

INITIAL VISIT VISITING COMMITTEE SUMMARY

**ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

UNITY CONCORD INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

PreK – 12

November 6-7, 2019

Visiting Committee

Marilyn S. George, Ed.D.
Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC

Madeleine Bystrom
Curriculum Director
Ruamrudee International School

Introduction

[Excerpts from School Description, including the school's purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes]

Unity Concord International School (UCIS) was founded by Ajarn Amporn Garmolgomut along with her husband Ajarn Chugiat. Unity provides education to students from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 using the American Common Core California curriculum. The school was founded (2016) and opened its doors to students on August 28, 2017, at the time only offering Pre-Kindergarten to grade 5 with an enrollment of approximately 150 students.

The 2018-2019 school year began with the opening of a new campus on the other side of the superhighway. Pre-Kindergarten to grade 2 remained on the first campus while grades 3 to 11 migrated to the new location. The addition of grades 6-11 raised the enrollment to approximately 580 students.

The 2019-2020 school year began with the re-opening of all Unity students on one campus. PK-G2 joined the grades 3-11 on the new campus and grade 12 opened. This will be our first year with a graduating class. The current enrollment is 728, with a majority (69.3%) of the students in PK-grade 6.

Unity Concord International School's vision, mission and schoolwide learner outcomes are stated below:

Vision

We seek to establish an educational environment that is creative, academically rigorous and emotionally nurturing. Unity Concord International will provide a safe and supportive environment that empowers students with the strategies and tools to become lifelong learners and informed, responsible citizens to function effectively in the 21st century global environment.

Mission

Unity's mission is to provide all students with an exceptional education that will allow them to excel inside and outside the classroom. Unity seeks to achieve this mission by offering students a rigorous core curriculum, an outstanding staff, high standards and expectations, extended instructional hours, and personalized learning opportunities. Unity will strive to ensure that students are prepared for college and for the 21st Century world and workplace by creating students with higher order thinking skills.

Unity seeks to: provide targeted instruction and support services to accelerate growth among students under-prepared for high school success, and (as a consequence) prepare them for college.

The mission of Unity Concord International School is to provide an experience-centered, life-long learner-based environment that enables each student to meet the academic challenges and develop the social, emotional, and physical understanding necessary to succeed in life.

Expected Schoolwide Learning Results

Proficient communicators who:

- Are active and critical listeners.
- Find appropriate solutions as an individual or in collaboration with others.
- Demonstrate effective listening skills by responding to questions, participating in discussions, and following instructions.

Research and technologically proficient students who:

- Access, analyze, synthesize, and apply information to solve problems, express insights, and present ideas accurately and creatively.
- Actively pursue knowledge through a variety of resources incorporating the use of technology.
- Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information.

Investigative problem solvers who:

- Use effective questioning and reflection to advance and evaluate learning.
- Exercise sound reasoning and understanding to analyze problems and reach solutions.
- Demonstrate a commitment to learning as a life-long process.

Diligent scholars who:

- Think, speak, read, and write clearly in English
- Identify and solve problems by applying critical thinking skills and mathematical reasoning.
- Establish career and life-long learning goals.

Ethical and honest students who:

- Exhibit personal and academic integrity.
- Embrace and celebrate diversity.
- Show honesty, ethics, and responsibility toward themselves and others.

Ongoing School Improvement

Schoolwide Strengths

Unity Concord International School provided a very thorough initial visit report, including supporting evidence. During the initial visit there was the opportunity for meaningful dialogue with the stakeholders, observations of students engaged in learning, and examination of additional evidence. The Visiting Committee found many positive aspects to the school which follow:

- The school leadership and staff for providing a sense of community that supports the learning and well-being of the students.
- The governing board for providing facilities resources that are conducive to the school's stage of development and for their forward thinking in well-planned future developments to support the vision that students will be lifelong learners and informed, responsible global citizens.
- The leadership and teachers for their commitment to the school and a learning environment that ensures students have a sense of belonging.
- The students' sense of pride and valuing that they are part of the Unity Concord community.
- The leadership for the documentation that provides an important foundation for operations and programs as the school continues to evolve and develop.
- The school leadership and teachers for providing a variety of approaches to provide effective communication to the parents.
- The school leadership for establishing a student support structures that will strengthen the personalization of actions and services needed to ensure student learning and well-being.
- The school leadership, faculty and staff for their work in the area of strengthening child protection policies, practices, and training.
- The school leadership and teachers for implementing the use of a common platform for documenting the desired vertical and horizontal curriculum to support the work on a challenging, coherent and relevant international curriculum.

Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement

Unity Concord International School leadership has carefully identified areas for further development as a result of preparing for the ACS WASC initial visit. The Visiting Committee concurs with these and, in addition, has highlighted particular improvement areas. These suggestions will be important as the school leadership and teachers prioritize the tasks within the schoolwide action plan that will be implemented and monitored by the school's formalized follow-up process.

Organization for Student Learning

- The leadership engage all teachers and staff with input from students, parents and other stakeholders in the further understanding and modeling of the schoolwide learner outcomes to ensure the current and future learning needs of the students are addressed at all ages and there is a promotion of a globally minded culture; above all there is an assessment of student progress towards these learner outcomes.

This includes explanation of the schoolwide learner outcomes in language appropriate for the developmental level of the students, i.e., elementary and secondary. (What does it mean to prepare students to be internationally minded or globally competent and ensure there is understanding and commitment of all? See *Focus on Learning* International Edition, 2017, pp. 3-4)

- As the school moves forward with addressing the recommendations and the self-study process, the school leadership, teachers, staff, students and parents further refine and update the student community profile that shows three years of data with noted findings: Who Are We? What Do We Believe? What are the major student learner needs? (See *Focus on Learning* International Edition, 2017, Task 2)
- The governing board reference the Thai Ministry of Education and the ACS WASC governance criteria and indicators to ensure there is a functioning governance structure with a clear organization that outlines lines of authority and responsibility.
- The governing board participates in board training as they review the board structure and composition, role and responsibilities; all refinements should be approved and documented in the board policies.
- The leadership uses the extensive documentation for policies, programs and operations as they further guide all staff, faculty and others in the implementation and strengthening of the actual operations and programs; this will ensure shared understanding of the expectations through regular communication and support student learning and well-being.
- The leadership refines and adheres to admission policies and procedures to ensure that students admitted are able to be successful learners throughout the program. This includes establishing specific criteria for English proficiency at various grade levels based on established international school norms.

- The school leadership and governing board ensure that there are well-qualified teachers who are credentialed in the subject areas in which they are teaching within the school program to ensure students are well-prepared in all areas of the desired high-quality program.
- The school leadership and teachers clarify the role of the teaching assistants with respect to support of student learning.
- The leadership with input from teachers and staff update and implement a schoolwide action plan based on the initial visit recommendations and other areas related to student needs. It is important that all teachers and staff know and use the plan as an overarching roadmap. (See Focus on Learning International Edition, 2017, Task 5, for suggested components of each action plan goal.)
- The governing board and leadership develop and implement an annual budget that reflects the realities of what is needed, i.e., professional development and instructional materials and equipment, and meets quality business and accounting practices, i.e., a required annual audit.
- The leadership review, refine, and clarify policies and purchasing processes and procedures to ensure the systems support student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards. This includes acquiring and maintaining adequate instructional materials, textbooks, technology and laboratory materials in a timely manner.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

- Leadership and teachers ensure there is a common understanding of what is curriculum and the importance of vertical curriculum mapping as a foundation of designing "backwards by design" units of study. This should be used in the common curriculum platform as a basis for a well-developed curriculum in all areas to support consistency in learning.
- The school leadership and teacher complete the documentation for all core and other subject areas through the common curriculum platform so that there is consistency and a base for further revision as a result of implementation and success of students in achieving the desired standards or modifications of instruction as needed.
- Leadership, teachers and staff define an English Language Acquisition model (immersion, sheltered, partial immersion) to support the students' English language acquisition. This should result in a clear ELD policy that has been adopted and used by all and includes entrance and exit criteria.

Articulation and implementation of an English Language Development (ELD) model should be based upon:

- Unity Concord's context and specific demographics

- Student language assessment data on-making process
- Leadership continues to look at additional language assessments in order to have accurate data in all four domains of language; i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking. This would facilitate placement of ELLs and help focus instruction for the school's English language learners.
- The school leadership and teachers ensure that all students are meeting the desired standards identified for each subject at grade level through the use of appropriate materials and strategies regardless of enrollment in the Unity Pathway, Transitional Pathway or College Pathway. This ensures all students are achieving the desired learning of all subjects at the defined grade levels.
- The school leadership develops and implements an assessment policy that guides the monitoring of student progress toward meeting the academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes.
- The school leadership implements structures to facilitate staff collaboration around regular review of data in order to make informed decisions about professional development, targeted and modified instructional approaches.
- As part of the review and refinement of the professional development, the Unity Concord leadership and teachers further develop and implement not only pertinent professional training but also coaching based on student and teacher learning needs in such areas as:
 - Curricular mapping and development of "backward design" units emphasizing what students should know, understand and be able to do, and how will that be determined and assessed
 - Instructional Strategies for English language acquisition for teachers in all content areas as part of implementing personalized and differentiated instruction (This includes the provision for appropriate classroom space adequate for the size of call to permit student group work and student interaction)
 - Use of a variety of formative and summative assessments and how to analyze the results to modify the instructional approaches to support stronger student learning
- Leadership and teachers implement a process to gather, analyze and use data to measure the impact of professional development to make sure it is sustainable and has an impact on student learning.
- The leadership continues to curate their library collection to include high quality, diverse texts from a wide range of genres and levels in order to support student learning and foster a community that values literacy. This includes access to quality online research bases, EBSCO.

- The governing board and school leadership ensure the science facilities meet international learning expectations and safety standards for students in laboratory science classes by outfitting the labs adequately; this not only will ensure student safety but also provide the opportunity for students to be proficient in the use of science tools. Students participating in labor(See *WASC Suggested Laboratory Science Safety Expectations*: <http://www.acswasc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Suggested-Science-Expectations-list.fall-2014-1.pdf>)

Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

- The school leadership, teachers, and staff further develop, implement, evaluate and refine the intervention and referral services to support all students in the social-emotional area and academically.
- Based on the school's inclusion model, the school leadership and appropriate staff provide training and support for teachers as they work with students with identified learning challenges.

School Culture and Environment

- The school leadership, teachers and staff move forward in addressing bullying issues with the intent to focus on inclusive programs.
- The school leadership establishes a school health and safety structure to monitor and address areas that impact the health, safety and learning environment of the students and other stakeholders. Examples of areas that must be addressed include:
 - science facilities meeting international expectations for laboratory science
 - visibility at all times of students involved in instruction, i.e., classrooms or other areas of the school
 - two easily accessible exits for evacuation, i.e., unlocked fire exits and maps within each classroom to guide evacuation in case of a fire or other emergency and attendance lists
- The school leadership expands the involvement of parents to ensure they are active partners in supporting student learning and well-being.