Based on the revised critical areas of growth QISS leadership in collaboration with the staff will need to update their school wide action plan in order to have a viable “roadmap” for the next three years.
- The school leadership in collaboration with the staff further develops a student/community profile that includes demographic, achievement, and perception data that has noted findings and overall interpretations. This profile should be used in discussion with all stakeholders as they review and refine the expected schoolwide learning results based on the school’s core beliefs and mission; the identified student learning needs, the 21st century challenges the students will face, and the proposed use of the IBO’s Learner Profile.
- The school leadership in collaboration with staff continues to develop means to ensure the student program complements the redefined student learning goals and their common understanding by all stakeholders so these school wide learning goals are regularly assessed throughout the program.
- The school leadership works closely with the Bureau of Education to finalize the Articles of Association that will define the roles of the Board of Trustees (BOT) and the school leadership by the end of the 2007-2008 school year to ensure a smooth beginning to the forthcoming 2008-2009 school year. Critical to this is a review of the WASC criteria and indicators, i.e., governance, leadership and resource management and development.
- The school leadership restructures and redefines the leadership team in light of the changes in governance and the need to systematize areas such as curriculum assessment, ESL work, and professional development to ensure a cohesive schoolwide development and ongoing school improvement.

Overall, the Visiting Committee found solid evidence that QISS is providing the international community with a quality program that will prepare the students for “next steps.” The school community does recognize that the use of the WASC criteria and indicators will continue to very powerful in the school’s further growth. The Visiting Committee is confident that the school will continue to move forward with the support of the WASC process.