



The
Windward
School

M.O.R.E. Commission
Special Education
Select Working Group
Meeting

Connecticut State Board of Education
Legislative Office Building
Thursday, March 20, 2014
Dr. John J. Russell
Head of The Windward School



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Mission Statement

Windward is a coeducational, independent day school dedicated to providing a proven instructional program for children with language-based learning disabilities. The multisensory curriculum is designed for students of average to superior intelligence who can benefit from the unique educational experience provided. Through direct instruction in small class settings, a trained staff assists students to improve their language skills. Academic success, combined with opportunities for social and emotional growth within an intentionally diverse and inclusive setting, enables students to understand their learning styles, build confidence, and develop self-advocacy skills. Windward is committed to helping students achieve their full potential in preparation for a successful return to a mainstream educational environment. To meet these goals, the School provides ongoing training to its faculty based on the most current research, and also shares its expertise with the parent body, other educators, and the broader community.



PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES

Windward School is dedicated to providing an excellent educational program for students with learning disabilities. These are youngsters of average to superior intelligence who have been unable to achieve academic success in the past because they have not had the benefit of appropriate teaching methods. At Windward they receive the specialized instruction they need in order to close the gap between intellectual potential and academic performance. The program is designed to allow students to experience success, to help them understand the nature of their learning differences, to provide them with the skills and strategies for overcoming their academic difficulties, and to enable them to return to mainstream settings.

The program has a defined core curriculum that is specifically designed or adapted to meet the needs of learning disabled students. It is modified as necessary to suit the requirements of each class. Classes are grouped according to the students' educational needs in each subject, and each student's progress is continuously and carefully monitored. Groups are small, and a low student/teacher ratio is maintained. Though it is a group model, specialists work with students on an individual basis as needed. The School employs a professional staff with a high level of competence, and it offers a continuing program of staff development.

The primary problem of most youngsters who come to Windward is the failure to achieve language competence. The negative impact of a language deficit includes much more than the inability to develop competent reading, spelling and writing skills. Understanding directions, organizing information, building a fund of general knowledge, developing effective problem-solving strategies, understanding information as it becomes more syntactically complex and expressing oneself succinctly in classroom situations are all adversely affected. Making friends, assuming responsibility, assessing social situations correctly and acting appropriately also depend upon having an internal language system with which one can make sense of the world. The Windward staff is sensitive to these problems and makes every effort to provide students with strategies for coping with them.

The first priority at Windward is to remediate the students' language/learning disabilities since they can affect performance in every academic area as well as undermine successful social and emotional growth. An emphasis on language skills is found in all aspects of the curriculum. The result is that similar concepts are reinforced in each class and through the grades. In the same fashion, organizational or study skills are woven into the lower and middle school curricula so that students learn, for example, to discern essential from non-essential information, summarize, and put thoughts and facts in order.



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WINDWARD TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTE

Windward Teacher Training Institute (WTTI) was established in 1988 to further support The Windward School's mission of educating professionals about research-based instruction. The mission of the WTTI is to provide professional development based on scientifically validated research in child development, learning theory, and pedagogy. Courses, workshops, and lectures address a broad range of developmental and curricular topics appropriate for mainstream and remedial settings. It serves as a resource for educators and professionals in allied fields, as well as for parents. The goal of the Institute is to disseminate reliable and practical information for those seeking to enhance their knowledge and expertise.

WTTI believes that the influence of teachers, what teachers know, and how they apply their knowledge in schools, is critical to student success. All workshops and courses, therefore, are based on the principle that, in order to be effective, teachers should have comprehensive knowledge about the structure of language and its impact on learning. In addition, educators need expertise in subject matter, developmental milestones, children's learning styles, and the teaching methods that facilitate learning. Last year over 1,800 professionals attended WTTI programs. Participants evaluate all courses and workshops and information collected is used as the basis for improving the quality of the offerings.

WTTI has established partnerships with public and independent schools to assist in the development of research-based language arts programs. WTTI has also established partnerships with The Haskins Lab at Yale University and The Center for Reading and Language Research at Tufts University. Through partnerships with these research centers, Windward professionals are able to keep abreast of the latest research and innovations in the field of language and learning and collaborate on research projects.

Through WTTI, Windward shares its instructional techniques with members of the professional community in the tri-state area. Educators from public and independent schools, mainstream teachers, administrators, language therapists, guidance counselors, psychologists, and parents attend its programs. Each year, the WTTI hosts two lectures. In the fall, a Community Lecture is held which focuses on a topic of interest to parents. Speakers have included local experts in the areas of child psychology, the effect of media on children, auditory processing, and social communication skills. The Robert J. Schwartz Memorial Lecture, in honor of a past Board of Trustees member, is given every spring. This lecture hosts a world leader in the field of educational research. Presenters have included: Dr. Louisa Moats, Dr. Reid Lyon, Dr. Sally Shaywitz, Dr. Maryanne Wolf, Dr. Kenneth Pugh and Dr. Joseph Torgesen. Over 500 parents and professionals attend each lecture.

In 2007, the WTTI became an accredited International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council (IMSLEC) training center. This accreditation enables the WTTI to offer national certification in Multisensory Structured Language Education. WTTI's accredited program offers extensive coursework and supervision leading to professional certification.

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THE MAKING OF A WINDWARD TEACHER

Sandra Schwarz, Director of Windward Teaching Training Institute, 2011

In “The Missing Foundation in Teacher Education” (1996), Dr. Louisa Moats, a renowned researcher in the field of learning disabilities, declared, “Until we recognize that teachers do not naturally acquire the kind of expertise in language structure that is required of them for remediating and preventing reading problems, we will neglect to provide the necessary training.” Fifteen years later, a report from the International Dyslexia Association reaffirms Moats’ assertion stating, “Teaching language, reading and writing effectively, especially to students experiencing difficulty, requires considerable knowledge and skills. Regrettably, the licensing and professional development practices currently endorsed by many states are insufficient for the preparation and support of teachers and specialists....The majority of practitioners at all levels has not been prepared in sufficient depth to prevent reading problems, to recognize early signs of risk, or to teach students with dyslexia and related learning disabilities successfully.”

Tragically, teaching candidates in undergraduate and graduate education programs are **still** not receiving adequate instruction in the foundations of language. To address this gap, The Windward School provides its teachers with a detailed and explicit background of knowledge in the structure of language. The School has designed a teacher-training program that is comprehensive, demanding and extremely effective in closing the knowledge gap between research and teaching practices. Professional training at Windward is an ongoing program that begins before a teacher steps into a classroom and continues as long as a teacher remains on the faculty.

Teachers, even very experienced ones, begin their careers at Windward as assistant teachers. The hiring of assistant teachers starts with an exhaustive recruitment process. Candidates are culled from a large pool of applicants. College career centers, job fairs, online advertisements, employment agencies, private referrals and unsolicited resumes are all sources of applications. Every resume is read and analyzed for proper credentials and special talents, skills and interests. When a candidate is chosen for an interview, a team of administrators meets with the candidate, explains the Windward program in depth and analyzes the candidate’s answers to questions. A thorough reference check is completed before a candidate is offered a position. In choosing potential assistant teachers, administrators look for candidates who possess strong language skills, a passion for working with children with learning disabilities and the dedication necessary to becoming a teacher. A future Windward teacher must also have patience, a strong work ethic, an intellectual curiosity and an appreciation for being part of an organization that transforms children’s lives.

In addition, speech and language pathologists work closely with assistants to provide instruction in the diagnosis and remediation of students' specific expressive and receptive language deficits. The Language Arts Director and curriculum coordinators present staff development sessions that are consistent with research-based strategies for delivering effective language-based lessons. Throughout the year, assistants also attend weekly curriculum staff development meetings and are expected to take an active role in these professional discussions. Mentor teachers and members of the administrative team observe assistants, both formally and informally, on an established schedule.

Reflection by the assistants on these observations and input from observers help to improve an assistant's teaching style and refine teaching techniques. The evaluation of assistants supports their training and insures that assistants are delivering the Windward program as prescribed.

During the summer, in addition to WTTI courses and workshops, an intensive training program for assistants is designed and implemented through the WTTI. This is an in-depth, seven-day program structured to present a consistent message about the School's unique student population and teaching model, with a special emphasis on lesson preparation and delivery of a direct teaching model. Another WTTI designed staff development activity for assistants is the Windward Practicum. Each August, before the opening of school, selected Windward students are invited to take part in reading, writing and math courses designed to strengthen their skills in these areas. The summer classes are two hours a day for two weeks and are taught by Windward master teachers and assistant teachers. Students receive instruction for the first hour and assistant teachers receive intensive staff development in the multisensory structured language program during the second hour.

To further their professional development, assistant teachers are encouraged to take part in the Windward Summer School Program. This four-week program consists of classes in math, reading, writing, science, study skills and organizational skills for both Windward students and students from other schools. Serving in this program allows assistants the opportunity to observe master teachers delivering selected aspects of the Windward program.

During their second year, assistants are enrolled in a more structured program which includes additional observations, lesson planning and attendance at advanced WTTI courses. Teaching assistants who have exhibited expertise in delivering classroom lessons may be assigned some part-time classroom teaching responsibilities. Administrators and curriculum coordinators continually mentor and coach assistants during this time.

Being a Windward teacher means that professional development is never completed. The entire teaching staff, including the most senior members of the faculty, is observed by coordinators and administrators and receives ongoing coaching and feedback on daily classroom instruction. It is the expectation that all teachers maintain their knowledge of Windward pedagogy by retaking the core reading, writing and language courses at the WTTI at least every five years; most teachers enroll in WTTI classes every semester. To further support ongoing learning, the WTTI maintains a collection of professional books and



LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

In order to achieve the School's mission of successfully returning students to mainstream schools, Windward teachers follow a prescribed research-based language arts curriculum. Since all Windward students have diagnosed language-based learning disabilities, the Language Arts Program is the core of the School's curriculum. Using an Orton-Gillingham-based approach, Windward's decoding program uses all sensory modalities to improve accuracy, fluency, and comprehension within a language-enriched environment. The expository writing strategies reinforce reading competency and promote clear and effective written and oral communication. Through direct instruction in small group settings, children are explicitly taught the rules of language that are necessary for comprehending, remembering, and communicating information. Windward's teachers receive comprehensive ongoing staff development in order to maintain the standards of its instructional program in language arts.

The language arts block consists of three 45-minute periods of daily instruction in which students are grouped homogeneously according to their reading level. The research-based curriculum for children who are learning to decode is *Preventing Academic Failure (PAF)*. PAF is a sequential, multisensory, phonics-based reading program that incorporates decoding, fluency, comprehension, handwriting, and spelling. The introduction of phonetic elements provides the building blocks of Windward's reading program. As students complete the PAF sequence, decoding instruction is continued through more advanced work in multisyllable words, advanced spelling patterns, and a study of Greek and Latin roots, prefixes, and suffixes. Students receive direct instruction in spelling skills and practice encoding spoken language.

During the reading period of the language arts block, all reading is done orally. Strategies for improving reading accuracy and fluency are constantly reinforced. For beginning readers, connected text is tightly controlled so that students are only exposed to phonetic patterns they have been directly taught. All students read decodable text corresponding to their level of phonics instruction until their skills enable a transition to trade books. Trade books and other reading materials are carefully selected by the Language Arts Department to match the students' decoding levels and language needs.

Speech and language pathologists and language arts coordinators work closely with classroom teachers to develop reading comprehension lesson plans and target instructional strategies for individual groups. Each reading lesson begins with a pre-reading introduction, which includes a review of relevant information, activation of prior knowledge, and setting a purpose for reading. Teachers annotate selected text, designating a range of questions and comments to be used during the lesson, identifying crucial vocabulary, and planning for closure. During a lesson, teachers use direct instruction to model comprehension skills such as predicting, making inferences, summarizing, and paraphrasing. As the students progress and the complexity of materials increases, students are taught more advanced literary elements and higher level critical thinking skills.

During one of the three daily language arts periods, students receive direct instruction in expository writing. Windward's writing program utilizes strategies from Teaching Basic Writing



THE STUDY SKILLS PROGRAM

Unique and research based, the Windward Study Skills curriculum is the signature program of The Windward School. In accordance with Windward's mission to prepare students for mainstream schools and future academic success, the Windward Study Skills Program is specifically designed as a sequential curriculum to educate language-based learning disabled students in the skills requisite to preparing a research paper. This curriculum, which begins in the Lower School, culminates in the preparation of four research papers in a specific class required for all eighth and ninth graders, entitled "Study Skills." The Study Skills class represents the integration and culmination of the reading, writing, and research skills taught throughout the grades. This class encompasses the skills and content of the language arts and social studies curricula, emphasizing the analytical and practical application of strategies in order for students to internalize the research and writing process. In addition, students are taught the time management and organizational skills necessary to develop effective research, note taking, and writing techniques. In order to create independent, critical thinkers, students learn to identify, extract, and organize pertinent information related to a specific area of research. By learning formal writing strategies, the students are able to create clear and concise research papers. Study Skills classes are structured so that students move from direct instruction to varying levels of independent work. By gaining independence in navigating the challenging process of preparing a formal research paper, students gain a sense of accomplishment, learn self-advocacy skills, and build self-confidence.

At the outset, the course is teacher-directed with emphasis on developing fundamental skills, such as extracting and organizing relevant information from multiple sources. After learning basic research strategies, such as note taking, outlining, and the use of citations and quotations, students begin to critically evaluate primary and secondary sources and learn to utilize increasingly complex materials. As research skills improve, students are encouraged to work more independently.

All research assignments are designed to develop the students' cognitive and critical thinking skills. For example, students research significant individuals and important events in order to understand the historical impact and legacy. Students also write other types of research papers including those that present a problem or issue, a particular point of view, or compare and contrast significant people or events. The subjects chosen are carefully aligned with the social studies curriculum so that students are researching an individual or event while learning about the time period in social studies.



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Independent School Acceptances
2013

Avenues - The World School	Millbrook School
Birch Wathen Lenox School	MTA (Yeshiva University High School for Boys)
Brewster Academy	New Canaan Country School
Brooklyn Friends School	The Packer-Collegiate Institute
The Browning School	Poly Prep Country Day School
Columbia Grammar and Prep School	Pomfret School
Convent of the Sacred Heart (CT)	Proctor Academy
The Dwight School	Purnell School
Dwight-Englewood School	Rippowam Cisqua School
Elisabeth Irwin High School	Rumsey Hall
The Fessenden School	Rye Country Day School
Fordham Preparatory School	Salisbury School
Grace Church School	SAR High School
Greens Farms Academy	School of the Future
Greenwich Country Day School	School of the Holy Child
The Harvey School	Solomon Schechter Day School
Heschel School	Soundview Preparatory
The Hewitt School	Stanwich School
High School for Mathematics, Science and Engineering at the City College	Storm King School
Interlochen Center for the Arts	St. Hilda's & St. Hugh's
Iona Preparatory School	St. Vincent Ferrer High School
Abraham Joshua Heschel High School	Suffield Academy
The Joy School	Trevor Day School
The Kildonan School	Trinity-Pawling School
King & Low-Heywood Thomas School	The Ursuline School
The Mary McDowell School	Vermont Academy
The Masters School	York Preparatory School

As of 6/5/2013



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Windward Admissions

Strict adherence to admission criteria

- Average to above average intelligence
- Diagnosed language-based learning disability
- No other primary learning/behavioral issues
- Group model

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Enrollment by Geographic Area

(Year state)

	CT	NJ	Manhattan	Other Boroughs	Westchester/Putnam	Rockland	Long Island
2013-14	99 (18%)	12 (2%)	118 (21%)	16 (3%)	*300 (53%)	10 (2%)	6 (1%)
2012-13	108 (19%)	10 (2%)	116 (21%)	14 (2.5%)	296 (53%)	8 (1.5%)	6 (1%)
2011-12	113 (21%)	15 (2%)	101 (19%)	12 (2%)	293 (54%)	8 (1.5%)	4 (5%)
2010-11	114(21%)	17 (3%)	95 (18%)	10 (2%)	284 (53%)	9 (2%)	4 (1%)
2009-10	124(23%)	16 (3%)	85 (16%)	13 (2%)	280 (53%)	9 (2%)	6 (1%)
2008-09	107 (22%)	10 (2%)	70 (14.5%)	12 (2.5%)	280 (57%)	10 (2%)	6 (1%)

*We have one student from Orange County for the 2013-14 school year

Windward's Research-Based Curriculum

Learning to read is **not a natural process**. Most children must be taught to read through a **structured** and **protracted process** in which they are made aware of **sounds** and the **symbols** that represent them, and then learn to apply automatically.

(The Illusion of Balanced Literacy, Dr. Louisa Moats, 2010)

Windward's Research-Based Curriculum

- Research-Based
 - Samuel Orton (neurologist) and Anna Gillingham (psychologist) 1925
 - Recent Meta-analyses



National Reading Panel (2000)



Writing Next (2007)



Writing to Read (2010)



Reading Next (2010)



Teaching Elementary Students to Be Effective Writers (2012)

Windward's Research-Based Curriculum

Components of a Research-Based Program

- Phonemic awareness
- Systematic phonetic instruction
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Strategies for comprehension
- Explicit writing instruction

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Instruction

Teachers' knowledge of language is critical for reading (academic) success.

(National Reading Panel, 2000)

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Windward's Research-Based Instruction

- Direct Instruction (Project Follow Through, 1974)
- Small homogeneously grouped classes with two teachers
- 3 periods of Language Arts every day
- Rigorous language instruction (in all classes) that is direct, explicit, structured, sequential, systematic and multi-sensory
- Instruction that is diagnostic and prescriptive – teachers continuously monitor each child's progress and adjust instruction accordingly

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Windward's Observation/Evaluation

Windward's Evaluation System

- Formal Observation (*Framework For Teaching*, Charlotte Danielson, 2007)
- Reliable and valid – multiple observers
- New Teacher – a minimum of 3x
- Probationary Teachers – a minimum of 2x
- Non-Probationary Teachers – 1x every 2 years

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Ineffective Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation programs simply do not sufficiently prepare new teachers for the classroom.

- "...courses provided in teacher licensing programs are **often insufficient in content and design** to enable the students to learn the subject matter and apply it to the teaching of reading" (Walsh, Glaser, & Denne-Wilcox, 2006)
- Teachers have "**insufficiently developed concepts** about language and **pervasive conceptual weakness** in the very skills that are needed for direct, systematic, language-focused reading instruction..." (Moats & Lyons, 1996)

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Ineffective Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation programs "range from inadequate to appalling"

(Arthur Levine, President of Teachers' College, Columbia, 2005)

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Windward's Professional Development

- Being a Windward teacher means that **professional development is never complete.**
- Professional development at Windward reflects the **research-base** of the School's program.
- All Windward teachers maintain their knowledge of Windward pedagogy by retaking the core reading, writing and language courses at the WTTI at least every five years.
- Teachers new to Windward serve as Assistant Teachers for up to 3 years and participate in exhaustive professional development programs while serving in the classrooms of mentor teachers.

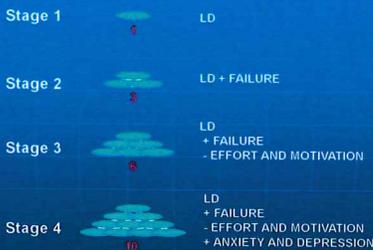
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Windward's Professional Development

Professional Development for all Faculty

- Workshops, courses and lectures provided by WTTI
- Faculty and department meetings dedicated to professional development in our research-based methodology – 2 to 4 hours per week
- Coaching model by coordinators in each curriculum area
- Speech and Language Pathologists support teachers
- IMSLEC Certification

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Each stage is exponentially more difficult to treat than the previous stage.

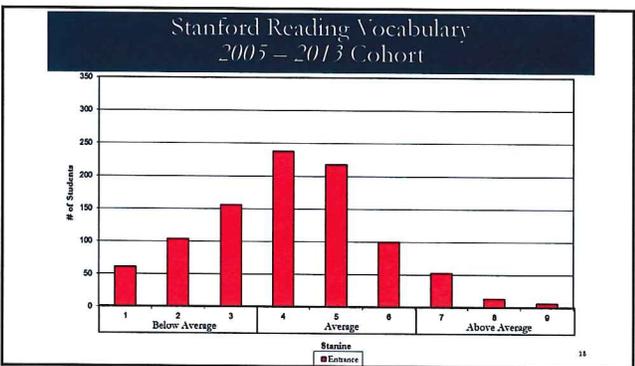
Emerson Dickman, 2013

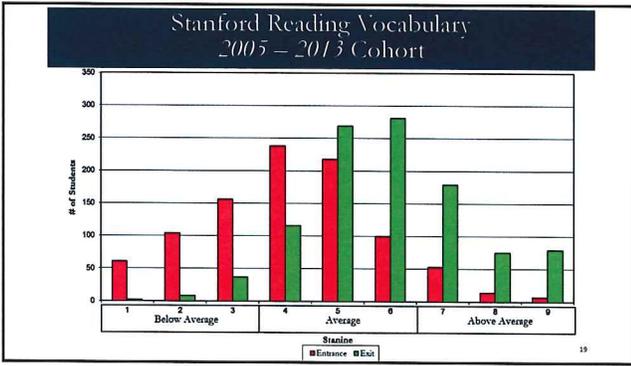
The Results of a Windward Education

Research Based Program
+
Direct Instruction
+
Supervision and Support of Faculty
+
Professional Development
=
Positive Results

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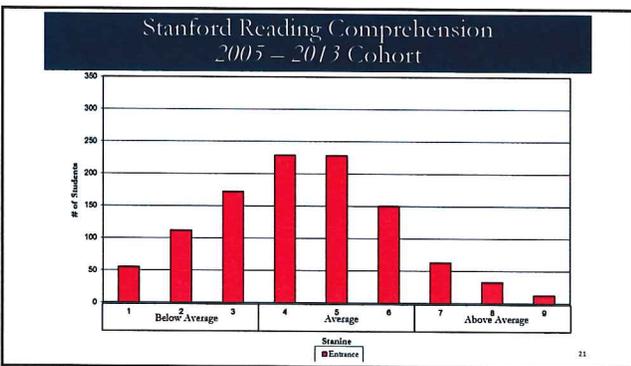
Standardized Test Results
for 1049 Students
Who Left The Windward School
from 2005 - 2013

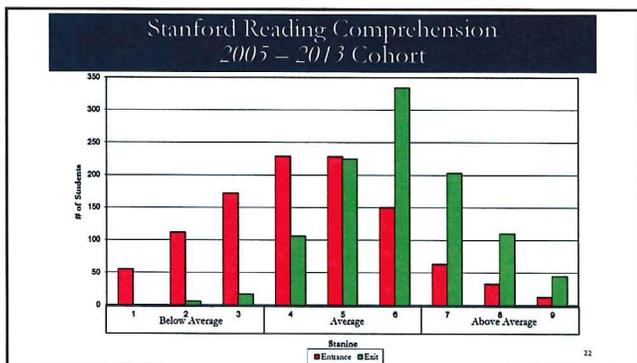




Stanford Reading Vocabulary 2005 – 2013

Scores Upon Entrance		Scores Upon Exit	
Below Average	34%	Below Average	4%
Average	58%	Average	64%
Above Average	8%	Above Average	32%





Stanford Reading Comprehension 2005 – 2013

Scores Upon Entrance		Scores Upon Exit	
Below Average	31%	Below Average	2%
Average	56%	Average	64%
Above Average	13%	Above Average	34%

Cumulative Standardized Test Results

The percentage of exiting students who score in the average to above average range on standardized tests.

Reading Vocabulary	96%
Reading Comprehension	98%
Math Procedures	91%
Problem Solving	97%

Alumni Performance
in Mainstream Schools

25

Alumni Academic Performance
Post Windward 2004-2009

Above Average	48.3%
Average	48.2%
Below Average	2.4%

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Alumni Social Adjustment
Post Windward 2004-2009

Excellent	55.5%
Average	38.7%
Fair	5.1%
Experienced Challenges	1.3%

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