



THE ORYX

The weekly newsletter of Windhoek International School

FROM THE DIRECTOR

ACE Learning Principles

Two weeks ago in The Oryx I wrote about “*Change. Transition. Evolution. Adaptation. Development. Progress.*”

I was referring to the winds of change that are blowing through the school, specifically the **what** and the **how** of the learning your children experience. Best educational practice is continually evolving and the best schools are constantly reflecting on what they do, how they do it, when, and why.

One of the important drivers of change in the school is our ACE accreditation process – something I’ve written



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

about in The Oryx a number of times. We are mid-way through a process that began in November and will culminate in a visit from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) in January. In fact, ‘culminate’ may be the wrong word. Our self-study report will be written and the visitors will write their own report but, in a sense, that is only the beginning. The value of the whole exercise will only be measured in terms of the impact it has on teaching and learning.

I’m writing about this now because this week saw the completion of the work that three committees have been doing for many months.



‘ACE’ stands for Learning **A**rchitecture (though not in the sense you may immediately think of), Learning **C**ulture, and Learning **E**cology. **Veena Nambiar**, **Lyndsay Bain**, and **Rick Fitzpatrick** have very ably chaired committees examining each of these and more than two dozen teachers (and other staff) have worked with them. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed.

The next stage (from August) will be to pull all this together into a single report that we must submit in November.

So, what does Learning Architecture, Learning Culture, and Learning Ecology look like? The answer is found in ten Learning Principles. It is how closely aligned to these principles we are that the committees have been examining. The ten principles can be found on the next page.

Peter MacKenzie

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Dates to Remember

June 2019

- **10 - 14:** Week B
- **10:** Internal Exams Start
- **19:** End of term 4
- **20 - 21:** Staff Work Days



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The ten ACE Learning Principles

1. Learning Goals

Learners demonstrate understandings, competencies, knowledge, dispositions, and values that will allow them to become responsible and successful citizens.

2. Dimensions of Learning

Learning encompasses creative, moral, social, experiential and entrepreneurial dimensions.

3. Assessment for, of, and as Learning

Assessment measures the effect of learning on the learner. Assessment for, of and as learning includes qualitative as well as quantitative criteria.

4. Learning Perspectives

Meaningful learning is extended when learners explore the unfamiliar, consider a range of perspectives, and take informed risks. Mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning.

5. Learner Engagement and Autonomy

Learners are engaged with and inspired by their learning. They have autonomy over their learning and make informed choices, supported by teachers acting as coaches and mentors.

6. Research and Reflection on Learning

Research, reflection, and future design-oriented thinking are valued and acted upon by the community of learners.

7. Inclusiveness of Learning

The learning community embraces a culture of inclusiveness.

8. Governance and Leadership for Learning

Governance, leadership, and management support, embody, and promote the organization's intended Learning Impacts, norms and values.

9. Learning Space and Time

The design of learning spaces and the structuring of learning time are driven and shaped by the learning community's intended Learning Impacts.

10. Learning Community

Respectful, healthy, ethical relationships and interactions create a true sense of community. Communication is honest and transparent. Community values are clearly stated, actively lived, and define a distinct, sustained identity.

WEEKLY PUZZLER

Although it appears that in every point in time in the race the tortoise will be ahead of Achilles, Tiancheng, using mathematics, proved that Achilles will catch the tortoise at exactly the 111 $\frac{1}{9}$ meter mark. How did he do that?

The Puzzler will be going into hibernation, but we will leave you with one last puzzle. And you may need the entire holiday (or more) to solve it!

In the beginning position of the problem, one cup is upside-down and the other two are right-side up. The objective is to turn all cups right-side up in no more than six moves, turning over exactly two cups at each move.



Please send solutions, or any fun and interesting puzzlers to pfarrell@wis.edu.na

**PRIMARY PRINCIPAL**

Thank you to all the parents who attended the Primary School information session this past Wednesday. Following is an overview of the information that was presented.

Primary School Curriculum

A simplified definition of curriculum is the *what and when* of what's being taught. The Primary School curriculum is based on the PYP Curriculum Framework, which is more of the *how and why* of what's being taught. The IB recognises the uniqueness of schools and doesn't provide, endorse, or require a specific national curriculum.

A recommendation in both the PYP evaluation visit report and the NEASC - ACE visit report was to articulate the curriculum across the school. After reviewing several curriculums and Standards (New Zealand, Australia, Ontario, Singapore, UK, AERO, and Common Core), we have decided to adapt the Australian curriculum (ACARA) benchmarks in Language and Mathematics so that we will be in line with the Middle School curriculum. These benchmarks will elaborate and enhance the developmental continuum of the PYP. The Australian curriculum is a well-researched curriculum and is used by many international schools. More information can be found on the [Australian curriculum](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au) website.

Instructional Coaching

Another recommendation from the NEASC - ACE report was for us to revise our teacher evaluation procedure and make it a tool for growth. We have implemented an instructional coaching model where the focus is on improving student engagement, which ultimately will have an impact on student learning. Michael Parsons, our newly appointed Director of Teaching and Learning, is facilitating the coaching program.

School Day/Time Table

The Primary school day will be extended by ten minutes (7:20-13:40) so that we are in sync with the Secondary School. The additional minutes will allow for a homeroom time at the end of the day, giving children a calm end of the day for packing their bags, collecting their belongings, and organising any homework tasks.

We also will be having a two week/ten day schedule. This will help with scheduling of those teachers who teach in both the Primary School and the Secondary School. As with the previously mentioned initiatives, the ten day schedule helps us to be aligned with the Secondary School schedule.

Conferences

We are going to pilot having assessment conferences in October and March. These conferences will be an opportunity for parents to meet with the teachers to discuss how the child is settling in to the new Grade Level, and to go over the various assessments (MAP and internal assessments) so that parents have a clear understanding of how their children are performing socially, emotionally and academically. Later in the semester (November/May) we'll have the three-way/student-led conferences where students will be able to share their progress in meeting their goals and evidence of learning.

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

The purpose of MAP testing is for instruction as opposed to mastery. Our students are making progress and showing growth in their learning. Now that we have two years worth of MAP data and are more familiar with the information that the MAP results provide, we've invited a consultant from NWEA to facilitate a workshop in September

for teachers to further understanding about the data and using that data to inform instruction. In addition MAP testing will continue into Grade 6 next year.

Here is the link to [Wednesday's slide presentation](#). Please feel free to contact me via email or make an appointment to see me with any questions you may have. We are excited about the new initiatives for next year and know they will enhance the learning experience for your children.

**Regards,
Beth Smith**

Mathematical Mindsets Part 2

(The need to engage numbers flexibly and not through rote memorisation - a balance between conceptual understanding and developing mathematical skills.)

What about Maths Facts?

Many people believe that it is not possible to think conceptually about mathematics all the time because there are lots of maths facts (such as $8 \times 4 = 32$) that have to be memorised. There are some maths facts that are good to remember, but students can learn maths facts and commit them to memory through conceptual engagement with maths. There is a misconception that since some areas of mathematics are factual, such as number facts, they need to be learned through mindless practice and speed drills. It is this approach to early learning about numbers that hinders positive mindsets in students and makes them think that being successful at maths is about recalling facts at speed. This pushes them onto a procedural pathway that works against their development of a mathematical mindset.

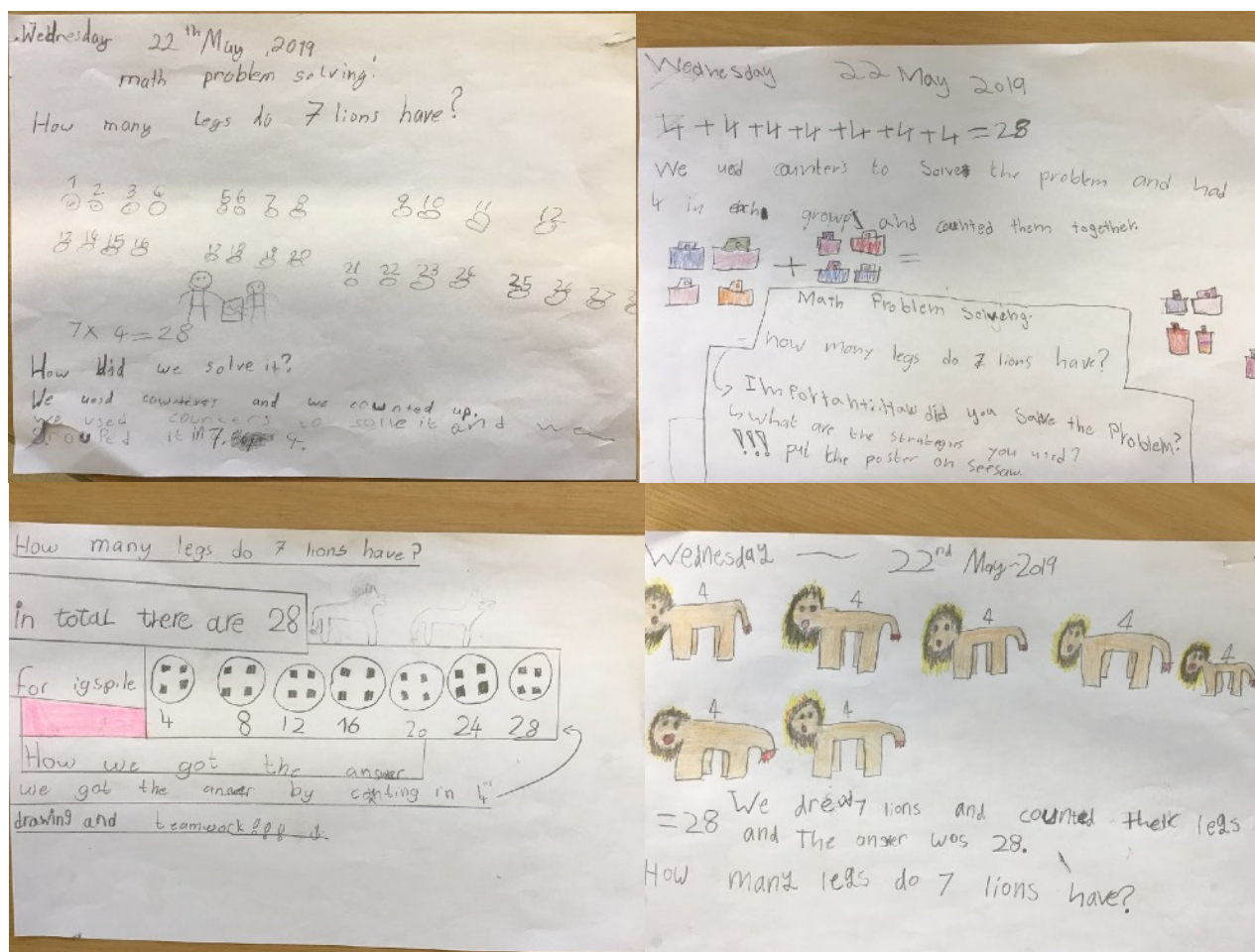
Maths facts by themselves are a small part of mathematics, and they are best learned through the use of numbers in different ways and situations. Giving maths facts in isolation gives students the impression that maths facts are the essence of mathematics, and, even worse, that mastering the fast recall of maths facts is what it means to be a strong mathematics student. Both of these ideas are incorrect, and it is critical that we remove them from today's practices, as they play a key role in creating maths-anxious and discouraged students.

Cognitive scientist, Sian Beilock and her colleagues, have studied people's brains through MRI imaging and found that maths facts are held in the working memory section of the brain. But when students are stressed, such as when they are answering maths questions under time pressure, the working memory is compromised, and students cannot access the maths facts they know. As students realise they cannot perform well on these tests, they start to develop anxiety, and their mathematical confidence erodes. The blocking of the working memory and associated anxiety is particularly common among higher-achieving students. When we put students through this anxiety-provoking experience, we lose students from mathematics.

Maths anxiety has now been recorded in students as young as 5, and worksheets and timed tests are a major cause of this debilitating, often lifelong condition. Some students may be maths traumatised, even though they are among the highest-achieving students around.

So what do we do to help students learn maths facts if we do not use worksheets and books or timed tests? The very best way to encourage the learning of facts and the development of a mathematical mindset is to offer conceptual mathematical activities that help students learn and understand numbers and number facts.

The examples below show students constructing their own meaning and showing their mathematical thinking visually.



Brain researchers studied students learning maths facts in two ways. One approach was through strategies; for example, learning 17×8 by working out 17×10 (170) and subtracting 17×2 (34). The other approach was through the memorisation of facts ($17 \times 8 = 136$). They found that the two approaches (strategies and memorisation) involve two distinct pathways in the brain and that both pathways are perfectly good for lifelong use. Importantly, though, the study also found that those who learned through strategies achieved “superior performance” over those who memorised; they solved test questions at the same speed and showed better transfer to new problems. The brain researchers concluded that automaticity should be reached through the understanding of numerical relations, achieved through thinking about number strategies.

In reality, all subjects require the memorisation of some facts, but mathematics is the only subject in which students are expected to show their understanding of worksheets and frequent timed tests from a young age. Research evidence shows that students can learn maths facts much more powerfully with engaging activities in order to liberate them from mathematics fear.

Some students are not as good at memorising maths facts as others. That is something to be celebrated; it is part of the wonderful diversity of life and people and as such we celebrate this diversity at WIS. We encourage teaching and learning of maths conceptually rather than a reproduction of worksheets or rote memorisation. (Some extracts in the article have been taken from Jo Boaler’s Books and the Mathematical Mindset course).

Jo Boaler. *Fluency without Fear: Research Evidence on the Best Ways to Learn Math Facts.* (Youcubed) Stanford University. 2014

Jo Boaler. *What’s Math Got to Do with It?: How Teachers and Parents Can Transform Mathematics Learning and Inspire Success.* Penguin Books. 2015

Pamela Mungate

SECONDARY PRINCIPAL

Changes in Secondary School as of August 2019

In our different communications via the Oryx, Edmodo and emails from school, we have been informing you through the year about initiatives that are happening in Secondary School. The most significant developments have no doubt happened in the Middle School. We are very proud of the way our teachers and students have embraced these initiatives and we are looking forward to a new year where a lot of these implementations will start to become “normal”.

In order for us to consolidate these developments, we had to make some adjustments to our teaching schedule. This letter serves to outline these changes which will come into effect as of August 2019. Many of these do address recommendations of our accrediting agencies (the IB and NEASC/ACE).

The schedule will be adjusted in the following way:

- School will still start at 07:20 with a 10-minute registration/homeroom session.
- There will then be lessons taught in blocks (A through H.)
- The lessons will be 75 minutes long, but in between lessons, there will be five minutes passing time to ensure no teaching time is lost when students move from one class to the next.
- There will be four blocks of 75 minutes each day (five for Grades 9 - 12)
 - This ensures that students do not need to move as often as currently and that they do not need to carry materials for six or seven subjects as is potentially the case at the moment.
- The lessons/subjects are happening every second day and at different times of the day to avoid having the same subject only once at the start of the week or always at the same time of the day.
- We will also incorporate Student Directed Learning and Self Determined Learning (SDL) sessions into the schedule. This is facilitating student voice and choice which is prominent in the IBDP and ACE report recommendations received during this past academic year.
- Approaches to Teaching and Learning (ATL) is incorporated in teaching across the school. These were already reported on in our reports sent to you in December and May and will be assessed as part of the criterion based assessments.
- School will be closing at **13:40** for all Grades up to Grade 8 (it will be closing at **14:30** for Grades 9 - 12).
 - **On Wednesdays, school will close for all Grades at 13:40.**
 - This is to enable staff Professional Learning to take place to ensure that all our staff have the tools for embracing these initiatives in teaching and learning that we are implementing.
- On Fridays school will still be finishing at **13:30**.
 - Changes have been communicated through the year and will continue to be communicated to the community in our various channels of communication (the Oryx, Parent Information Sessions, Edmodo).
 - We will be hosting a Parent Information Session each last week of the month to inform, discuss and celebrate the happenings in school.
 - **The biggest thing for our parents to take note of is the change in school finishing time (13:40) and the early closing time on Wednesdays for Grades 9 - 12 (13:40).**

If you have any questions in this regard, kindly email Ms. Reiff (mreiff@wis.edu.na).

Regards,
Maggie Reiff

Goodbye to the IBDP Class of 2019

On 25th May we said goodbye to our IBDP Class of 2019 at our IBDP Graduation Dinner. This event marks the end of a significant journey of these young adults and as always, it was celebrated with elegance and style.

The graduates were shining with their smiles, relief that the examination was over and the anticipation of what lies ahead in their lives. WIS is proud to have been able to be part of your journey for the last years - for some of you it was quite a number of years. It is amazing to witness how teenagers turn into young adults - taking responsibility for their own futures, but also appreciating the journey they have taken.



Every year, WIS gives the Alexander Award to one student who, in their final years of school, has shown to model the IB Learner Profile and also been a role model in the community in different areas. This year, the Alexander Award went to Hazim Ashraf Hishamuddin. Ashraf's modest but determined way of doing things, his polite and caring manner has earned him the respect of both his peers and teachers. He has lead the Senior Student Council, has been active in many student lead events and has been knowledgeable, caring yet reflective in his way of doing things. His openminded approach to things, made him take on new challenges, be it volunteering at the SPCA, taking on photography or participating in the Afternoon Activity PAYNamibia. Ashraf further participated actively in the MUN activity and attended different JoMUN conferences as a delegate, but also has chaired the Security Council committee.

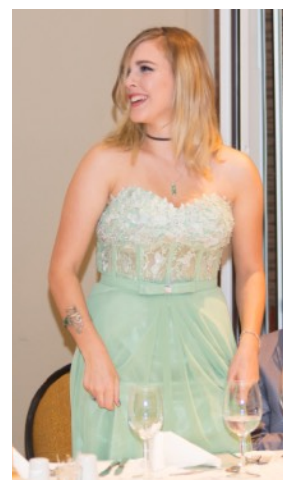
Ashraf was also awarded the AISA Service Award.

Another award WIS is proud to present each year, is the WIS Award of Excellence. This year, the award went to Thyra Eysseleinck.

Thyra has embraced the IB Diploma with determination and commitment. She has faced the challenges encountered with an open mind and never despaired. Thyra also served in the Senior Student Council and was the WIS' Junior Counsellor in the Junior City Council of Windhoek.

Congratulations to Ashraf and Thyra. WIS is proud to have had you in our IB Diploma Programme for the past two year. We also want to wish all our leaving IB Diploma students success, joy and fulfilment in all the endeavours they are embarking on in their futures.

Maggie Reiff
Secondary Principal



An Internet challenge

By Sophie Lindy - Gr. 8MP

A few weeks ago some of the Gr. 8MP learners were challenged to limit their use of devices for three weeks. The group of 10 students all agreed to turn off all electronics after 6PM and partake in a more constructive activity. The challenge was purely up to self control as only the students were allowed to regulate their internet usage. This proved to be difficult for the vast majority and although there was a reward, a free trip to the movies, all but one student failed!

The challenge itself was brought up during a discussion between the students and their teacher Ms. Angie, about internet addiction. Many teenagers spend hours on end scrolling through social media, playing video games or watching videos, this leads to a hard to break habit that can ultimately affect one's short and long term health. Sleep pattern, attention span, and memory (just to name a few) can all be affected by internet addiction and the obsession is tough to break. This was only proved by the students' lack of self-constraint and although a larger part of the group did last for two weeks, it takes *at least* three weeks to break a habit.

Despite failing the challenge, much was learnt by the Grade 8s about the importance of balancing your schedule to keep a healthy lifestyle. Hopefully a few students will decide to make a change involving their internet usage but in this day and age electronics are virtually unavoidable, so it may be hard.



Grade 7 & 11

Collaboration in Team Learning about Historiography

Grade 7 and Grade 11 learners engaged in a dynamic and engaging collaborative discussion regarding historical perspectives on Wednesday. Three-person teams (two Grade 11s and one Grade 7 student) were challenged to consider how historical events can be viewed from different angles. A short, engaging video (<http://bit.ly/2WfNwpe>) concerning 'What is historiography?' served as an additional springboard to a wonderful team-work focused conversation (with the learners of different ages) which then focused on how major 20th century events have and are viewed from different perspectives. Reference was also made to E.H. Carr's classic text 'What is History' (<http://bit.ly/2MwDsZ6>).

The effective teamwork between learners (13 year olds and 16 year olds) enabled to leave the dialogue with not only a sense of how the study of historical interpretations (historiography) is complex but also how it is so much context-based but it also can be a fun and interesting endeavour.

Rick Fitzpatrick

Improved Time Management

Out of My Comfort Zone, Humility - How CAS Changed me...

Windhoek International School Grade 11 students shared an array of moving insights & concrete examples of how CAS changed them for the better in this school year. The three most often stated ways were:

1. Improved Time Management - The unrelenting and significant school work demands combined with carving out time for Creativity, Activity and Service learning experiences transformed their modus operandi and enabled them to better balance life's challenges.
2. 'Out of My Comfort Zone' - So many stated...."Unexpectedly I found real growth in 'stepping out of my comfort zone' to...(learn an instrument or new language, play a new sport, become more extroverted...) While the context for each learner was different, the net effect was similar and fabulous to observe first hand!
3. 'Humility' - "Encountering those less fortunate and watching them work ever so hard to better themselves at Pay Namibia altered my world view and helped me appreciate much more how lucky I am and motivated me to do more." This is a poignant and profound epiphany that took place in the inner spaces of these WIS Grade 11 students and the engenders a real world citizenship outlook that bodes well for this country and our world.

This is the 51st year that the International Baccalaureate has been in existence (here is the story - <http://bit.ly/2Ikf5IW>), and the CAS component of the Diploma Programme 'Core' (along with the Extended Essay and Theory of Knowledge) serve as crucial centrepieces to the holistic learning which makes the IB DP the 'gold star' credential in secondary education globally. (Learn more about CAS at <https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/curriculum/creativity-activity-and-service/>.)

Rick Fitzpatrick

Peer Counsellors of 2018/2019

The trainee Peer Counsellors of 2018/2019 completed their training during the course of this week. As expected of this group, they were committed to and focused on their goal of becoming good listeners, and providing a trustworthy, confidential and non-judgemental shoulder to lean on for their peers. Back in my school days we had prefects whose main task seemed to be to catch kids being 'naughty' and getting them back in line.

We generally avoided them wherever possible. At WIS, our Peer Counsellors are approachable and on the lookout for fellow students who need support and kindness in difficult times. We are proud of this very different approach. One of the first tasks of this new group will be to help the Grade 6s of next academic year in their transition to Middle School. Yesterday each Peer Counsellor spent some time with their special group. This support will continue for as long as it is needed.

Sharon Gorelick



From the PTA

The PTA has been working hard to revise its Constitution and examine how the PTA can best serve WIS parents, teachers and students. If you would like to be a part of the conversation and collaborate with the PTA, you are welcome to join! Email pta@wis.edu.na

NEW and DISCOUNTED APPAREL to show your WIS Spirit!

Winter is here, and we want you to stay warm! Pick up a WIS Buff at the PTA Centre for N\$120. Also check out the discounted jackets and luxury towels for N\$150. Bundle up and show your school spirit!

