

Quality of WMS Verified Through Dissertation *Abridged version of Dr. Darrel Camp's Dissertation*

In July 2009, Dr. Darrel Camp, Principal, defended his dissertation through George Fox University. The title was, "A Survey Of The Graduates Of Christian Secondary Schools And Their Beliefs In The Effectiveness Of The Academic And Spiritual Education Received." The intent of this study was to investigate long-term effects of private Christian schooling on graduates, both educationally and spiritually. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of the programs of Western Mennonite School (WMS) in preparing graduates for exhibiting the stated goals of the Faith and Learning Goals of WMS. ([Click to see the Faith and Learning Goals.](#))

Participants for this project were graduates of WMS from 1992 through 2002. A survey was distributed to the population of alumni to determine the effectiveness of the education and spiritual training received while in attendance. The data collected suggest that the alumni are Christ-centered, have continued to learn, continued to be part of a nurturing community, pursued a life of peace and service, and have continued to seek enrichment opportunities. The alumni of WMS have kept their faith and continued to learn. They have developed into healthy individuals who minister to others.

Recommendations include continuing to emphasize the [Faith and Learning Goals](#) and increase opportunities for the students to lead, serve, and share.

The following were the research questions of the study:

1. Do the alumni perceive that they are more Christ-centered as a result of the time they spent at Western Mennonite School?
2. Did the alumni continue to learn?
3. Have the alumni continued to be part of a nurturing community?
4. Have the alumni pursued a life of peace and service?
5. Have the alumni sought enrichment opportunities?

The items on the survey were based on the [Faith and Learning Goals of WMS](#). The following Likert Scale was used to score 23 of the items:

- | | | |
|---|-----|-------------------|
| 5 | AS= | Agree Strongly |
| 4 | A= | Agree Somewhat |
| 3 | N= | Neutral |
| 2 | D= | Disagree Somewhat |
| 1 | DS= | Disagree Strongly |

Christ-Centered

There were six items in the survey related to Christ-centered. The following were the Likert Scale items on the survey for the Christ-centered distinctives:

- | | |
|----|---|
| 7g | I believe the Bible is the inspired word of God. |
| 7i | I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. |
| 7j | I recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in daily life. |
| 7k | The teachings of Christ are central in all aspects of my life. |
| 7l | I model the way of Christ in dealing with life issues, conflicts, and reconciliation. |

The mean response for these items was 4.4. Most of the alumni selected Agree Strongly or Agree Somewhat indicating the continued development of a Christian worldview beyond high school.

Positive Responses to Christ-Centered Items

	7-g: Bible inspired by God	7-i: Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ	7-j: Holy Spirit present in daily life	7-k: Teachings of Christ central to life	7-l: Models the way of Christ
Agree Strongly	72	61	53	48	21
Agree Somewhat	11	24	28	38	63
Total Positive Responses	83	85	81	86	84
Total Responses	94	94	93	94	94
Percentage Positive	88%	90%	87%	91%	89%

Academic Excellence

The results of the Academic Excellence items indicate the alumni have continued to learn, develop there analytical and critical thinking skills, and value the contributions of all people and cultures. The mean for these three items was 4.6. Most of those responding have continued learning, completing training and/or academic programs after graduation. Of the 95 responding to this item, 76 (80%) of the alumni have completed a post secondary program and 61 (64.2%) have completed a four-year college program or more.

Post Secondary Training/Education

	No training or education	Some college or training	Completed a 2-year program	Completed a 4-year program	Completed a Master’s program	Completed a program beyond a Master’s
Total per category	2	17	15	47	10	4
Percent of 95 total responding	2.1%	17.9%	15.8%	49.5%	10.5%	4.2%

Nurturing Community

There were five items in the survey for measuring this distinctive using a Likert scale. These items were completed by 94 of the 96 responding graduates. An additional item was included in the survey in which the respondents indicated how they have demonstrated a life of gratitude, service, peacemaking, justice, and stewardship. The following are the five items from the survey:

- 7-p I have developed into an intellectual, spiritual, social, and physically healthy individual.
- 7-q I am anti-racist.

- 7-r I have developed a Christian life style of gratitude, service, peacemaking, justice, and stewardship.
- 7-s I am active in the local church and/or global community.
- 7-t I have formed relationships of accountability and respect.

The mean for these five items was 4.4. Over 90% of those responding indicated that they have developed into healthy individuals, are anti-racist, and have developed relationships of accountability and respect. Developing a Christian life-style was slightly lower at 87%. While being active in a local church and/or global community was the lowest of these items, 76% was still quite positive.

Positive Responses to Nurturing Community Items

	7- p: Developed into a healthy individual	7-q: Anti-racist	7-r: Developed a Christian life-style	7-s: Active in church and/or global community	7-t: Formed relationships of accountability and respect
Agree Strongly	46	71	36	38	53
Agree Somewhat	43	17	46	33	38
Total Positive Responses	89	88	82	71	91
Total Responses	94	94	94	93	94
Percentage Positive	95%	94%	87%	76%	97%

Of the 91 students responding to the item on demonstrating a Christian life of gratitude, service, peacemaking, justice, and stewardship, 78 (86%) indicated that they had shown this attribute through serving. Volunteering was selected by 66 (73%) and tithing was selected by 62 (68%).

Peace and Service

Of the 96 surveys completed, 95 (99%) of the alumni responded to the item as to where they had found opportunities to lead, serve, and share their faith journey. The most common place was at work where 67 (71%) indicated they have had opportunity to lead, serve, and share. Church, 63 (66%), and Home, 62 (65%), were the two next most common responses. The least common response was Voluntary Service, 29 (31%).

Opportunities to Lead, Serve, and Share Personal Faith Journey

	Community	Church	Work	Home	Voluntary Service	Total
Total per category	51	63	67	62	29	95
Percent of 95 total responding	54%	66%	71%	65%	31%	99%

Enrichment Opportunities

Of the 96 possible respondents, 61 (64%), selected one or more of the areas they have been an active participant in since high school. Forty-five (74%) of those responding have been active participants in athletics and 29 (48%) have participated in music. These were the most common responses.

When asked what educational and/or exploratory experiences the graduates have participated in since attending WMS, 55 (57%) responded. Of these, 43 (78%), have participated in educational experiences, 21 (38%), have participated in a mission related activity, and 14 (25%), have traveled.

When asked what churches, institutions, and/or agencies the graduates have been connected to since graduation, 83 (86%), responded. The most common connection was to a church, 76 (92%). Other connections were to educational institutions, 18 (22%), mission related organizations, 12 (14%), and to other agencies, 11 (13%). Mennonite churches and agencies were listed by 30 (36%) of those responding.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The survey data collected suggest several conclusions about the program of WMS. The alumni responding to the survey from the classes of 1992 through 2002 were generally positive, have continued to learn, have developed as healthy individuals, and have found ways to minister.

Two recommendations were suggested for WMS: (1) continue to emphasize the [Faith and Learning Goals](#) and (2) increase opportunities for the students to lead, serve, and share. These recommendations are directed to the faculty, administration, and board of directors.