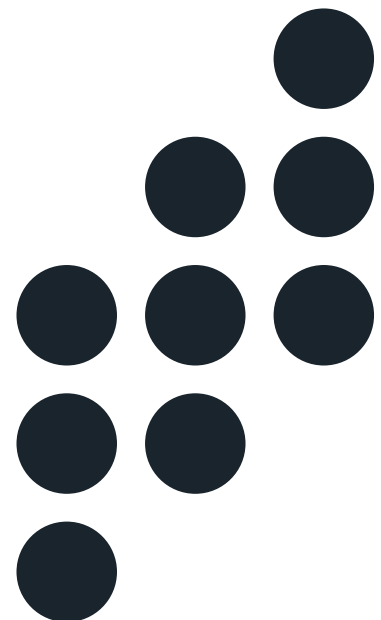




Anglo Singapore International School

Introducing a single,
integrated school MIS -
the challenges and the benefits





A case study with
Elvin Macatangay, Schools Superintendent,
and
Charven Ligan, Database/WCBS Manager
at
Anglo Singapore International School,
Bangkok, Thailand

Anglo Singapore International School aims to better prepare students to meet the changing national and global needs of the 21st century. Its campuses provide the same holistic and wide ranging education based on the Singapore curriculum with choices of additional “mother tongues” such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

Focus is on educating students in the core areas of literacy, numeracy and science to provide a strong foundation for future learning. Our WCBS school management information system (MIS) is giving us the data management and communication facilities we need to run our international school in the best possible way.

Life at Anglo Singapore

Our student body is primarily international with about 30 nationalities consisting of Singaporean, British, American, German, Malaysian, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, South African, Taiwanese, Dutch, Irish and Thai. We try to adapt to their native languages when it's appropriate but, as an English medium international school, the vast majority of learning is in English.

We have teachers from many parts of the world; right now, fifteen different countries including Britain, the US, Australia, Ireland, South Africa, Singapore, Thailand, China and Malaysia, Canada, Japan, Philippines and Bulgaria.

We believe we combine the best of two worlds in our teaching and learning. Our children follow the National Curriculum of England combined with the Singapore curriculum at kindergarten and the Singapore curriculum for the primary years.

Our high school students study towards IGCSEs using a combination of the British and Singapore curricula. Students at our junior college study for UK A Levels through an adapted Singapore curriculum.

Managing our data

When we opened the school, we created our own data tracking system to meet the requirements of our different curricula, assessments and qualifications. It was tough because we were mostly relying on separate Excel or Word documents, and hard copies.

There was no coordinated approach to the management of data so when

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we looked for information relating to a student, it was very hard to find. Tracking student performance was difficult because it was so segmented and unconnected; it certainly wasn't one touch of a button!

As the school expanded, it became evident that we needed a much better system for documenting our students and their progress. All records needed to be in one place for the effective running of day to day operations and for tracking performance. We started looking at MIS, considering local and international vendors.

We found that WCBS provided a system that could meet our needs. Support was available from them 24 hours a day and we felt the opportunities WCBS could give us for flexibility and for working with us to develop an MIS was right for our school.

Introducing a new data management system – getting staff on board

Launching our new MIS of course had some teething problems, as we expected. Naturally, not all of our teachers were enthusiastic; it was a new way of doing things and some people don't like change.

Nevertheless, we required all our teachers to use it. We explained to everyone that this was a tool that would make our record keeping, student tracking, and performance analysis more efficient, and would help everyone to be better informed about what's happening; not only within teaching, but also throughout the whole environment of the school. Everyone received training to help them through the transition.

The challenges and resistance by some that came with introducing new technology gradually went away. The more the staff saw how their colleagues were engaging with the system and how it helped them, the more everyone came on board.

Now 100% of our teaching staff, and nearly all of our administrators are inputting or accessing data and information into the MIS and are appreciating the benefits; to them and their time, and to the students.

Once they are sufficiently competent with the MIS, teachers realise that putting all the data into one central system means they can see the big picture of each student, of their class, of their year, and even of the school. It helps them to see a child's learning progress and what steps they need to take next.

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It also gives the teachers their timetable; one click of a button and they can see what class is next, what room they're going to. It helps them to communicate with parents.

Optimising staff use of our MIS

Using our MIS is now compulsory for everyone in the school. We make sure sufficient training is available for all new staff and, most importantly, we have always had very accessible consultation with WCBS support staff. This was especially crucial during our early implementation because it reassured the staff, giving them a sense of comfort that support was there for them when they needed it. This built a very positive relationship between the school and WCBS.

Without the support team, I don't think we would have reached the level of competency and progress that we've achieved at this point in time. Whenever we have encountered a problem that we couldn't handle ourselves, we turn to WCBS and get help very quickly. The support continues to be extremely responsive.

Achieving what we wanted

Has the system helped us to improve our tracking of student performance? It's definitely helped us. As we started from scratch, inputting all the data and getting all the staff proficient took us about three years to get completely up and running, but now everyone is happy. All data on a student (from their learning progress, to their attendance, to their medical details),

is now input into the MIS and used in a wide range of ways.

It's helped us to achieve a much better understanding of each student's learning progress. Previously, we would use some basic calculations of our own to assess student performance. Now, through the WCBS Markbook programme, we have access to advanced calculations which produce detailed analysis of each student, plus provide a common assessment across the school, at the touch of a button.

Our teachers can now see at a glance if a child is making improvements, areas they need to revisit, and where the teacher needs to modify the learning. In that sense, teachers can effectively monitor their students' learning and see how they can deliver the necessary support.

The MIS also provides us with a variety of features that help us to do our jobs efficiently and effectively.

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For example, some teachers take a lot of classes, so they could risk missing out students when it comes to assessment. The system creates a student checklist for each teacher, which ensures they can't miss anyone. Our teachers simply log in



to our MIS and immediately see all the students who require assessment.

It also enables us to view a student's reports and assessments which is particularly valuable for new teachers, and for making sure report feedback correlates to previous reports.

The big benefit of data integration

Having the ability to directly import data to and from the applications that we find of value is very important to ensure that our one data source is always current and accurate. We have been able to integrate several of our preferred data applications, such as our library system, our CCA sign-up system for extra-curricular activities, and our parent-teacher meeting system into our MIS.

Now that the parent-teacher system is integrated, parents can simply log into the school portal, identify their child's teachers easily, and book meetings available to them at a time that best suits them.

We are continually progressing in terms of system usage. We have successfully integrated an attendance card reader system and, as we identify new and valuable classroom and administration apps, we work with our support team to integrate them.

WCBS always welcomes new reputable technology. One example is our recent addition of Firefly. We are very happy that Firefly and WCBS will work together; that integration between two good suppliers is important. Also, we are currently developing our own online extra-curricular activities module.

We are now 100% sure that our system is able to work to our school's specific needs; that includes across multiple campuses. Whatever we do on the main school campus, we are able to implement and integrate on the other





two campuses. Our Database Manager is able to see what is going on across the system within all our campuses. We monitor this as frequently as we can to ensure everyone is following the same processes and functioning well.

Communicating with parents

In the past we have used a variety of conventional ways to communicate with our parents; some more beneficial than others, such as the student's organiser, parent/teacher meetings, our morning open-gate approach, and our newsletter. However, we are in an age when schools must strive to be digital in their services and our MIS is helping us to reach our parents that way using the school portal.

Through this parent portal, we can communicate news, invitations, and instructions quickly and easily, and also give our parents access to live data and analysis on their child. They don't need to see a teacher every time they want to know their child's learning progress, grades or test score. The information is available to them day and night through the portal.

Before having access to the portal, our parents would not have a clue how their child was doing until they met with the teacher. Now this information is available to them at any time and anywhere, through their login on any online device.

We are trying as much as possible to be ahead of our competitors in terms of services to parents, as well as delivery of learning, and the portal is certainly helping us.

Today, our parents have access to a wide range of information that relates to their child. They can easily view their child's timetables and school reports. Before a meeting with the teacher, parents are able to see their child's grades which

helps them to plan questions and aspects of their child's learning that they want to discuss. They can email a teacher at any time, select what extra-curricular activities their child wants to participate in, sign up for teacher meetings, all by simply logging in.

They also access our schoolwide announcements this way, including urgent messages. In these cases, they receive an SMS text message telling them to go to the portal right away.

We have faced two big challenges for our communication with parents through our MIS. Many are non-English speakers and, until recently, all our communication through the portal was in English. Now, it has Chinese translation and, as a result, 30% of our Chinese parents are logging into our portal in Chinese; the rest of our parents are doing so in English.

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Our second challenge is an ongoing one; ensuring all our parents are able to access and use the portal. At first, we tried to do a general tutorial for everyone, but only parents who were fast learners were able to learn this way.

Some parents and family members struggle to use technology, particularly some grandparents who are doing much of the daily childcare.

Necessary step by step instructions are now translated and kept very simple. For those who are having real difficulty, they can contact a member of our admissions team who is assigned to help them if they're having trouble logging in or navigating the system. These parents are invited in to school to be given one to one instruction.

For our new parents, we do not limit the way we reach out to them. Every time we have orientation with new parents, we show them the system and how to use it. We give them simple instructions through the portal, through the website, and through letters.

Slowly, slowly we have moved away from the paper-based notifications to parents, and now around 90% of our parents are logging in. We're always reminding them to use the portal and what information is available to them. The more they use it, the more they find it of value.

Improving school administration

In all areas of school life, our MIS is supporting us. In terms of leadership, we frequently consult the system to give us the basis that we need to make informed decisions. It provides the internal analysis necessary to reassure the senior leadership team that we're making sound decisions.

We are using the data now available to us to inform our targeting, and to benchmark by comparing with previous years, which helps our planning.

We do the same with our childrens' scores from the previous year to the current year; and against global standards, to assess how we are doing in key phase examinations. It helps us to



What we now know about data management

Moving to a single integrated MIS has taken us three years and along the way, we have learnt what we really think matters for an international school:

- Select an MIS that is flexible and can coexist with your other applications.
- Make sure that the system you choose can be customised. As an international school, we have unique practices and it's important to be able to adapt for how you want to use it.
- Ease of use is essential. Your system must be user friendly for all staff, regardless of their technology skills.
- You need to be able to control the access of data by different people.
- Support from your MIS provider needs to be accessible and openminded so that you can work together to achieve solutions. We take a team approach with WCBS regarding support and that is very beneficial.
- Contact WCBS! We know now that we can trust them, not only in helping us to create a system that's absolutely right for our school, but also in the ongoing support that they are able to give us.



quickly see where there is a weakness and what we need to do.

Previously, any benchmarking that we were able to do was manual, extremely laborious, and difficult to analyse. Now that it is digital and integrated directly with our data systems, it's at a click of a button.

Our system enables us to see detailed demographics of our students and where our new admissions are coming from. This helps us to adapt our marketing and admissions strategy for the future.

We have integrated a risk management system and are currently developing a system to record and analyse the progress of our staff from the day we hire them.

Our next data development project is to track student travel; which street their bus is on, how far away from home they are. This will be a very useful tool for parents. In many ways, our MIS is helping us to look towards future growth of the school.

WCBS has given us a tool that has inspired us to collect and use data for the right reasons. This couldn't have been done without the right sort of MIS. All the new data projects that we are considering, we're able to move forward with, because of our system.

What matters most

We have discovered that one of the most important features of our MIS is that it is user friendly because not all teachers and administrators are tech savvy. Every process is well guided and, being intuitive, can be quickly embraced by most people.

Having access to enough skilled, friendly and responsive support staff who are always there when we need them is very, very important too. Our day to day management of the system becomes smooth and productive because of the help from the WCBS team.

An essential factor is security of all data. Using a reputable brand like WCBS who specialises in the complex and very sensitive area of MIS has given us confidence that our data is as secure as it can be.

Our system enables the security to be set at different access levels for different users.

“WCBS has given us a tool that has inspired us to collect and use data for the right reasons. This couldn't have been done without the right sort of MIS.”





And we regularly thoroughly test it, giving us the confidence that our data is well protected.

Another crucial aspect of using an external and reputable specialist MIS provider is that we have a system that we can trust and is sustainable, regardless of changes in our own technical staff.

If we had built and managed our own system internally, and that person who built it leaves us, then we would be faced with a huge challenge to know and maintain the functionality.

Flexibility is also a big advantage of the system that we have. We had very complex needs from the start, which required a lot of computations away from a standard format.

During our early discussions, we could tell that WCBS was willing to work with our specific needs and very quickly, we were able to see how flexible their system could be.

It reassured us that our particular requirements could be accommodated. WCBS has not failed us, and they keep

on helping us modify and refine things to suit our growing school's needs.

That's been such an important factor in the success of our data management.

Now we can see how important it is to have a system that is user friendly and easy to integrate. We have learnt a lot from other schools that are using the same WCBS system.

We share questions, successes, ideas, challenges. With schools new to WCBS, we have shared our own experiences of starting out, how we were able to make changes to the system to make it relevant to the needs of our school, how we managed it. For more established schools, we have shared best practices and solutions to challenges.

We still feel we're in the middle stage of deploying our MIS, but we already have valuable experiences and advice to offer other schools.

And yet other schools are able to give us new ideas based on how they implement the system. This sharing of minds is

WCBS: Working with Anglo Singapore

Greg Martin, Business Development Manager at WCBS says:

“Our relationship with a school works best if it's reciprocal.

“We provide schools with tools that offer them a huge amount of potential. It's down to the school to maximise that potential, with our support.

“Anglo Singapore School have made the most of the opportunities; using their system for things I didn't even know were possible.

“Every time we speak with Anglo Singapore, there's something new that they're doing with the help of their system; they are phenomenal.

It's a real credit to their senior leadership and technical team.”

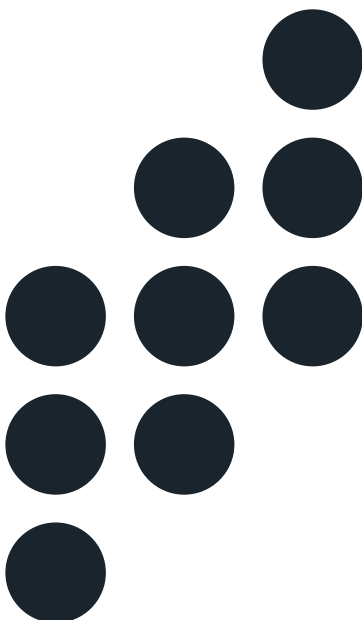
very valuable, because every school is different, and there is no one solution.

For any school, data is a powerful tool. Whether it's looking forward or reviewing historically, it can tell you what you need to know, where your school is heading, what your school is missing, and your school's strengths and weaknesses.

All we need to do is analyse the data and view it in the right way; a pie chart or a bar graph, produced at the click of a button, can help explain so much that we need to know.

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information@wcbs.co.uk

www.wcbs.co.uk

+44 (0) 1458 833 344

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