

The Master's Vessel Classical Academy

An ACCS School in Abia State, Nigeria

By Dr. Felix Obiorah

In April, 2008, Okorie Johnson Kalu, a student attending **The Master's Vessel Classical Academy**, placed second in a national reading competition in Nigeria. The competition, sponsored by Nigeria Breweries, started in January with more than 6,000 participating students. At the finals, Okorie defeated thirty-

received a N5,000 cash prize. Finally, Chidike Oba Eni was honored in recognition of the meritorious standard he attained in the National Mathematics Competition organized by National Mathematical Centre–Petroleum Technology Development Fund.

The Master's Vessel Academy began in 1981 with a pre-K and

(the capital city of Abia State) for the past twenty-six years. Presently there are 800 students in the elementary grades with an additional 400 students in grades seven through twelve. Dr. Obiorah and other founders envisioned a school that would develop Christian character in the students while providing an education that meets and exceeds all state academic standards. (All Nigerian students, whether in private or public schools, take the same standardized tests.)

Dr. Felix Obiorah studied Latin as a young student in a missionary school in Nigeria. In the 1950s and 60s, Latin was taught at missionary schools throughout Nigeria. As happened in the U.S., Nigerian schools eventually stopped teaching Latin. Dr. Obiorah was teaching Latin and logic to The Master's Vessel students until this current school year, when a problem with his vision caused him to step aside from classroom teaching.

A desire to adopt classical learning (specifically teaching the tools of grammar, logic, and rhetoric), as well as an aspiration to teach every subject from a Christian worldview, led The Master's Vessel Academy to join ACCS in 2001. The school also hopes to one day have the privilege of participating in the ACCS national conference. Thus far they have been unable to do so due to high travel costs and U.S. visa restrictions.

The school's success in achieving their mission is evidenced by the school's enrollment growth, by the students' success in national competitions, but also by the fact

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one other finalists to earn a cash prize (N150,000), along with books (N500,000), a computer and a printer for his school. Mr. Jerry Agada, the Minister of State for Education, congratulated the winners in person and donated some of his own books to the Master's Vessel Classical Academy.

This wasn't the first time a Master's Vessel student had performed well in an academic competition. In 2005, Miss Oluchi Emelogu, earned first position in a nationwide essay competition among secondary school members of NAFDAC (National Food and Drug Administration and Control) consumer safety clubs, junior category. She received a prize of N75,000 cash and the school was awarded a full computer set. The same year, Daniel Uhiara, placed third in the Cowbell National Schools Mathematics competition in Abia State. He

kindergarten program. For the next ten years the school worked to prepare children for academic success in other elementary schools. Eventually, parents from the local community, desiring a Christian school with higher academic and moral standards, asked Dr. Felix Obiorah and other school leaders to start a primary school. For the next ten years, the school offered instruction in grades one through six. However, parents and school leaders observed that upon leaving the Master's Vessel to attend state schools, students were often forced to step back in their educational standard.

Ultimately, in 2001, the school started a junior high and high school program for grades seven through twelve. The Master's Vessel Academy, started as a Christian school for the local community, has served families located throughout Umuahia

Dr. Felix Obiorah is the headmaster at The Master's Vessel Classical Academy in Umuahia, Nigeria. The school has been a member of ACCS since 2001.

The Master's Vessel Classical Academy

that the principal and teachers of the local government school, desiring higher academic and moral standards for their own children, send their sons and daughters to The Master's Vessel.

The Master's Vessel churches in Abia State provided the initial funding needed to establish the school. The school is now financed by tuition payments with the resulting income used to pay teachers' salaries. The school is also raising funds to build its own facilities.

School enrollment was actually a bit higher last year, with 450 high school students rather than the 400 students enrolled this year. The biggest challenge facing the school is

retaining trained teachers who are frequently offered higher pay by the government schools. As Dr. Obiorah says, "Teachers are the key to everything—teachers, teachers, teachers!" Given the difficulties filling all teaching positions, school leaders decided to limit the enrollment of this year's student body.

Teachers are recruited from the capital city, from Abia State, and from other adjacent states to the north. Some of these teachers have attended college to study education. All of the teachers, those with college training and those without, receive additional training from Dr. Obiorah and his staff.

Foreign teachers could come to

Nigeria and assist The Master's Vessel with teacher training, but the board realizes that the best long-term strategy is to depend mostly on trained, local people to meet its teaching needs. Financial support that would allow The Master's Vessel to pay higher salaries to its teachers would also help the school meet its most pressing need. The school board plans to limit student enrollment to two classes per grade until the school can fully meet its teaching needs.

There currently is no land-line phone service in Nigeria and the school does not have internet access. If you'd like to know more about the school, you may contact Dr. Felix Obiorah at 803-574-2413. (The country code for Nigeria is 234.) Or you may email him at benfic70@yahoo.com.



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World Computer Exchange

The Master's Vessel Academy recently received forty computers through the World Computer Exchange program. The "World Computer Exchange is a grassroots organization providing donated computers for reuse in schools and libraries throughout the developing world." See http://worldcomputerexchange.org/donate_equipment for more information about donating used computers.