

WESLEY INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY



The Vision

Wesley International Academy develops students who are global citizens and are academically competitive by international standards of excellence.

The Mission

Wesley International Academy develops in students the discipline of learning and a life-long desire for knowledge through a world class International Baccalaureate education.



I. The Strategic Planning Process

Introduction

Wesley International Academy (WIA) is entering its tenth year of operation with significant wins. The school has grown significantly from a small school operated by a for-profit company to a community of more than 700 students and their families. The board, which was once comprised of the management company's employees, is now a diverse, committed board of eleven. Going into the 2017-18 school year, WIA maintains a waiting list of more than 700 students, no available seats in any grade K-8, and no staff vacancies. The leadership and support team has grown to provide strong internal capacity for operations, academics, student services, financial management, and International Baccalaureate programming. The Primary Years Programme and Middle Years Programme have both received their renewals as IB World Schools with the highest marks, and the school is entering its second year under the most experienced, accomplished Executive Director to date.

As WIA looks to the future, this strategic plan reflects the strengths, opportunities, and areas of growth that are critical to realizing the mission for every student. The school's strategic planning process was timed to occur in the same year as the charter renewal, enabling stakeholders to collaborate in data collection and analysis to determine the most critical areas of focus for the next 3-5 years. This plan outlines those critical areas of focus, as well as the metrics and next steps to realize them. It is anticipated that the entire plan will be revisited and reviewed by an ad hoc strategic planning committee in the 2020-2021 school year to determine the revisions and refinements necessary to drive action from 2021-2025.



History



WIA was founded in 2006 and opened in 2007 as Imagine Wesley International Academy (IWIA). Founded by parents and community members with the support of the Imagine educational management organization, all staff and most governing board members were employees of Imagine Schools. The families that participated in founding the school, and many of the original staff members, were committed to a vision of a community-centered, IB, single-gender school that provided a more intra-cultural perspective to educating the whole child. However, under the management of Imagine, the school had uneven enrollment and performance, a new principal each year, and exorbitant management costs.

In 2008, the Georgia Department of Education enforced its policy that all charter schools must be governed by fully independent, local non-profit governing boards, and six parents stepped up to become the school's first non-profit board. Under the governance of the school's first volunteer board, the school successfully severed the relationship with external management and was reborn as Wesley International Academy. This board recruited the school's first principal outside of Imagine, and under their governance, restructured the leadership team, moved into an APS facility that eliminated the \$600,000 annual lease, and increased student enrollment and attendance. Throughout the changes, the school has maintained a diverse student body and staff, and has continued to recruit students from throughout Atlanta Public Schools.

More recently, the board has grown to eleven volunteers with a broad set of skills and perspectives, as well as greater representation from community members outside of the parent body. WIA has significantly increased its student retention, surpassing its previous charter goals, with more than 700 students on the waiting list and every seat K-8 filled. WIA has also leveled its enrollment pattern, increased staff and student support structures, and grown many of its innovative programs, like Chinese and the MYP Accelerated Programs of Study, as well as opportunities like participation in the Youth Chinese Test, annual trips outside of the United States, and a STEAM-based afterschool program.

The school's history has taken shape in three eras: the 2007-2012 era under Imagine management, during which time the school established its brand and model; the 2012-2016 era as an independent non-profit that made structural changes and refinements to programming; and now the 2017-2021 era, which is being led by a new executive director focused on moving the school into the top quartile of public schools in the state. As the second charter renewal is submitted and the board and leadership look to the next five years, a strategic planning process is critical to align the community behind common goals and vision for the school's next era.

Context

WIA entered the strategic planning process on the heels of a few significant changes. The new ED was recruited for the 2016-17 school year after the MYP principal served as interim for one year. Three leadership transitions in three years compelled the new ED to focus his first year on collecting data and meeting with stakeholders to better understand the needs of the school.

Although a strategic plan was crafted in 2014, this plan was neither adhered to or widely promoted. As a result, the board and leadership were focused on getting full participation from each stakeholder group and outlining a process that would promote engagement and authentic application of the plan. A one-page document, to be shared across all stakeholder groups, is being used as the primary means of communication about the strategic plan to ensure all community members are aware of, and working toward, the strategic directions.

WIA is also submitting its second charter renewal. Although many of the goals around operations, finance, and stakeholder satisfaction have been met, many student performance goals have not. The academic performance over 2012-2017 did has been uneven, unpredictable, and did not meet or exceed the goals outlined in the prior charter. Therefore, the leadership and board are focused on improving performance to a level that exceeds the expectations of the authorizers and stakeholders.



Process

Committee

The strategic planning committee was comprised of representatives from each stakeholder group, and various subgroups within stakeholder groups were identified to ensure representation of different perspectives. Two board members volunteered to participate on the committee and communicate between the board and committee to ensure satisfactory progress. All other committee members were recruited by the ED. Committee members were:

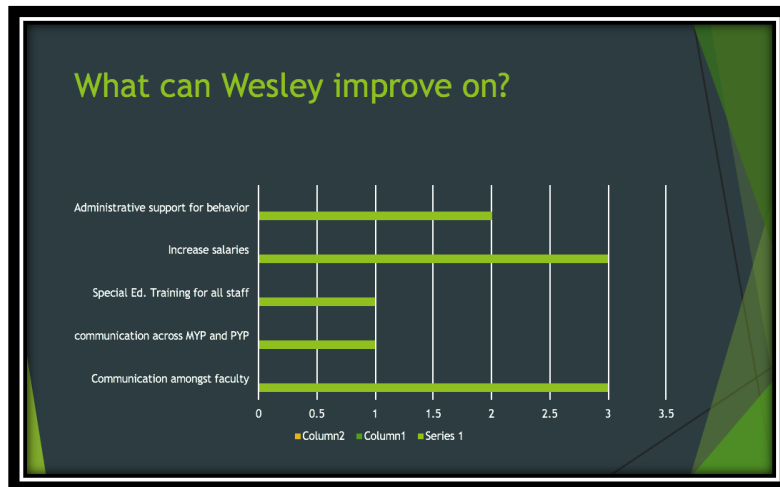
- Nicole Jones, board representative
- Elisa Buckner, board representative
- Jason Marshall, executive director
- Anita Lawrence, PYP principal
- Keisha Hancock, MYP principal
- Lisa Price, operations representative
- Kamilah Konrad, parent representative
- Shannon Sanders, parent representative
- Hanna Grendzinski, student representative
- Anthony Chung, Chinese department representative
- Collette Minnifield, IB representative
- Desta Tonge, specials department representative
- Andrew Potter, special education representative
- Eric Schirmer, MYP teacher representative
- Tomiko Thompson, PYP teacher representative
- Britnney Williams, PYP teacher representative



The committee met a total of six times at the school site, and each member completed other tasks outside of meetings to achieve the strategic planning process over the course of the 2016-17 school year.

Data Collection and Analysis

The strategic planning process began with the board’s July 2016 SWOT analysis, facilitated by Georgia Charter Schools Association. The strategic planning committee convened for the first time in September of 2016 to review the importance of the process, evaluate planning models, and brainstorm strategies for data collection from each stakeholder group.



Representatives collected data from their stakeholder group over a two-month window in anonymous online and paper surveys, in-person interviews, and in group meetings. The primary questions each representative asked their group were:

1. What does Wesley do well? What are the strengths of the school?
2. What does Wesley need to do better? What are our school’s most critical growth areas?

Over 300 parents participated in interviews and surveys, and 100% of staff and students in grades 5-8 participated in anonymous surveys of focus groups facilitated by their group representative. Each representative pulled this information together into handouts and

presentations, which were shared with the entire committee. The leadership team pulled student performance and operating data to share with the committee, and themes in findings from the board’s SWOT analysis were also included in the share-out.

Once all data had been collected and shared, small groups within the committee worked together to evaluate trends in strengths and growth areas. It became clear, early on, that there were similar themes reported by each stakeholder group, and most feedback for growth was focused on different strategies for the same core challenges: student performance, teacher retention and satisfaction, and behavior and culture. The final two meetings were dedicated to refining the directions and priorities, identification of metrics of success for each direction, and recommendations for sub-committees to manage action planning and progress monitoring.

Next Steps

One sub-committee and a designated lead has been assigned for each of the four strategic directions based on feedback from the strategic planning committee. These sub-committees are pre-existing groups whose work will be informed and shaped by the directions, rather than a new sub-committee convened to address the direction.

Starting in the 2017-18 school year, each sub-committee will convene to articulate the long-term (five year) measures of success for each priority, as well as the benchmarks to be used for annual progress monitoring. Each sub-committee will also create an action plan for the priorities in their assigned direction. Each of the two board strategic planning representatives will serve as liaison for two of the sub-committees and will communicate updates and progress reports to the board each semester. In this way, the board will continue to oversee the progress toward the articulated directions.

Each sub-committee will use an action planning template to name the goals, intended actions, and measures of success for the year. This document will be submitted by October 1, 2017 to the board, and follow-up progress monitoring reports will be submitted via the board representatives at the end of each semester. After the 2017-18 school year, goals and action plans for the subsequent year will be developed by the end of the school year to inform summer initiatives.



II. The Strategic Directions

Strategic Directions



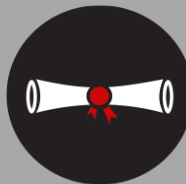
Direction #1:

WIA will recruit, grow, and retain a highly satisfied, high performing staff.

- Priority 1: Develop recruiting, vetting, and onboarding practices to secure hire the highest-capacity staff.
- Priority 2: Provide individualized professional goals and support at all levels of the organization.
- Priority 3: Use staff feedback to inform strategies that promote satisfaction and retention.
- Priority 4: Develop a leadership development process for staff and succession plan for leadership roles.

Success will look like:

- High rates of staff retention and satisfaction
- Demonstrable growth in capacity for all staff members



Direction #2:

WIA will out-perform similar schools in the state.

- Priority 1: Improve assessment performance in core content areas by whole school, grade level, content area, and subgroups.
- Priority 2: Increase student opportunities, participation, and performance in Chinese, Music, Physical Education, Technology, and Art.
- Priority 3: Use data to drive decision-making by leadership and individual staff members around planning, instruction, and professional development.

Success will look like:

- Beating the Odds designations
- Assessment performance that is higher than the state
- Increased participation in high quality arts and athletics opportunities



Direction #3:

WIA will define and implement a clear, consistent IB culture for all students and staff.

- Priority 1: Collect and use data on culture and behavior to drive professional development and decision-making.
- Priority 2: Develop and implement a tiered, K-8 approach to IB culture and discipline that empowers all students to succeed.
- Priority 3: Provide intensive support that empowers all teachers to implement model IB classroom cultures.

Success will look like:

- Reduced disruption and disciplinary infractions
- Increased self-governance and success for all students
- Increased staff capacity to facilitate IB classroom culture



Direction #4:

WIA will increase its financial and partnership resources.

- Priority 1: Create an annual development plan that projects ambitious annual fundraising growth.
- Priority 2: Raise capital to address long-term facility needs.
- Priority 3: Increase the resources (funding, partnerships, grants, and opportunities) for students to build IB leadership experiences and skills.

Success will look like:

- Increased revenue
- More high-quality partnerships and opportunities for students, staff, and families
- Facility resources that will accommodate the school program

Strategic Direction 1: WIA will recruit, grow, and retain a highly-satisfied, high-performing staff.

Committee: Leadership Team, Teacher Advisory (one person from each grade level and electives area), Board Member Rep

Initiative Lead: Jason Marshall

Priorities	Strategies to Consider	Committee Questions
<i>Priority 1: Develop recruiting, vetting, and onboarding practices to hire the highest-performing, most mission-aligned staff.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy/procedure in place • Staff in exit interviews report they were clear on expectations • Retention of new hires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we ensure we are leveraging best practices to hire the best, most mission-aligned people who will want to stay and grow?
<i>Priority 2: Provide individualized professional goals and the aligned development that builds skills for all staff members at all levels of the organization.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each staff member has individualized professional goals • All staff members have access to professional development to advance their goals • Level of satisfaction and impact of PD from stakeholder surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will non-instructional staff set goals and be developed? • How will specials teachers, Chinese teachers, and other specialty content be developed in their focus area? • What is the goal-setting process for teachers, and how does PD align?
<i>Priority 3: Use staff feedback to inform strategies that promote satisfaction and retention.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual teacher retention rate/ percentage of teachers who leave within the year • Annual staff survey/annual exit data • Average tenure of teachers at WIA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit data collection to assess barriers to retention—tracked and monitored • Committee of staff reps to examine data and make suggestions?
<i>Priority 4: Develop a leadership development process for staff and succession plan for leadership roles.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of leadership positions filled internally/ percentage of staff with additional leadership roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What leadership capacity building do teachers, non-instructional staff access? • What is the succession plan for all current leadership positions?

Action Items To Consider

1. Creation of high-quality annual staff survey with full participation implemented at the same time each year (to inform next year's planning)
2. Creation of exit data collection process
3. Leadership pipeline to prepare staff for increased responsibility and leadership
4. Someone assigned to collecting, monitoring, evaluating data
5. Structured annual process by which teacher retention, satisfaction, and promotion data is reviewed and used to inform strategies for subsequent year
6. Staff committee with representatives who are involved in decision-making (maybe monitoring this initiative?)
7. Means of assessing PD satisfaction and impact regularly used with PD opportunities
8. Strategies to promote staff culture and commitment to the school in response to data
9. The individualized goals created at the start of the year need to be the foundation of the observation cycles, feedback, and PD you access throughout the year—keep it aligned and keep coming back to the TKES structure/strategy.
10. All staff, regardless of tenure and proficiency, are pushed to grow and access PD throughout the year to grow their practice.
11. How does the leadership pipeline recognize the small, insular nature of our school model?

Metrics

- Annual year-over-year staff retention
- Retention and promotion rates within the school year
- Number of vacancies filled before start of new school year
- Staff feedback on annual state survey
- Staff feedback on annual internal survey
- Percentage of staff who meet annual goals annually
- Staff attendance and participation rate (within the year and at optional events)

Strategic Direction 2: By 2021, WIA will improve student academic performance to out-perform similar schools in the state.

Committee: Leadership Team, Academic Excellence Committee, Specials and Chinese department chairs

Initiative Lead: Jason Marshall

Priorities	Strategies to Consider	Committee Questions/ Recommendations
<p><i>Priority 1: Improve performance in core content areas (math, ELA/reading, science, social studies) by whole school, grade level, content area, and subgroups</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised coaching structure • Adoption of curricula and common strategies • Greater support for differentiation (pull-outs, small groups) • Use of data to drive planning on a more frequent basis • Identification of key data measures to focus decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the metrics for performance K-2 • What are the means of measuring annual growth for science and social studies? • How are subgroups defined (students with disabilities, students by income and race, language proficiency, gender, cohort)
<p><i>Priority 2: Increase student opportunities (internal and external), participation, and performance in Chinese, Music, Physical Education, Technology, and Art.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget for supplementary arts opportunities • Reorganization of specials to afford longer segments (by semester or year) • Advanced specials electives for MYP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The body that oversees this component must include specials and Chinese teachers to inform goal-setting and strategy
<p><i>Priority 3: Use data to drive decision-making by leadership and individual staff members around planning, instruction, and professional development.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting annual goals and quarterly benchmark targets for each student, sub-group, cohort, grade, etc. • Element of planning template that asks for the data used to make the plan • Professional development on use of data • Designated leader to guide availability and use of data across school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we measure the improved use of data at the school across time? • What does a school that effectively uses data to drive decision-making look like? Where will the change be obvious?

Action Items To Consider

1. What measures of improvement might the school have other than MAP and Milestones?
2. Who is tracking subgroup performance, and what subgroups do we track (income status, SPED, ELs, gender?)
3. Can we start disaggregating data by cohort (how many years they have attended) to track value-add of attendance year over year?
4. What matriculation data can we track, especially around advanced course participation (ELA, math, arts, Chinese), MYP/DP completion, etc.?
5. How does the data we have get integrated into the decision-making process? How are teachers coached through using their data to guide planning and instructional decision-making?

Metrics

- Milestones proficiency (beating district and state) and MAP annual goal attainment
- Percentage of students who receive high school credit in 8th grade
- Matriculation data (participation in advanced coursework at high school)
- Completion of MYP/DP in high school
- Writing and speaking skills in IB work
- Beating The Odds designation
- Year over year growth by cohort (to determine value-add for return students over several years)
- Percentage of students who participate in the YCT annually
- Performance of students on the YCT annually
- Performance on the STAMP annually
- Participation of students in high-levels arts opportunities (all-county, all-state, etc.)
- Other assessment measures determined by specials teachers
- Use of data in PD sessions—clear evidence of alignment in planning
- Stakeholder surveys
- Observation/audit for use of data across staff

Strategic Direction 3: WIA will define and implement a clear, consistent IB culture for all students and staff.

Committee: Counseling staff, Assistant Principals, board designees

Initiative Lead: Designated by ED

Priorities	Strategies to Consider	Committee Questions/ Recommendations
<p><i>Priority 1: Collect and use data on culture and behavior to drive professional development and decision-making.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain a system to track disciplinary data (referrals to other classrooms, referrals to admin/counseling, etc.) that can be tracked at the leadership level by student, subgroup, teacher, etc. • Regular analysis of behavior data by counselors and administrators to inform PD and teacher supports • Development of data-based student intervention strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does IB look different in the PYP vs. MYP? • What are the habits and behaviors we want students to have as IB leaders? How is this a part of the cultural norms? • What are the opportunities students need to practice these target behaviors? • Need parents to be involved in some way in this initiative
<p><i>Priority 2: Develop and implement a tiered, K-8 approach to IB culture and discipline that empowers all students to succeed.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a system of tiered interventions that are revisited and revised according to data • Identify strategies and recognition to encourage behaviors that align to the learner profiles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we onboard new teachers and differentiate teacher supports to facilitate a consistent IB culture? • What are the hallmarks of an IB culture? What do we have now vs. where do we want to be? Gap analysis.
<p><i>Priority 3: Provide intensive support that empowers all teachers to implement model IB classroom cultures</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals for each teacher around discipline and culture • Coaching from admin on behavior and culture strategies • School-wide PD on common culture-promoting techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need intervention teachers, counseling staff to be involved in determining the right supports • Who are the people on the admin team with the greatest skills here? What training will they need?

Action Items To Consider

1. What is our current vision for culture? How is it articulated? How is what we are seeking here different?
2. Who are the right people to organize this initiative? How can we get the voices of graduates and middle school students involved in this initiative?
3. If the vision is defined by December 2017, this informs the training and supports for the subsequent semester, with a hard focus beginning in the 2018-19 school year. 1-17: set the focus, create the systems for data, set the budget for training; 2019-20 school year: all staff trained, data collected—new vision implemented.
4. What are the expectations for staff in an IB culture? How might teacher behaviors be different, and how are teachers supported in this?
5. How does the Wesley Way fit into this?

Metrics

- Clear plan to which all guidebooks and policies are aligned
- Observation data to confirm consistent application across classrooms
- Clearly articulated vision with aligned systems and practices recognized by all stakeholders
- Disciplinary referrals (disaggregated by subgroup)
- Stakeholder (includes students) satisfaction
- Evidence students have had access to multiple levels of support for behavioral needs
- Improved stakeholder perception of behavior (surveys)
- School-wide observations/audit

Strategic Direction 4: By 2021, WIA will have increased its financial and partnership resources to provide more opportunities for stakeholders.

Committee: Development Committee, ED

Initiative Lead: ED

Priorities	Strategies to Consider	Committee Questions/ Recommendations
<p><i>Priority 1: Create an annual development plan that projects ambitious annual fundraising growth.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual development goal and plan with assigned tasks for ED and board • Codified structure for tracking and maintaining contact with donors • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit the requirements of the board (and job description of the ED) as they relate to fundraising • Make decisions about fundraising transparent to the whole school community—making decisions with feedback from stakeholders to include their perspectives in fundraising initiatives and goal-setting
<p><i>Priority 2: Raise capital to address long-term facility needs.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a facilities plan to accommodate the program and enrollment • Determine the costs to be covered through a capital campaign • Recruit support to develop an appropriate campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the costs of renovating the grounds to accommodate the program and enrollment outlined in the charter? • What support for these renovations will need to come from fundraising?
<p><i>Priority 3: Increase the resources (funding, partnerships, grants, and opportunities) for students to build IB leadership experiences and skills.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of grant language and grant search protocol • Recruitment of partner organizations to provide WIA students with new opportunities • Assign this outreach responsibility to specific staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there someone who can seek and write grants? • Who could lead oversight of these partnerships? • What opportunities and relationships does the school need to create for students? • What opportunities and relationships do parents and students want?

Action Items To Consider

- How are budgets and available funds communicated to departments, and how do departments communicate needs that might be considered in development?
- How can we determine what opportunities are available for students, especially in alignment with the IB vision/culture in direction 3? How can we integrate student voice?
- What are the facilities needs for the next 3 years, and what is the plan to address these needs?
- How will the board and ED address development needs—what is the segregation of duties here?
- What opportunities and access do we want for our students, and what are the partnerships we need to avail them?
- Is there an appropriate goal for partnerships? Annual trip participation?
- Might there be an opportunity to be made available to each grade level? Department?
- What partnerships might promote the math/science goals? Make the APOS coursework more tangible?
- What specials opportunities are to be included here, and how does this connect with Direction 2?

Metrics

- Opportunities for participation in advanced programs of study outside of school (Chinese, arts, etc.)
- Access to leadership development for students
- Participation in external opportunities
- Offerings at school for leadership and other IB-related programming (electives and afterschool)
- Annual funds raised
- Annual give or get participation of board
- Number of contacts, networks connected to the school annually
- Percentage of donors who give repeat gifts, continue to give annually
- Grants earned
- Stakeholder feedback on annual survey
- Annual trips
- Facilities plan with aligned development goal
- Creation and implementation of a capital campaign