



## **CIS / MSA ACCREDITATION**

### **VISITING TEAM REPORT**

***BASED ON 7<sup>TH</sup> EDITION OF THE CIS ACCREDITATION GUIDE***

Name of School: **International School of Brussels, Belgium**

Dates of Visit: 17 to 23 October 2009

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   | Page Number |
|---|-------------|
| Introduction                                  | 3           |
| Preamble                                      | 5           |
| Part One: The Surveys                         | 9           |
| Section A: Philosophy and Objectives          | 11          |
| Section B: Curriculum:                        |             |
| Early Childhood Curriculum                    | 16          |
| Elementary School Curriculum                  | 21          |
| Middle School Curriculum                      | 25          |
| High School Curriculum                        | 30          |
| English Curriculum                            | 36          |
| English Language Development Curriculum       | 42          |
| Humanities Curriculum                         | 47          |
| Languages Curriculum                          | 52          |
| Mathematics Curriculum                        | 57          |
| Performing Arts Curriculum                    | 61          |
| Physical Education / Health Curriculum        | 65          |
| Science Curriculum                            | 69          |
| Technology Curriculum                         | 73          |
| Visual Arts Curriculum                        | 77          |
| Section C: Governance and Management          | 82          |
| Section D: Staff                              | 86          |
| Section E: Student Support Services           | 91          |
| Section F: Resources                          | 97          |
| Section G: Student and Community life         | 103         |
| List of Major Commendations                   | 109         |
| List of Major Recommendations                 | 111         |
| Team Comments on Part Three of the Self Study | 112         |
| Concluding Statement                          | 114         |
| Team List                                     | 116         |

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **CIS**

In July 2003 the Council of International Schools (CIS) took over responsibility for the Accreditation Service which the European Council of International Schools (founded in 1965) had been offering to schools since 1970. CIS is an independent, non-profit, membership organisation of approximately 650 international schools in approximately 110 countries throughout the world. It serves the interests of some 340,000 young people, a constituency which represents many nationalities with varied cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. CIS also includes universities and colleges to which students from international schools apply.

Presently over 280 CIS member schools have been granted accredited status following a directed comprehensive Self Study and a rigorous, thorough evaluation by a Visiting Team, which found them to meet the CIS Standards for Accreditation. Accredited schools are subject to regular monitoring through routine progress reports and visits, and they must undergo a full re-evaluation every ten years. CIS accreditation is accepted throughout the world, including in the USA through the recognition programme of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

The school evaluation programme consists of three main stages: the Self Study conducted by the professional staff and other members of the school community, the evaluation by the visiting team, and the follow-up programme carried out by the school under CIS monitoring to implement the findings of the Self Study and the valid recommendations of the visiting team.

CIS recognises that schools which are different may be equally good. The fundamental premise of the accreditation programme is that an educational institution must be evaluated in terms of the CIS Standards for Accreditation and the degree to which the school is putting its own Philosophy and Objectives into practice. The school's Philosophy and Objectives statement is therefore a vital document, and it should express the principles which guide the governing body, school management and professional staff in their efforts to meet the needs of the students enrolled. The visiting team's observations on the school's philosophy are found in Section A of this evaluation report.

As the responsible body for matters of evaluation and accreditation, the CIS Board of Trustees charges visiting teams with the responsibility of assessing the degree to which evaluated schools are putting their own Philosophy and Objectives into practice and the extent to which they are meeting the published Standards for Accreditation.

## **MSA**

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) is a voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit, peer-administered association of educational institutions. Established in 1887, MSA is one of six regional organizations that together serve schools and universities in the United States and in many countries around the world. The MSA provides leadership in school improvement to its member schools in six states in the United States, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, the subcontinent of Asia, Africa, and other overseas regions.

The purposes of the Association are to encourage, advance, assist, and preserve the achievement of quality education in the Middle States region, MSA works in the public interest and cooperates with all interested federal, state, and private educational organizations, agencies, and institutions.

Membership in the Association is achieved through meeting the standards set forward by one of the three accrediting Commissions that make up the Association: the Commission on Higher Education, the Commission on Secondary Schools, and the Commission on Elementary Schools. In addition, a Committee on Institution-wide Accreditation acts as a bridge between the two school Commissions when PK through 12 accreditation is sought. Over 3500 schools are members of one of the school Commissions.

## **PREAMBLE**

The International School of Brussels (ISB) was founded in 1951 and for much of its history it has been considered among the foremost international schools in Europe. At the present time it caters for about 1400 students from Nursery through High School at its beautiful site on the outskirts of Brussels, where the landscaped campus borders a lake and a forest. The Administrative offices are based in a historic building known affectionately as The Château, once the 19<sup>th</sup> century home of Baron Jonathan Raphael Bischoffsheim. A number of separate buildings are located around the Château, the main ones being the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School, the Middle and High Schools and the Student Activities Center, which includes two large gymnasiums, a performing arts centre, a student common room and a number of teaching areas. Additional smaller buildings provide facilities for an infirmary, the International Community Center, a tennis bubble and the Metairie (ex-stables), which is designated as a second historic site. A large play area, equipped with climbing frames and play equipment, is dedicated to the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School, while ample pitches provide for external sports in the Middle and High Schools. An area of the woods bordering the lake has been cleared to become a Forest Classroom. ISB does not own the campus but leases it from the owner; however, given the restrictions on how this land can be utilized, the Board believes there are strong reasons under Belgian law to support a very long-term commitment to the present site.

The school has made full use of its advantageous location to create an educational complex that is closely linked to the natural and human environments. Signs around the campus walkways draw attention to natural features and to recycling processes which the school has put in place, referring to the ISB mission statement and to themes addressed in the curriculum. This attention to detail sets the scene for visitors to become aware that ISB is very much a school driven by its mission. As a result of its five-year development plan, some major enhancements are envisaged in the coming years and several of the current buildings will be demolished to be replaced by improved teaching areas, starting with the High School which is considered to be most in need of upgrading. Apart from some evident shortcomings in the High School, most of the facilities are well disposed and all of them are clean and attractively maintained. The development plan is therefore best seen as an example of good proactive planning rather than an urgent reaction to serious problems with the physical plant. Indeed, many schools would probably be envious both of ISB's location and the quality of its varied provision of educational spaces. The development plan also goes well beyond a simple improvement of the buildings in that it reflects a form of holistic thinking that in many ways characterizes ISB. Its intention is to create a unique campus project in which education, architecture and the natural environment will be bound and inter-connected in ways that reflect the overall mission and philosophy of the school.

The four divisions of the school do not follow traditional age groupings. The Early Childhood Center caters for students in Nursery through Grade 2, Elementary School includes Grades 3 to 6, Middle School covers Grades 7 to

9, while High School provides for the final three Grades 10 to 12 (and a very small number of students who remain for Grade 13).

ISB has something of a reputation for stability and for being a school that has been capably governed and well led over a substantial period of time. This reputation is more than justified in terms of some objective features such as Board continuity, Director turnover and enrolment trends. Indeed, in the competitive educational market in Brussels, ISB has shown considerable resilience and consistency over time. This perception of stability, however, masks the reality that ISB has become a school driven by innovation and that some highly significant and even remarkable changes have been undertaken during the past decade. During this time, ISB has adopted a new mission, embarked on the development of an entirely new curriculum framework, introduced a 1:1 laptop policy, re-branded its public image, recruited students from new population groups in response to changing demographic trends, and embarked on internal restructuring that makes the school today a very different place than it was ten years ago during the last Team Visit.

In 1999 the Accreditation Team commended ISB on being a good school, but of lacking unity of vision across the Early Childhood Center, Elementary School, Middle School and High School. A phrase which obviously made a lasting impact on the community spoke of ISB as being “four good schools, not one”. Since that time a great deal of effort has been devoted to forging a common and consistent educational project for the whole school, and the report which follows will devote frequent reflection to the current state of this project. The path which the school has chosen to achieve this goal has involved more than just the encouragement of interaction and communication between different divisions. It has, in fact, been based on the development of a unique curriculum framework derived from the school’s mission in order to be created specifically for and within the school. The “Common Ground Curriculum”, as it has come to be known, is the foundation for educational planning across all sections of ISB.

In a snapshot of ISB today the Common Ground Curriculum stands out on account of its impressive, articulate and innovative design. The ISB mission statement is essentially an appeal for inclusivity (“*everyone included, everyone challenged, everyone successful*”) and for education to help students become *independent learners* and *international citizens*. Drawing on some of the best current experiences in education, such as the IBPYP, Harvard Project Zero and the principles of Understanding by Design, the school has developed its own curriculum to meet the challenges of its own mission. Learning is structured in eight themes which run through all grade levels from Early Childhood to High School, and there are standards throughout the school to establish benchmarks for learning and define what it means to be an independent learner and an international citizen.

This brief summary, of course, does not do justice to ISB’s unique curriculum format but readers will need to keep this outline in mind as they turn the pages of this report because it is not possible to understand the school today without appreciating how much energy and time has been devoted to creating the curriculum and the approach to learning that we find in ISB today. As the school frankly admits in its reflections on “An Overview of Vision and Major

Plans", it is easy in retrospect to describe developments in terms of large brushstrokes which all seem to have had a clear purpose but "*the reality is much messier*". The development of curriculum and the extrapolation of its implications are still seen very much as "work in progress", with a great deal already achieved but a considerable amount still to do. New features, such as the teacher appraisal process based on ten components of learning, teaching and leadership, have literally been developed even in the months between completion of the Self Study and the start of the Team Visit, in what can only be described as an exemplary illustration of the continuous improvement that the accreditation process promotes.

The Visiting Team did not find it easy to come to grips with the written curriculum and only after some time in the school were the Team Members able to appreciate the extent to which documentation and resources are on record. The core curriculum is mapped using Atlas Rubicon software, which indicates the units being studied across the school in connection with the eight central themes and shows how they link to the standards of learning. This is a powerful tool but still not flexible enough to store and explore the full extent of the detailed curriculum. Another source to which the Visiting Team referred was Blackboard, a web-based learning platform in which teachers share details of the program with parents and, from Elementary School, with the students. Resources found on Blackboard often include specific learning assignments and objectives for the units being studied, assessment rubrics, references to inter-disciplinary connections and a range of material to stimulate and extend student learning. A third resource for curriculum information is the school's intranet, and especially the "L" and the "T" drives, where teachers maintain folders of resources for each of the curriculum units. As well as containing another store of curriculum documentation, these folders often serve as compendia in which teachers in the same department can share ideas, lesson plans, student assignments and a host of material used in teaching each of the thematic units.

Involvement in developing the ISB's ambitious curriculum model must have been a fascinating and demanding professional challenge for everyone involved, but at the same time innovation has proceeded rapidly in many other areas. A 1:1 laptop scheme has been introduced into Middle and High School (indeed, starting from grade 5), bringing technology forcefully into classrooms in ways that provoke new responses from teachers and provide new opportunities for learners. During the same period the demographics of enrolment have created an evolving school culture, with falling representation from the United States and increasing interest from local families, together with a larger number of students for whom inclusion depends on learning English to join the school community. Managing these changes, and doing so with constant reference to inclusion based on the school mission, has called for enormous flexibility on the part of faculty and staff.

The fact that ISB is a different school from ten years ago is immediately evident in the image projected by the branding used for internal and external communication. A great deal of attention has been paid to this and many of the materials have a high standard and a professional appeal, although produced mostly from within the school's own External Relations Office.

Similarly, new administrative structures are in place for managing human resources and finances. To some extent the increasing professionalization of these management services has been timely, because over the past three years the school has headed off a potential financial crisis that led to deficits in two successive years and would have led to increasing strains had there not been a review of employment conditions that has put the school onto a firm foundation for the future. These ingredients, the pace of professional change linked to financial pressures and the need to review salaries and conditions, could easily pose severe problems for some school communities but ISB handled its critical finances through transparent negotiation towards a solution built out of the common trust generated over time by stable and principled governance and management.

Soon after the Preliminary Visit in April 2008, the Self Study got under way and lasted until May 2009. The Steering Committee was chaired by Mike Crowley, Head of Middle School and Assistant Director. Time was provided during regular school terms to enable extensive reflection by the committees, and once the major findings emerged each committee went on to draw up action plans using the school's standard model in order to address the needs that had been identified. Once again, this demonstration of commitment to continuing improvement is commendable. On the other hand, given ISB's mission of "*everyone included*", the Visiting Team felt that some of the Self Study committees could have benefited from wider representation from community stakeholders to gain insights into the different perspectives that are present across the school. These would have been especially relevant in considerations of Philosophy, Staffing, Student Support Services and Community Life. This gave the Visiting Team some food for thought but did not detract from recognizing that the Self Study was taken very seriously. The major findings were summarized and collated in an overview which itself led to an action plan so that the Self Study fed directly into the ISB Five-Year Development Plan, and the Visiting Team was informed that the conclusions of its report will also be used in the same way. Given this active response to the accreditation process, numerous reactions to the Self Study findings were already under way before the Team Visit took place. The Team was briefed about these soon after arrival and copies of the "Overview of Vision and Major Plans" were shared with the Team, indicating developments literally updated to 15 October 2009.

The Visiting Team arrived in Brussels on Saturday 17 October. Since May, with the completion of the Self Study, the Director's Personal Assistant, Jessica Franken, had taken over responsibility for liaison on the logistics of the Visit. The Team spent Sunday in the school touring facilities, meeting the Board and Leadership Teams, and then engaging a cross-section of the community during a reception hosted in the Château. From Monday through Thursday 19-22 October the Team spent every day in school and the report which follows was compiled on the basis of their observations and discussions during this time.



## **PART ONE: THE SURVEYS**

The surveys undertaken by ISB involved over 800 students but only just over 200 families, no doubt reflecting the typical difficulties in generating ample feedback in any type of widespread community analysis.

It is often difficult to make clear deductions from opinion surveys unless the response is exceptionally positive or remarkably negative. For instance, 97% of parents commented that they regularly receive information about school events, 99% of staff indicated they have access to internet in school and 100% of Board Members believe that the annual budget is approved after consultation with relevant constituents. These figures leave little room for interpretation, but the same cannot be said of the 80% of staff who believe that school policies are “known and consistent”. A positive response rate of 80% on most surveys would be considered extremely positive but the real significance of this figure is for the school itself to determine. Does it have higher expectations than 80% for approval ratings on school policy ? If so, it might want to investigate whether this lower response is due to lack of awareness of the policies or to a lack in their being perceived as consistent.

This introductory paragraph is particularly pertinent in the case of ISB since many questions on the survey received responses that are unquestionably positive – but whether they are positive enough for the expectations of the Board and Leadership Teams is a more important question. Surveys of 800+ students, 200+ parents and 300+ employees will inevitably generate diverse points of view. Indeed, some difference of opinion is actually a potential strength of the school, encouraging debate and discussion and avoiding the risk of complacency and self satisfaction if it is used constructively.

In general, the Visiting Team found that the survey results confirmed many of the findings that will be expressed in the narrative sections of its report. Widespread approval for the ISB mission is evident in the 97% response from staff who express “support” and the same percentage of parents who state that they “know and understand” the school philosophy, although somewhat surprisingly “only” 77% of students stated that they knew about the mission. Similarly, approval ratings for governance and leadership were encouraging, with 82% of staff recognizing the “sound direction, continuity and effective support” provided by the Board and the 94% identifying the Director as the “responsible leader of the school”. However, only 40% of staff believe that they have an input into financial and educational planning, which makes this a of question requiring clarification and ongoing attention, as is the figure of 58% of staff who see themselves as playing a part in “planning professional development opportunities”.

The curriculum ratings were also very much in line with findings of the Visiting Team and even indicated the kind of healthy self-awareness which leads professionals to be just as aware of their weaknesses as their strengths. Articulation, which will be a theme running through this report, was highlighted as an area needing attention, with 52% of staff stating they do not meet regularly with colleagues in other divisions and 53% stating that they do not meet with colleagues in other disciplines. Not surprisingly, the same 52% of staff believe that curriculum documentation “includes references to links

within and across disciplines". Interestingly, just 58% of the staff believe that a new teacher would find the curriculum documents "useful in preparing to teach an assigned class", perhaps for the same reasons that the Visiting Team needed extended orientation on how to access the written curriculum during their first days in the school.

Some of the student responses may also call for follow-up. For instance 97% of staff indicate that they take the learning style of students into account whereas fewer than 63% of students replied positively to the same question. An element of divergence of opinion is to be expected in this area but such a discrepancy calls for attention from a school committed to inclusivity and to seeking and valuing diverse perspectives. Similarly, just 62% of parents indicate that they believe the school identified their child's abilities, disabilities and learning styles during the admission process, although 92% reported that the students find school to be interesting and engaging.

There is a natural tendency to highlight discrepancies because they stand out so clearly when presented as contrasting percentages, but the overall context and balance of the survey points to a healthy and dynamic school community. Not only is the climate positive and friendly, the staff is committed to putting the school's mission into practice and is dealing energetically with the issues thrown up by constraints on time in a busy schedule of activities. Parents are concerned and interested in the school's educational vision, and the students are engaged but at the same time critically aware of some features they think can be enhanced.

The long-term impact of the survey may not be as strong as the Self Study or the Team Report, but the Visiting Team recommends continuing review of the survey's main features to highlight those questions which call for further investigation. In the long term this can only be helpful. In fact, the school is currently asking some crucial questions of its own, such as how to identify the extent to which it is putting the ISB mission into practice - and whether surveys and polls have a place in evaluating this kind of question. There is much that can be learned from an analysis of the ISB survey both about the benefits and the pitfalls of making decisions on the basis of opinion surveys. Those who are responsible would be wise to reflect carefully on how to use this information and the extent to which it can really provide an accurate evaluation of the school's essential educational operations.

## SECTION A: PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

|    |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|----|--|---------------------|
| 1. | The school shall have a clear and effective written statement of its philosophy and objectives, appropriate for the students it serves.                          | E                   |
| 2. | The school's philosophy and objectives shall be generally known, understood and accepted by the governing body, school management, staff, parents, and students. | M*                  |
| 3. | There shall be procedures which enable the school to determine its degree of success in putting its Philosophy and Objectives into practice.                     | M                   |
| 4. | The school's Philosophy and Objectives shall lead the school to act within the spirit of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.               | E                   |
| 5. | The Philosophy and Objectives shall commit the school to promoting international and inter-cultural experiences for its students.                                | E                   |

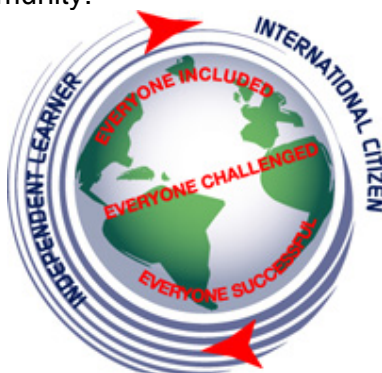
### COMMENTS:

2. The mission statement is almost universally known, recognized and respected across the ISB community. It plays a key role in bonding a common identity. However, an "E" rating could not be awarded because the implications of *"everyone included, everyone challenged, everyone successful"* do not seem to have been fully explored for different stakeholders. See Recommendation 1.

## SECTION A: PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

### OBSERVATIONS

The International School of Brussels has a brief statement of mission and goals that is direct, powerful and inspiring. The graphic representation, which is shown below, is widely visible around the school and easily recognizable for members of the community:



The ISB Mission is "*Everyone Included, Everyone Challenged, Everyone Successful*", while the educational aims of "*Independent Learner and International Citizen*" are referred to as Enduring Goals. The meaning of these five terms is explained through short paragraphs which are just as striking as the mission itself. All of these explanatory paragraphs begin with the words "*All learners*": for example:

*"Everyone included: All learners needs are supported, their perspectives sought and respected and their qualities valued and nurtured".*

It is evident that the ISB mission and goals reflect a school which is committed to the values of international learning and to exemplary practice in catering for a population that is diverse in many ways: culturally, linguistically and individually. There can be no doubt that the mission has been adopted as a unifying statement of identity and bonding for the ISB community, which is justifiably proud of its powerful statement of purpose. At the same time this challenging mission begs a response on many different levels. The Visiting Team found ample evidence that the school takes these challenges seriously, but it also reached the view that their full implications have not yet been explored. There are, then, still further opportunities to discover the potential of the mission and to clarify its impact on education and policy.

In recent years the mission has been referred to over and over again as a motivator of action. This is especially true as regards curriculum and learning. The teachers, for instance, are very aware that ISB's emphasis on being inclusive requires provision for diverse learning needs in terms of the overall curriculum structure, the availability of language and learning support and the planning of their daily activities in class. The implications of "everyone challenged and everyone successful" have led to numerous innovations in pedagogy, curriculum structure, optional courses, guidance systems and other features of school. In addition, the introduction of a thematic curriculum has specifically addressed the goal of developing

independent learners and international citizens, and the exciting Common Ground Curriculum is an excellent example of the mission's impact on the learning. There have also been consequences for professional development and the school has repeatedly shown itself to be creative and generous in making this available. Some of the professional initiatives undertaken in this respect have been designed within the school to be intended specifically to prepare staff for implementing the ISB mission. Similarly, in another context, several members of the community made explicit reference to the impact that the mission might have on the design of facilities to include in the campus development plan.

The adoption of this highly inclusive philosophy may have been initially led by questions of value and principle, but its implementation has coincided with some pragmatic changes which have highlighted its relevance in ways that were perhaps not originally intentioned. The evolution in demographics, for instance, has brought a population shift away from mother-tongue English families to a more diverse and fragmented, but also more international, community. The philosophy impacts clearly on the provision of services at ISB for this evolving population distribution and many support services have been enhanced as a consequence. In addition, the school promotes a wide range of inter-cultural and international celebrations to demonstrate the reality of "everyone included".

In spite of these outstanding efforts to align learning opportunities with the school mission, there appear to be other areas where the implications of "everyone included" have not been used to full advantage. For instance, several of the self study committees appeared to lack the balance that would have been expected in order to seek and respect the perspective of all stakeholders in the community. Parental involvement was particularly lacking, especially the input of parents from diverse language backgrounds and from families with experience of diverse learning needs. The Visiting Team came to the perception that the prevalent understanding of the term "learners" in the mission statements is restricted to "students" and that it is not always extended to adults, both teachers and parents. This may also be symptomatic of a certain approach to communication that has privileged top-down decision-making in which good ideas generated by the leadership teams are transmitted to, rather than discussed with, the educational staff. This is not to imply any dissatisfaction or discontent regarding the ideas themselves. Staff morale, and indeed the morale of the community in general, is very high and there is wide respect for the leadership teams and the educational vision that has been promoted in recent years. None the less, the absence of wider debate and discussion about the mission may have resulted in lack of appreciation for its full potential to be realized as regards the staff and parents as well as the student learners.

It is rarely easy for any school to evaluate its success in implementing philosophy and ISB is no exception. Within the area of student learning the teachers are conscious of the planning implications so curriculum review can be considered as an on-going project with reference to the mission. More articulate evaluations and the incorporation of feedback from other community members has been intermittent (for instance at the five-year accreditation review stage) although a new system based on on-going

surveys is currently under review. The new "dashboard" management tool was demonstrated to the Visiting Team and mission surveys are incorporated into it as indicators of school performance, but the tool itself is still under development and it not clear how it will be utilized. In any case, more work remains to be done on the evaluation of effective implementation and this is a topic which might benefit from discussion involving diverse community representatives.

There might appear to be an inconsistency in the admissions policy, approved in 2009, which requires evaluation of applicants to ensure their potential for success at ISB. Although this seems to contradict or undermine the values of inclusivity implicit in the mission, the Visiting Team was satisfied that this is not actually the case. In fact, the statement simply recognizes good practice in that even a school with a relatively open admissions policy needs to be aware of the limits of its support programme so as not to admit students for whom it cannot provide an appropriate education. Testing can also ensure correct placement and initiate dialogue on the programmes and successful outcomes that can be envisaged for individual students. None the less, a modification to the phrasing of the admissions policy would remove any misunderstandings.

Although not all the school's advertising material refers to the ISB mission, it is difficult to imagine that any student can be enrolled without their family having become very aware of the school's core ideals. From the arrival of an envelope through the post to even a rapid visit to the ISB website, the mission is very much in the public eye.

All in all, the ISB community can be congratulated on its enthusiastic adoption of the school's mission. It provides a strong statement of values and educational aims that will continue to serve the school well in the future. In addition, there is still unexplored potential for it to drive action and practice in constructive ways to enhance and celebrate both learning and community in the school.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the ISB Board and Community for embracing its powerful mission
2. the faculty for its efforts and on-going commitment to translating the core ideals of the mission into practical features of the ISB educational experience
3. the ISB leadership team for promoting the mission and for developing a novel curriculum structure which reflects the five core ideals
4. the ISB leadership team for providing professional development related to the mission and the curriculum implications for learning
5. the Board and the Director for providing funding in areas where additional provision has been needed to enhance implementation of the mission

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Director, the Board and the Educational Leadership Team continue to explore the significance of inclusivity for the school community as a whole
2. the Admissions Office and Section Heads reconsider the admissions policy to ensure that it describes practices that are in line with the ideals expressed in the school's mission
3. the Director, the Board and the Educational Leadership Team continue to explore ways of evaluating the implementation of mission in all school operations

## SECTION B1 - EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | E                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | M                   |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | M                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | M*                  |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | M                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | M                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | E                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | E                   |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | M                   |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | M                   |

### COMMENTS:

- The curriculum is well articulated within the ECC but vertical articulation with the Elementary School still calls for attention.



## **SECTION B1 - EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The Early Childhood Center (ECC) is a well resourced facility designed to house students aged 2-8. Located directly in front of the building is a wide array of playground structures in a beautiful natural setting.

The ECC team comprises forty staff members including 15 class teachers, an art teacher, a music teacher, psychomotricity teacher and a PE teacher, as well as 7 assistants and interns and 3 support team members including a literacy coordinator. Additionally there are five teachers devoted to English Language Development. The ECC is led by the Division Head and an Assistant Head; both are long-serving former faculty members and are highly committed to school improvement. The Visiting Team observed a collegial and hamonious working environment.

The mission and enduring goals of ISB lie at the heart of the widely implemented ECC curriculum. For example, students are well aware of their roles as individuals, as members of their school community and also as members of the global community committed to preserving our environment. The ECC's "green team" promotes environmental awareness through energy conservation practices in this section of school, i.e. ensuring lights are turned off, windows are closed, etc.

The ECC culture is in alignment with the ISB mission. There is an emphasis on respecting and appreciating diversity even at the earliest stages of a student's experience at ISB. United Nations Day is an example of the many ways diversity is celebrated. ISB encourages individual expression and viewpoints, while concurrently promoting respect for other opinions and the understanding that others can have different ideas that are equally valid as our own. The Visiting Team observed lessons which incorporated differentiated instructional practices, allowing students to learn at their own pace. Moreover, the ECC provides for special education provisions.

ISB prides itself on being a school that teaches for understanding. The ECC curriculum is comprehensive, thoughtfully designed and well documented on Atlas Rubicon. It is based on the ISB Common Ground curriculum.

Standards and Benchmark tests, such as the PM Benchmark Test for Reading Skills, are utilized to monitor essential features of student learning. ECC provides an inquiry-based rich learning environment and the students appear to be independent and engaged learners. They often rely on rubrics for self and peer assessment and they are conscious of their responsibility for their own learning. With the guidance of the teachers they set personal academic goals which apply to their individual needs. For example, a student in kindergarten had an individual goal of "leaving spaces between words". Their progress is then monitored and documented in a clear, easy-to-track manner, which is later used to set new individual goals. Students demonstrate an eagerness and enthusiasm that was reflected in their general attitudes toward learning. Cumulative Folders are used to showcase tests and

samples of their work, generally collected in September and May. This serves to highlight continuum and progress in skills and content areas.

The classrooms are designed around central play and recreation areas which can also serve as extra learning spaces. The ECC is generally a safe and secure environment. However, the Visiting Team noticed that students are sometimes allowed into the central play areas with minimal supervision and suggest reflection on this practice to ensure that it is consistent with the school's high standards.

Technology is fully integrated in the ECC curriculum. It is viewed as an empowering vehicle to help students achieve their academic goals but not as an end in itself. Students use technology comfortably in their daily learning experience. For instance the Visiting Team observed students using laptops and headphones to read electronic books. They were also seen using an LCD projector to go on a virtual tour of countries around the world, and digital/video cameras to document work.

Both parents and students have clear expectations of the learning outcomes, as grading standards and criteria are shared openly. Student progress is conveyed to parents via two written progress reports, which identify "successes" and "challenges/next steps." Additionally there are two conferences scheduled to report feedback to parents. The second conferences are student-led in which the students share information about themselves as learners. This is an empowering statement as students establish responsibility for their own learning in line with the school enduring goals. Blackboard is also used as a communications tool for students and, especially for younger children, with their parents.

The guiding questions for the first unit and the whole academic year are posted around the ECC, serving as a visual reminder of the themes being studies to students and to larger school community. Students are constantly encouraged to list them and apply them to real life situations at the classroom level. The Visiting Team observed students in kindergarten who were presented with a situation and the students responded using these questions while citing them aloud as a group completely unprompted. In a second grade classroom, the Team observed students being paired up (a practice widely used in the ECC), to work on a poster to illustrate their understanding of the underlying answers to those guiding questions. Responses are encouraged in terms of four key considerations: *is it fair ?*, *is it safe ?*, *is it respectful ?*, *is it kind ?*.

The faculty participate in a variety of professional development programs through a set of summer institutes plus additional initiatives that are organized throughout the academic year.

Horizontal and vertical articulation of the curriculum is evident within the ECC and cross-curricular collaboration is frequent. For example, students in the ECC sometimes use musical instruments they made themselves in art class. The practice is facilitated by grade level meetings every Wednesday afternoon, and a general ECC faculty meeting once every three weeks. This enables teachers to gain insight into better methods of delivering the

particular desired outcomes in student learning based on actual practice and observation that takes place in the classroom.

Even though the ECC is linked to the Elementary School through “The Bridge”, this physical connection is not necessarily mirrored in the vertical articulation of the curriculum. The Visiting Team concluded that coordination remains sporadic and informal. This is not due to lack of interest or team spirit, but probably derives from the busy schedule of activities in which the faculty is engaged. The school has already identified this concern and it emerged as an issue in the Self Study so attention is now being focused on how to fine tune the vertical articulation of the curriculum.

Effective use of baseline data is utilized to identify students requiring special learning support. However, a specific tool is not available for identifying the highly able students and teachers recognize that these students may not always be sufficiently challenged. This concern is not unique to the ECC and has been identified as a school-wide area for growth.

Host country integration was in strong evidence in the ECC. The students engage in many activities that promote an appreciation of Belgian culture. For example, students go on fieldtrips, visit art museums, and celebrate local festivities.

In conclusion, the Visiting Team was impressed from the outset by the positive learning environment they encountered at the Early Childhood Center, and this was confirmed during the week spent at ISB. The Visiting Team found ample and consistent evidence of the high level of dedication of the whole ECC team to their students and to the ISB community at large.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the ECC Division Head , the Assistant Head and the entire ECC team for fostering a positive learning and working environment.
2. the Early Childhood teachers for modelling high standards of collaboration to their young students
3. the Early Childhood support team for striving to fulfil the inclusive mission of ISB
4. the Early Childhood Center students for their commitment to putting the ISB Mission into practice by learning to become exemplary international citizens.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Early Childhood Center faculty consider how to develop assessment tools to identify highly able students and provide appropriate stimuli for these students
2. the ISB Educational Leadership Team ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided for the horizontal and vertical curriculum coordination and that vertical coordination between the sections is given priority in future planning considerations
3. the Head of Early Childhood Center continue to engage the faculty in devising more formative methods of assessment
4. the Head of Early Childhood Center and the Early Childhood team reflect on appropriate supervision needs in the central play areas between the classrooms.

## SECTION B2 – ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | E                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | M                   |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | E                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | M*                  |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | M                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | E                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | E                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | E                   |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | M                   |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | M                   |

### COMMENTS:

4. Improved vertical articulation is a goal that ISB has already recognized and the Visiting Team concurs with this as a priority for the school. Horizontal articulation is already being undertaken and is not a matter for concern.

## **SECTION B2 – ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The Elementary School (ES) caters for approximately 450 students in 20 classes from grades 3 through 6. There are four to six classes in each grade level. The Elementary Leadership Team consists of the Elementary Head, Assistant Head and Numeracy Coordinator, all of whom teach and co-teach at some capacity part time. There are four Learning Support Teachers who pull out students needing extra help and co-teach with one class at each level.

The Elementary Leadership Team is actively working on the revision and implementation of the curriculum. At least every two weeks they meet with the grade level teachers and grade level Heads. All grade level teachers and the Learning Support teachers meet weekly for two hours to coordinate curriculum and lesson planning. This year the ES focus is writing across the curriculum and presently a representative from each grade level is meeting once a month to discuss writing. The ISB Curriculum Coordinator meets with the grade level teams twice a year.

The Visiting Team observed that the curriculum is very much alive and present in the Elementary School program. The Mission Statement is prevalent throughout the curriculum, with enduring goals evident in all classrooms. Teachers refer to curriculum documentation that is easily available on Atlas Rubicon and keep a library of resources for planning and implementation on the intranet's "L" Drive. The Visiting Team was able to observe lesson plans and planned units based on the curriculum. Many teachers have their year and trimester plan posted in the classroom. In the New Teacher Mentoring Program that is implemented at ISB, ES teachers also mentor new teachers in regards to the curriculum through conferencing, and peer observation. All teachers observed by the Visiting Team were teaching with specific reference to the curriculum both as regards the general topics being studied and the specific lessons for the month.

The students have a wealth of support to help them succeed in reaching the standards and benchmarks set for the Elementary Curriculum. Differentiation in teaching was present in some of the ES classes. Using co-teaching and level grouping in Numeracy, English, Science and Social Studies, students were challenged and able to be successful at their own level. Art and Music teachers refer to the year plans and the concepts being covered in core subjects, i.e. the art teacher works with shapes when this is also the topic for numeracy classes. Technology is present in all ES subject areas. All teachers teach awareness of community the first months of school across all ES grade levels.

The promotion of cultural awareness was observed in several projects and activities during our week at ISB, both in and out of lessons. A 6<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies class discussed personal involvement in World Hunger while a Unicef Bake Sale was under way. Students are actively studying and learning about their own culture and others, assisted by a faculty in which there is diversity of teacher backgrounds and by relationships with other

international schools, i.e. pen pals, research projects, local field trips, parent involvement,

Teachers communicate the curriculum to the parents through Blackboard and personal web pages and objectives and lessons are clearly stated and followed. The ES has two written reports a year and two parent conferences a year. One of the parent conferences is student led. The Visiting Team observed various forms of formative assessment in use, including self-assessment in all subject areas, portfolios, peer assessment, tests, quizzes, and wide reference to rubrics. The ES has piloted the MAP testing in Numeracy and Language as part of their formative assessment philosophy. ISA testing is also utilized annually but results are not received until the end of the year and there has been discussion about the extent to which this is conducive to planning and goal setting. Teachers and Heads recognize the need to coordinate formative assessments across the ES grade levels. The Elementary Leadership Team is proactive in this respect and often visits classrooms to actively observe teachers to help this coordination. The attention being paid to assessment and feedback across ISB in general was evident during the Team Visit as a whole-staff workshop on feedback was presented with faculty from all sections present. Workshops and training are ongoing and very present in the ES with a wealth of professional development opportunities in and outside of school. Learning does not stop with the student and the visiting team observed teachers also learning and excited about new ideas and concepts.

The students, when interviewed, were very aware of what they were learning and why. They also appreciated that learning is not all teacher directed but can often be initiated and assessed by students themselves. In classrooms with mainstreamed students who needed additional support, it was evident that the teacher or teachers were aware of the students' needs and even the other students were able to assist their peers in the learning process. The Visiting Team often saw students working at different levels.

All teachers were positive about the recent curriculum changes and enthusiastic about improving communication between the Elementary School, the Early Childhood Center and the Middle School. Curricular communication takes place in the team meetings and Head of grade level meetings with the Elementary Leadership Team. Concerns about curriculum are communicated to the Elementary Leadership Team at these meetings and then observed or addressed by classroom observations, co-teaching, peer observation, and professional development. There is a general collaboration in implementation of the curriculum between ES teachers.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Elementary School Head and faculty for ensuring the presence of the Mission Statement throughout the Curriculum
2. the Elementary School Head and faculty for regular revision of the curriculum
3. the Elementary Leadership Team for leading the faculty in professional development by co teaching
4. the Elementary Leadership Team for efforts in unify the curriculum by concentrating on specific areas of attention, i.e. writing and Elementary School wide goals.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the ISB Educational Leadership Team ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided for the horizontal and vertical curriculum coordination and that vertical coordination between the sections is given priority in future planning considerations
2. the Elementary School Head and faculty continue their efforts to identify particularly gifted students and develop strategies to challenge them with appropriate learning goals
3. the Elementary faculty continue to coordinate and develop their strategies for formative assessment and feedback.



### SECTION B3: MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | E                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | M                   |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | M                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | M*                  |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | E                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | E                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | E                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | E                   |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | M*                  |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | M                   |

#### COMMENTS:

4. Horizontal articulation and cross-disciplinary activities are good, but vertical articulation is inadequate, especially as regards transition to the High School.
13. Results of student assessment are used by some departments to modify teaching and improve learning, but not on a formal or systematic basis. External testing (ISA) is also perceived to be limited, as it provides neither timely feedback nor feedback in all subjects.

## **SECTION B3: MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

Under the direction of the Middle School Head and two Deputy Heads, the Middle School (MS) serves 390 students in Grades 7 to 9, with the curriculum taught by approximately 50 teachers. The academic and the pastoral are combined into one whole, varied and well-balanced curriculum, which clearly implements ISB's established Common Ground Curriculum through six core subjects – English, French or English Language Development (ELD), Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Physical Education - and a very wide variety of electives. Each student can choose four electives per year – two in each half year. This system allows students, if they wish, to sustain a particular interest or area of expertise over a period of years, as well as to sample a range of different subjects. Bilingual study is available to those with strong English and French: Geography, History, Biology and Visual Arts are currently offered in both languages. This bi-lingual provision also enables students who are withdrawn from French classes for ELD to follow other subject courses in their mother tongue. The well-established Advisory Program, delivered through daily meetings, is also built round the Common Ground Curriculum themes and aims to enable students to grow into strong community members: it focuses particularly on growth of independence and taking responsibility for individual choices and behaviour, and it leads to students reflecting regularly on themselves as international citizens.

Internationalism lies at the heart of the MS curriculum, and what is learnt in classes is seen very much as only a part of the whole educational experience. French and Dutch speaking teachers provide valuable insights into, and contacts with, local culture; service initiatives take MS students into the local community and students from local Belgian schools also come regularly to use the theatre in the International Community Center. A divisional Activity Day, which is distinct from the school-wide International Festival, takes place annually, early in the academic year. This gives a specific focus both to building school spirit within advisor groups, and to teachers and non-teaching staff of different nationalities sharing their cultural expertise. Beyond the local community, extra-curricular trips take the students to diverse cultural experiences and locations: in Kiev, for example, they go to the homes of street children and also pay for three hundred children to have a holiday in the mountains; and in Makaputhu in South Africa, students work and play with children of AIDS victims in a project which the school has supported for the past nine years.

The curriculum reflects the school philosophy that all learners, including the Special Education students, should be included and challenged, and the Visiting Team observed classroom activities which were differentiated by task as well as by outcome. Through its particular emphasis on enduring human understandings, and as the result of the varied teaching strategies employed, the curriculum also enables students successfully to develop the abilities and skills they need for life.

Nevertheless, more needs to be done to ensure that two groups of learners, those with limited English and the exceptionally able, are not only fully

included, but also challenged and successful. English Language Development (ELD) teachers have begun to work in closer conjunction with mainstream teachers to support English Language Learners (ELL). Science teachers are currently being taught by ELD trainers, and professional development in strategies to help ELL is eventually planned for all subject specialist teachers. At the same time, and partly as the result of the Self Study, a team consisting of the Curriculum Director, Head of Learning Support and representatives from each division is working on a policy to ensure that not only the MS but the whole school curriculum challenges exceptionally able students. The school's major plans point towards PD for all teachers from January 2010.

Communication of the MS curriculum to parents is clear. Each MS Head of Department holds an annual subject-specific evening, at which the curriculum is described and parents may ask questions and make suggestions. Review of curriculum is seen very much as an ongoing process and largely follows the needs of the students. Additionally there is regular communication of student progress and results through progress reports, parent-teacher conferences, written reports and three way conferences. Parent teacher conferences, held just before the Team Visit, were attended by approximately 90% of parents.

Subject unit plans, produced through teacher collaboration, are documented widely on Atlas Rubicon, and show their relation to one or more of the eight Common Ground Curriculum themes. Assessment of learning is also linked to the Common Ground Curriculum standards, and the Visiting Team were told that a recent review of assessment, which considered how, why, and what is assessed, led to an increase in the collection of diagnostic material and to moderation of work within departments. More needs to be done to increase consistency of assessment across departments. Curriculum documentation could also clarify the links between disciplines.

ISA results show students in the school to be performing well, and the results are clearly a source of reassurance for parents. However, the Visiting Team perceived concern that these results lead neither to widespread assessment of the effectiveness of teaching and learning, nor to systematic revision of curriculum or pedagogy. There is also a concern about the scheduling of the ISA assessments since feedback is not timely to inform a planning, and the tests also evaluate learning in language and mathematical abilities.

While good dialogue already exists between Heads of Department in the Middle and High Schools, more communication is needed both to strengthen the vertical curriculum articulation and to bring consistency in assessment and grading between the two divisions. Grade 9 students begin to earn credits for the ISB Diploma before moving into the High School, so strong alignment is important. Horizontal articulation within subjects is fairly strong and is partly the result of subject classrooms being grouped together in the school, with provision of department offices also in most subjects, an arrangement that allows for regular good communication between subject teachers.

The Visiting Team observed strong commitment to professional development on the part of both the teachers themselves and the MS leadership. Whole school professional development provides regular training in aspects of pedagogy, often related to school philosophy and to the design and development of curriculum, and increasingly related to teacher appraisal. MS Faculty meetings, held once a month, focus on learning and pedagogy rather than on information giving, and equip teachers with ideas useful for the classroom. Material for discussion in these meetings often originates in the monthly Heads of Department meetings. Teachers are also encouraged to attend and to present at ECIS and ELMLE conferences, and the MS Best Practice Symposia provides excellent in-house learning experiences.

Resources and equipment, including the one-to-one Tablet PC program in the MS are good, and the learning environment is light, spacious and comfortable. The Visiting Team noticed the open doors of many classrooms during class time, and the quiet atmosphere of learning that permeated the whole building. MS teachers are also encouraged to be present in the open spaces between lessons, and this contributes to the excellent teacher-student relationships observed by the Visiting Team. Week long curriculum trips for each grade level, which all take place in the same week at the end of the academic year, add to the strong sense of trust and community.

The Librarians work very closely with MS teachers in both the preparation of materials and learning experiences for the students and the delivery of frequent enquiry-based units. Additionally, they hold an annual end-of-year meeting with each Head of Department to plan purchases for the Library that will facilitate the delivery of the following year's curriculum.

Stability of leadership in the MS over a number of years, together with the recent initiative of an annual MS teacher autumn retreat, has helped in the building of a strong, committed faculty team. Their dedication and enthusiasm impressed the Visiting Team.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Middle School teachers for whole-heartedly embracing and implementing the school's Common Ground Curriculum; for their passion for education; for their understanding of MS students and for their commitment to ongoing professional development
2. the Middle School Head, Deputies and Heads of Department for developing the rich curricular program, which brings academic and pastoral into a coherent whole
3. the Educational Leadership Team for initiating the process to improve alignment between the Middle and High Schools
4. the Middle School leadership team for instigating an annual teacher retreat to build and strengthen teacher relationships.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the ISB Educational Leadership Team ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided for the horizontal and vertical curriculum coordination and that vertical coordination between the sections is given priority in future planning considerations
2. the Educational Leadership Team put in place the planned school wide policy, designed to meet the needs of higher achieving students
3. the Educational Leadership Team consider alternative benchmarking systems to complement ISA and lead to the use of assessment results in the formal systematic review of curriculum and teaching methodology.

## SECTION B4: HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | M*                  |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | M                   |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | M                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | D                   |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | M                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | E                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | M                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | M                   |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | M*                  |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | M                   |

### COMMENTS

1. The breadth of curriculum offerings in the High School is extensive and could merit "E", but there is some concern about the extent to which exceptionally able students are challenged.
4. The vertical subject articulation between Middle and High Schools needs attention to provide a consistent and coherent approach to learning.
13. Some departments use analysis of IB results in revising curriculum, but there is no established culture in the school for doing this.

## **SECTION B4: HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The High School (HS) includes grades 10-13 and currently caters for 405 students from some 70 nationalities, taught in classes of an average size of 15-16 by the equivalent of 55 full time teachers. Occasionally, class sizes reach 22–23 students, and at this point, classroom size becomes an issue.

The High School offers a wide, varied curriculum which reflects the ISB philosophy that every learner should be included, challenged and successful. The Grade 10 curriculum, which has a compulsory Arts element, prepares students for entry into one of the 5 routes to an ISB Diploma: the academic (23 credits), the general (19.5 credits), the individualised for Special Education students, which includes ASDAN programs of key life and vocational skills, the IB Diploma and AP courses, some of which may be taken in Grade 10. Any student may take electives and/or AP courses, but to enter the full IB Diploma there is a minimum requirement in English, a foreign language and Maths. To gain an academic diploma, students may combine AP courses, IB certificates and electives. Some electives and AP groups combine learners from Grades 11 and 12, and every year about 5-6 students stay on into Grade 13. New teacher-designed elective courses are added periodically in response to student need, and two courses can be taken in French: World Regional Studies and IB Theory of Knowledge.

In any given year, between 65-70% of students take the full IB Diploma, with a further 20-25% taking some IB certificates, and almost every student has an individualised timetable. Requests for special assessment concessions in external examinations are made for up to 10% of students, who all receive learning support within the HS. Special Education students, who have individual learning plans, are taught mainly in the SEN unit, but they are integrated into the HS through Advisor groups and extra-curricular activities. A range of imaginative options have been devised for these students and occasionally they may be offered work experience alongside support staff. Other students also work with the special education students as part of their service activities within the Creativity, Action and Service (CAS) program.

Providing for the needs of gifted students has not received so much attention but this was highlighted in the Self Study and the school has been reflecting on how to respond. To their credit, mostly teachers recognize that simply providing the IB Diploma option is not an adequate response in itself.

All curriculum offerings are clearly laid out and explained for parents and students in the High School Course Descriptions Handbook, available online and as hard copy. The handbook also provides information about requirements for access to IB and AP programs and requirements to obtain an ISB Diploma. The Common Ground Curriculum does not underpin the academic curriculum in the High School as thoroughly as in the other school divisions. Nevertheless, units of work for HS courses, which are generally well documented on Rubicon, show how subject content engages with the eight commonalities. There is also evidence of cross-disciplinary

collaboration both within the regular academic curriculum and in special events such as the Language and Culture Festival and Global Issues Day.

Events such as those mentioned in the previous paragraph utilise the wide national and cultural diversity that can be found in the school community. They are also part of a wider initiative to raise awareness and provide opportunities for service, including several international activities. There are student trips to Togo, Ghana and Tanzania, where the school has service projects under way. Students regularly collect materials to take to the children in Ghana, and one of the students in the recently introduced Composition and Creative Writing elective has proposed the production of a book of children's stories to be taken this summer. The International Award Program, beginning in Grade 9, is popular, and provides not only a useful transitional instrument for students into HS, but also plentiful opportunities for them to develop independence, initiative and self-reliance. and they are supplemented by numerous opportunities for service in the local community, such as helping in a home for the disabled.

The question of transition from Middle to High School is widely recognized as needing attention. A number of teachers, for instance, openly voiced concern that students do not join the HS from Middle School with the knowledge base required for the AP and IB courses. This opinion may turn out to be not entirely correct but the opinion itself is symptomatic of the fact that High School has a different sense and focus than the rest of ISB. To a large extent this may be on account of the external assessment focus in Grades 11-12, a feature that does not always sit comfortably alongside the Common Ground Curriculum which forms the basis for learning up to grade 10. But it is also true that lack of priority attention devoted to articulation of the Middle-High School program has led to the sense that these are still two good but different schools, rather than one consistent learning experience for the student.

The Visiting Team learned that a number of strategies are in place to ease the personal and social transition of students into the HS. Grade 9 students spend a whole day in the HS in the spring before entry and an Orientation Day for all Grade 10 students is incorporated into the first week. A comprehensive Advisory Program was introduced at the start of this academic year to balance the traditional academic nature of the High School and to help in the transition process. The advisory program is linked to the Common Ground Curriculum and covers topics such as Advocacy, Mentorship and Leadership, Community, and Learning to Learn. The program is theme-based, delivered in mixed groups of approximately ten students from all HS grade levels and focuses attention on the learner as a whole person and as a future citizen. Advisors are responsible for tracking both the academic and non-academic progress of their students and are expected to write a twice-yearly report. Despite the Head of School modelling the role of Advisor, the program has not had a completely smooth introduction, partly because its incorporation into the school day was perceived by students - erroneously - as being the sole cause of a shorter lunch-hour. Some teachers have difficulty in planning for the short daily sessions and the Visiting Team observed much variety in the way the sessions were being



used. Both the length and timing of Advisory sessions are under discussion for the future.

The curriculum is delivered through a ten day rotational schedule, with most courses meeting for 3 x 75 and 4 x 45 minute sessions in that time. This schedule creates a very fast-paced school day, and the Head of HS has proposed a change of schedule for the coming academic year. A new timetable might also be linked to a change in the curriculum structure in Grade 10. Consultation on the possible changes was just getting under way during the Team Visit with initial discussion about how a new model could best cater for both the compulsory core and the elective programs, as well as serving the needs of both students and teachers and maintaining time for extra-curricular activities during lunch.

Most HS teachers share classrooms, which are divided between two buildings and grouped geographically according to subject: they are generally well-equipped, but in many cases they are not large enough to allow comfortably for group activities or for storage of materials. Teaching styles vary both across and within subject disciplines. Much whole-class teaching was observed, but the Visiting Team also witnessed pair and group work and differentiation, as well as widespread use of technology. The one-to-one Tablet PC program enables students to take responsibility for their own learning, both inside and outside the classroom.

Many HS teachers are qualified as examiners or as workshop leaders for IB and AP, which provides them with up-to-the-minute information about the curriculum they are delivering. Commitment to Professional Development in both subject specific areas and general pedagogy was clearly evident. The Librarians work consistently with HS Heads of Departments to provide resource materials for student projects and research.

Parents are informed about teachers' learning expectations and student progress in a variety of ways including Blackboard, Open Houses, Learning Conferences and traditional report cards. Over 90% of parents attended the most recent Parent Teacher Conferences, showing a very high degree of parent involvement in their children's progress. Results of assessment, particularly IB results, are analysed in some departments in the review and development of curriculum and in the improvement of teaching methodology, but there is neither a formal divisional system nor a school culture for doing this. The Visiting Team also became aware of a general perception in the HS that the awarding of grades lacks consistency across disciplines and even within subjects.

IB Diploma results, which are communicated in general form to the school community, indicate that ISB students regularly perform above the world average, even though the school does not provide Higher Level (HL) students with the IB's recommended number of teaching hours. Standard Level (SL) students, however, receive above the recommended number of hours, since HL and SL courses are often taught in the same class. It is hoped that the new schedule will address this issue.

Guidance Counsellors are involved with students from Grade 9 upwards in preparing for the choice of optional subjects to will suit their preferred career and then assisting with college applications. Approximately 90% of students graduating from ISB go on to a wide range of further studies worldwide, including courses at the most elite universities, but there are also always a few who take a gap year. The destinations of SE students has not so far been tracked, but there are plans to do so in the future.

The High School is a busy place, both for teachers and students, but the Visiting Team observed friendly and relaxed relationships at all times. While the students have a common room in which to relax, space - in the Annexe in particular - is not generous. However, the Visiting Team learned that there are plans in place for a completely new HS building in the near future, designed to cater for all courses in the curriculum more effectively.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the ISB Board, Director and Operational Leadership Team for putting in place plans for a new High School building
2. the Educational Leadership Team (ELT) for the wide range of courses which enable each student to follow an individualised schedule
3. the Head of High School for his determination to resolve scheduling issues and to create a more balanced and less hectic school day
4. the High School teachers for their expertise and dedication and the part they play in the students' consistently good results in IB and AP
5. the Director, Board and whole school community for the outstanding range of extra-curricular activities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the ISB Educational Leadership Team ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided for the horizontal and vertical curriculum coordination and that vertical coordination between the sections is given priority in future planning considerations
2. the ELT explore ways to facilitate more regular horizontal discussions of curriculum within the HS
3. the Educational Leadership Team continue to develop and implement a strategy for ensuring that exceptionally able students are challenged
4. the Educational Leadership Team promote reflection on assessment with a view to developing a policy to ensure consistency in assessment and grading
5. the High School teachers investigate and develop ways to link assessment results to revision of curriculum and teaching methodology
6. the Head of High School provide opportunities for teachers and students to be involved in revising and developing the Advisory Program.

## SECTION B: CURRICULUM

### SECTION B – ENGLISH

|     |   | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|---|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.                | M                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented  | E                   |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                                     | M*                  |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines.        | M*                  |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the culture(s) of the host country and the diversity in the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students. | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.  | M                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.  | E                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.               | E                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.   | M                   |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.  | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                       | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.              | M                   |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.                     | M                   |

3. Although this is an 'M' overall, on account of the high level of support for students who are new to English and students with specific learning difficulties it could be considered as an 'E' within the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School.

4. The vertical articulation of the curriculum is in need of further attention.

## **SECTION B – ENGLISH**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

It is widely recognized that the development of English proficiency is fundamental to the success of all students at ISB. Besides the teaching of this language to mother-tongue students and others who have extensive knowledge and understanding from their prior education, there is a separate program called English Language Development which caters for the numerous students who are learning this language for the first time or who require additional support.

The class teachers are responsible for teaching Language Arts in the Early Childhood Center and the Elementary School. In these sections English is integrated into the thematic units and the teachers refer to First Steps strategies for reading and writing, as well as other resources, including Guided Reading for younger students. In Middle and High Schools English is taught by specialists. The Middle School programs are designed and assessed internally in line with the Common Ground Curriculum, which extends to grade 10 as the first year of High School. In grades 11 and 12 English is taught on programs for the IB Diploma (6 courses) or AP exams (2 options), but the department has also devised additional courses for ISB diploma students such as: “New Media and Communication” and “Different Voices, Different Visions”. Besides the external evaluation with IB and AP, the school makes use of ISA evaluations to give objective standardized assessments on learning and comparability with similar schools around the world.

The curriculum is well documented in each section and the self study provided an overview of strategies and assessment across the school. In practice, however, the sections tend to operate as exclusive units. This does not appear to give rise to serious discrepancies in continuity but greater vertical coordination between the sections would benefit all sections through sharing of experience and expectations as well as providing a seamless and integrated approach to learning.

English courses in the Early Childhood Center focus on helping children to develop the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. The Center benefits from a Literacy Coach who works both with and alongside class teachers developing the program for literacy. The Center provides many attractive, bright and well resourced learning areas with plenty of opportunity to display and celebrate children’s writing. The students appear to enjoy learning and a range of different strategies were in evidence during the week demonstrating, how students engaged enthusiastically with writing. The influence of the Literacy Coach is evident in the flexible grouping of students which enables them to develop at their own pace.

The Elementary School continues to provide a stimulating environment for language and this is reflected in the geography of the building as the impressive library spans the gap between the two divisions. The school makes use of the First Steps approach to reading and writing but teachers seem to have considerable flexibility in choosing from a range of resources

and strategies and the program is not dependent on any one approach. Language is linked to the units being studied in the program which is closely referenced in the Common Ground Curriculum and well documented on Atlas Rubicon. The Visiting Team observed students engaged in a range of activities and their enjoyment of writing was evident throughout. However, some concern is expressed about the extent to which students who are particularly gifted in English might be challenged. In the upcoming evaluation of writing, which is scheduled in the next phase of curriculum review, this is a topic worthy of special attention. Up to grade 5, the school stresses handwriting but after this age the students are introduced to the tablet PC's and there is more opportunity for writing with the keyboard. After Elementary School most of student writing across the curriculum is carried out on the keyboard although examples of handwritten work were in evidence in English lessons across Middle and High School.

In the Elementary School there are a number of support systems in place. For example, students needing support are provided with withdrawal or immersion in English during the class English lessons and during FEW (French / English Support and Writers Workshop). During this period students who have reached a good level of English are allowed to attend French classes, English language development students can receive English support, and students with special learning needs receive additional support in reading or writing. As well as the special support, there is also the opportunity for co-teaching in each grade for students who can benefit from additional, smaller group support. The students are obviously comfortable and competent in their approach to learning language as a result of the success they experience even while so young. One Grade 4 student commented that she *"hoped to soon be learning French as Italian was her first language but she was getting pretty good at English and thought that next year she would be starting to learn French as her English was now at a good level"*.

The Self Study recognised that the Elementary School classrooms are small and awkward spaces for the teaching of language. On the whole, the Visiting Team found that they provide adequate space for teaching, even if they do not provide the opportunity for reading or writing areas and sometimes there is restricted display space for children's work. Students have the benefit of an exceptional library but a class-based reading areas would serve to enhance learning in class and allow for class libraries to support the units being studied. In spite of these limitations the Visiting Team confirms that there is a real enjoyment of language and the teachers have been creative in using the space to make it attractive and to devise ways of displaying student writing. Languages activities are a strong point of the Elementary School.

Visiting writers are a feature of the program and during the Team Visit there was a popular published author spent a day in school to provide some stimulating workshop sessions for the Elementary School.

This enjoyment of language was also visible in the Middle School and many of the comments above apply equally to this division. English teachers occupy a suite of classrooms near to one another and they obviously work as a close and creative team. There was a positive vibrancy and energy in the

teaching of English and a wide range of strategies were in use. As a consequence of the way the teachers engage their classes the students appeared to be on task and focused at all times and they were very receptive to the activities being carried out. Teacher interaction with students reflected the caring and sensitive manner that is typical of this division of the school, and students appear to appreciate this in the way they are free to express themselves in creative writing.

The classrooms themselves are attractive although the displays do not always seem to make best use of the spaces available. Technology, on the other hand, is fully integrated into the lessons and the opportunity is taken to use communications in its widest sense, including corresponding with pen pals in a school in the USA. The units are well documented and a good choice of literature supports the themes being studied. These themes are closely linked to the ISB mission and touch on values and diversity, as well as mystery/crime writing, public speaking and classics such as *Romeo and Juliet*.

At this level of school the students work independently from Blackboard and this becomes a key resource for the learner as well as enabling on-going access to learning resources and teacher stimuli. The teachers have access to ample resources on the faculty intranet and a huge amount of material is available in digital storage.

The High School department is staffed by a highly competent and committed group of teachers who have been very imaginative in writing programs that continue to extend student's writing opportunities as well as the development of literary analysis.

In Grade 10 there is a standard curriculum for all students, aiming to prepare them for the different courses offered in Grades 11 and 12. All genres are introduced to large, mixed ability classes of nearly 20 students, some of which include up to 20% of English language learners. The mixed ability nature of these classes is seen as positive, but more could be done to support the English language learners to ensure that they are included and fully prepared for the next step, while more fluent users of English are still challenged.

At the end of Grade 10 students may choose from Advanced Placement (AP) and Internal Baccalaureate (IB) courses, with a wide choice being available. Many students take one of the IB courses (A1 Higher or Standard, A2 Higher or Standard, or B Higher), while students aiming for the ISB Academic or General Diploma may combine an elective with the AP English Literature and Composition course. The range of courses enables all learners to be challenged in an appropriate way serving their present and future needs. IB and AP options suit the more academic student while some of the courses designed in the department caters for those who are either not gifted at, or not so interested in, writing and literature. Some of the in-house courses are very imaginative such as "Different Voices, Different Visions", and the new, co-taught "New Media and Culture", giving opportunities for collaboration with the Visual Arts department, has been particularly heavily subscribed. The

High School newspaper provides an opportunity for journalistic writing in the community.

The classrooms and some of the class sizes in High School do not facilitate group work or diverse approaches to teaching and it is hoped that this will be resolved in the new High School building that is under consideration.

Assessment throughout the school emphasis internal mechanisms up to the IB and AP courses in Grades 11-12. Students are used to many different styles of assessment and are familiar with quizzes, extended assignments, rubrics, oral presentations with or without visual stimuli, and more. ISA tests are also used to provide standardized evaluations and comparison with other schools on basic literacy skills, but these are used (rightly) more as diagnostic tools than as evaluations of learning. During Elementary School there are individual portfolios for each student and these serve to track progress and enable new teachers to understand the learner's needs. These are also passed on to Middle School in grade 7, although each division tends to use its own evaluation instruments rather than accept placement on the basis of previous assessments. For instance, transition from Middle School to High School is preceded by a written exit piece in Grade 9 in which each student reflects on his/her own learning styles and relationship to literature. Some High School teachers have expressed concern, and this is stressed in the Self Study, that there is a discrepancy between the internally designed and assessed courses up to Grade 10 and the externally examined and moderated courses in Grades 11-12. The Visiting Team suggests that this can be resolved without any major modifications to the English courses but by greater interaction between the divisions to share knowledge about student learning needs and to plan a sequential set of standards to benchmark skill development in language and literary analysis.

English teachers are well qualified at all levels, and the departments in each division are led by experienced and committed coordinators. This is an enthusiastic faculty in all divisions and the teachers' love of language and literature is evidenced in all sections of the school.



## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Board and the Educational Leadership Team for providing excellent library facilities and the Librarians for the quality of their support for faculty and students
2. the Elementary School faculty for their excellent relationship with students and the diverse and stimulating ways in which language development is promoted
3. the Middle School English department for its creative and engaging delivery of the language program and the caring quality of interaction with students
4. the High School English department for its provision of a wide range of stimulating courses for all learners that reflect the mission and values of ISB
5. the English teachers across ISB for delivering and documenting a program which engages students as active and independent learners who enjoy the activities and teaching methods that are used.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends:

1. the Elementary School faculty consider how differentiation can be further developed, especially for more able students, as they develop their program for the writing element of English
2. the ISB English departments review the vertical orientation of the English curriculum with special reference to transition across divisions ensuring continuity and progression for students.

## SECTION B: CURRICULUM

### SECTION B – ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | M                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | M*                  |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | M                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | M*                  |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | M                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | M                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | M                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | M*                  |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | M                   |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | E                   |

#### COMMENTS:

2. Despite ongoing efforts to articulate curriculum since the self study, there is no school-wide ELD policy with a language continuum that identifies language proficiency expectations.
4. There is a lack of vertical alignment across the four school divisions.
9. ELD class sizes do not always facilitate effective language learning.
14. The reporting system is thorough, regular and effective.

## **SECTION B – ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The International School of Brussels provides English Language Development (ELD) for English Language Learners (ELL) who are not proficient in English. In the lower divisions, the program also includes native English speakers who are still developing their literacy skills. ELD is taught by 7 full-time and 15 part-time teachers and extends across the four divisions of the school. The frequency of lessons ranges from 5 to 15 classes per week depending on the division and level. Support is provided through a combination of withdrawal (small group instruction with a specialist teacher) and inclusion (additional support in the mainstream class).

The Visiting Team (VT) observed that there are clear links to the mission and philosophy of the school articulated in the written curriculum. The written curriculum is thematically structured and linked to the Common Ground Curriculum.

While written curriculum documents on the Atlas Rubicon mapping tool are extremely detailed and include clear scope and sequence for each ELD level, especially in the Early Childhood Center, there remains a need for a clearly articulated curriculum across the other school divisions, particularly in newly introduced courses such as the Middle School sheltered science courses. Furthermore, the written curriculum does not currently include a language policy with a language continuum that identifies language proficiency expectations. It is anticipated that ELD Divisional Heads will work together with the Curriculum Director to review the curriculum and devise a clearly articulated ELD policy. Although the Visiting Team was informed that the Curriculum Director's role will be to facilitate this process, it remains unclear who will provide the direction.

The developmental needs of the English language learners are addressed in a safe and supportive class ethos using a variety of instructional strategies. Individualized instruction occurs in a variety of class sizes to accommodate for the different learning styles. The curriculum shows provision for a wide range of ELL needs and includes an array of instructional practices and assessment strategies. These range from instructional games and authentic language learning in the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School, to differentiated learning, lectures and guided individual study in the Middle and High School divisions.

Although some ELD teachers work collaboratively with mainstream subject teachers through informal meetings to plan for inclusion and to prepare materials, there are no formal meetings scheduled to strengthen either the vertical curriculum and links across disciplines. The Visiting Team was informed that a concerted effort is underway in the Middle School to link ELD to mainstream classes and the Team saw examples of this in action.

Local cultures are incorporated into the curriculum through various projects to enhance language acquisition. English language learners are given an insight into Belgium's culture through field trips and the inclusion of aspects of

Belgian life, history and culture into the curriculum. Intercultural awareness is used to enrich the curriculum through the observation of various cultural celebrations in the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School, and by studying texts from a range of cultures, through informal discussion in class and making use of the diverse cultural backgrounds in the Middle and High Schools. The Visiting Team observed instances of learners and teachers providing anecdotes about customs and language used in the learners' native countries and it was clear that this was a common occurrence in the ELD classes.

Through the observation of lessons it became evident that students are encouraged to develop as lifelong learners and this goal is embedded in the curriculum. Furthermore, learners are given plenty of opportunities to develop their individual learning styles as well as develop their critical thinking and problem solving skills.

The Educational Leadership Team has provided for professional development opportunities in the form of external workshops and conferences and a range of in-house training. A program called "Teaching ESL Students in Mainstream Classes" (TESMC) has been introduced to address the needs of teachers who work with ELD students but who are not qualified and/or experienced for this role. The Middle School Science faculty has been given release time to participate in this course which will be extended to other subject areas such as Social Studies in the future.

Teaching practice within the ELD department provides well for individual learner's needs through the use of varied teaching methods, analysis of progress, and a curriculum that allows for differentiation. The Visiting Team observed practices that included instruction which incorporated both basic and higher order skills, student-directed instruction, differentiated instruction, experiential instruction, Socratic methodology (questioning and discourse) and the integration of technology through the extensive use of the student Tablet PCs. Furthermore, the Visiting Team observed that the classroom ethos and teaching methodology is supportive and encouraged ELL to take risks.

The school is extremely well resourced. The provision of indoor and outdoor space, teaching time, technology, instructional resources and access to external assessment support the language development of all learners. Class sizes in the lower divisions were generally small and this facilitated individualized learning and accelerated language acquisition. Not least, the teachers feel that resources allow for effective delivery of the curriculum. However, the Visiting Team observed a room in the Early Childhood Center basement that had no access to natural light and air. In addition, some class sizes in the Middle and High Schools prevent optimal instruction for language acquisition.

Although teachers analyse student performance through a variety of assessment models, expected learner outcomes, especially for older students, are not always clear and not always communicated to parents and learners. Furthermore, there is a perceived lack of communication between divisions mainly due to the structural constraints and the lack of scheduled

meeting time. This can affect student transition as they progress through the school divisions.

Age and language appropriate assessment techniques are used to measure the performance of learners and the progress they make. While there are entry and exit criteria that apply within the different school divisions, these have yet to be aligned (an example of the lack of vertical coordination). Learners are assessed on entry and then on a regular basis until they reach grade level proficiency. A variety of assessment techniques are used including running records, International Schools Assessment tests, Secondary Level English Proficiency tests, questioning, portfolios, written and oral tests, peer and self assessment, individualised goal setting, and formative assessment. The Early Childhood Center has developed very clear guidelines based on modified Ontario standards and the Elementary School is in the process of developing similar proficiency standards.

There is on-going revision of curriculum with reference to the school's Common Ground Curriculum and this is documents using the Atlas Rubicon curriculum mapping tool. It is expected that the ELD Divisional Heads identify common objectives and consider current educational thinking for the program when devising a school-wide Language Policy.

The school regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning through a wide variety of teacher prepared assignments, departmental and standardized testing including the International Schools Assessment in grades 3-10, results of the American Advanced Placement examinations, the International Baccalaureate Diploma examinations, internal exams, and a mix of observations and diagnostic testing. All assessments are used for goal-setting to evaluate language progress within ELD levels and to revise curriculum. However, the process for progression to the next ELD proficiency level and for exiting the program needs to be clarified.

Information about student performance and results of standardized achievement tests is well communicated to the parents through reports and semester report cards. Furthermore, teachers have an opportunity to meet parents at parent-teacher conferences and on a more informal basis to discuss ELL progress. The school community, in the survey and in meetings with the Visiting Team, showed that they were regularly and adequately informed about the progress of English language learners.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the English Language Development teachers for their engaging teaching practice, which provides well for individual student needs through the use of varied teaching methods, analysis of student performance and a differentiated curriculum
2. the English language Development team for training mainstream teachers to support English language learners
3. the English Language Development team for raising the profile of ELD school-wide in order to accommodate the shifting demographics of the student population in order to access the curriculum
4. the Board and Director for ensuring that the school is extremely well resourced to support the English language learning of all students
5. the ISB Faculty for its thorough, regular and effective system of reporting to the school community on school and student performance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the English Language Development team consider how to facilitate effective vertical alignment of curriculum and oversee the implementation of the recommendations that follow
2. the Division Heads, in collaboration with the Curriculum Director, establish a cycle and process for a thorough curriculum and assessment review as well as schedule regular meetings to strengthen both vertical curriculum articulation and links across disciplines
3. the English Language Development team further develop and implement the plan to meet the professional development needs of both ELD and mainstream subject teachers
4. the English Language Development department and the Division Heads investigate ways of ensuring optimal ELD class sizes in all divisions of the school to facilitate effective language learning
5. the English Language Development team continue to respond to the challenges resulting from changes in the demographic population of English language learners by documenting and communicating the emerging ELD philosophy to the school community and ensuring that prospective teachers have appropriate ELD qualifications.

## SECTION B: CURRICULUM

### SECTION B - HUMANITIES

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | E                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | M*                  |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | E                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | D                   |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | E                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | E                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | M                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | E                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | E                   |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | M                   |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | M                   |

#### COMMENTS:

2. The Visiting Team found evidence of documentation, but not staff familiarity with the documentation.
4. Horizontally, but not vertically articulated between divisions.

## **SECTION B - HUMANITIES**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The Humanities Department is a natural place for the international mission of the school to be highly visible. Therefore, it is also subject to high scrutiny regarding its ability to implement this. The Visiting Team found an exemplary faculty and staff providing extensive offerings and completely dedicated to the international mission of the school.

The most highly commendable features of the Humanities program include the utilization of differentiated instruction and technology, especially in the Middle School, the high test scores on criterion referenced external assessments. The most identifiable shortcoming, school wide, is the lack of evidence of strong vertical integration. On balance, though, the curriculum and implementation in Humanities deserves praise.

Vertical Integration is essential to continuity and eliminating duplication of references. The Visiting Team concurs with the Self Study Team that this is an area that does not meet the standard. Furthermore, teachers indicated that the curriculum documented on Atlas Rubicon was not the first source of inspiration for their planning. However, the Visiting Team found that there was ample teacher involvement in writing the continuums within each division. Teachers are not aware of skills content in other divisions but do have an understanding of subject areas which have been covered (i.e. Ancient Civilizations vs. map making). Interestingly, in High School there are no prerequisites to enter IB and AP courses, rather entry is based on teacher recommendation. The High School could benefit from establishing a set of skills that a beginning IB/AP student should have and identify where they will be learned before Grade 10, taking into account the inclusive nature of both the school and IB as well as the transient student population. The Secondary Department Head has started work on this but more needs to be done.

Humanities is taught through several courses. High School options include IB Economics, Business, History, ITGS, TOK (also in French), Geography, AP Comparative Government, European History, US History, Peace and Conflict studies (non AP & IB), and World Regional Studies (Grade 10, also in French). In the Middle School through grades 8 and 9, students study social studies classes in English and French, with Grade 7 Geography also taught in both languages. In the Elementary School and Early Childhood Center Social Studies is embedded in the basic themes that make up the ISB curriculum, such as Building Communities.

The Visiting Team found the delivery of the curriculum in Middle School to be outstanding. The 7 teachers in the department demonstrate a consistent commitment to teaching to diverse learning styles and addressing developmental and emotional needs of students. The Self Study team felt the courses could be more challenging, yet interviews with MS students noted that they felt appropriately challenged, with few indicating their courses to be either too difficult or too easy. Furthermore, English language learners in grades 7-9 indicated that they had appropriate levels of support. The availability of Social Studies content classes delivered in French to qualified



students can be seen as a reflection of the ISB mission but it also has considerable marketing value in recruiting local students. Differentiated instruction was reported at all levels, from grouping by language preference in content classes and in the Early Childhood Center, imaginative use of technology and A/V resources, tiered assignments, peer and self assessment, and allowing students to choose their medium for research projects (verbal, written, or visual). Of special note is the use of the "Fair, Safe, Respectful, Kind" essential questions in the Early Childhood Center to provide a rationale for young students as to why differentiated instruction is used. Observations in the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School confirmed this dedication to attending to diverse needs of the learners. During the Team Visit the Elementary curriculum was dedicated to the Rights of the Child and an upcoming UN Day, but the methods of delivery crossed many domains, both cognitive and affective. The Early Childhood Center also uses the Humanities curriculum to address socio-affective domains. The Visiting Team found that the overall curriculum implementation followed a model of Mission-> Core Themes ->Differentiation -> Curriculum.

Written materials dealing with curriculum are available, but the Visiting Team found different levels of familiarity among the different divisions. Faculty in the Early Childhood Center was the most visibly comfortable in referring to the Common Ground Curriculum and navigating the standards on "Atlas Rubicon". Two of the themes in the Common Grounds Curriculum deal directly with Humanities; Understanding Our Organizations and Understanding our Place in Space and Time. The Self Study Team felt that they could not convincingly say all staff was aware that all the curriculum existed in one format/location. The Visiting Team found that this statement is still true.

The Visiting Team noted, with some concern, that the Grade 8 Social Studies courses in French and English address different content. Even if care is taken to ensure alignment of skills learned, which occurs only informally, the treatment of different topics restricts the possibility for interaction and reference to common resources.

Student performance on norm referenced external assessment consistently outperforms the world average. The students obviously respond well to the way that courses are delivered in the school. Furthermore, students in all divisions were respectful, well informed, and well rounded. Average results on criterion referenced assessments such as IB and AP exams in Humanities related subjects (Economics, History, Geography, ITGS, Business and Management) regularly exceed the average grade world-wide. At the secondary level, IB test results are broken down by their components and areas in need of strengthening are addressed. As IB test scores are misleading to read on their own, only the overall average is published externally for the wider community.

In terms of preparing students for lifelong learning, the active use of the 1:1 PC tablets and interactive web portals like Blackboard demonstrate a school committed to the digital age and student's future. Furthermore, the academic curiosity evidenced by the students and the large participation in Humanities related school activities commits students to learning beyond the classroom.

The Visiting Team concurs with the Self Study that ISB is exceeding the standard in this area. (Standard 6)

Overall, class sizes in Humanities are not large, and in view of the availability of technology, library holdings, and ELD support, the Visiting Team agrees that there is appropriate support and resources to implement the Humanities curriculum. The Self Study Team noted that there were varied class sizes in Middle and High School and that some Early Childhood Center classes were too large given the wide range of abilities. The observation of the Visiting Team confirmed this as well, especially given the scheduling difficulties in the upper levels due to complexity in timetabling IB and AP. Specifically noted was the larger than average class size in the World Regional Studies class, which also contained the widest diversity of learning abilities. As the diverse learning abilities in the school increases the Leadership Team should respond accordingly.

As noted elsewhere in this report, the Visiting Team found extensive professional development to support and improve the implementation of curriculum. In the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School teachers have attended Professional Development on Diversity, Differentiation, Globalizing the Curriculum, and Cultural Perspectives in Education since 2007. IB and AP trainings are available to all applicable teachers.

The Visiting Team found extensive offerings both co-curricular and extra-curricular that provide numerous opportunities for learners to interact with both the host country and in international settings. Examples of these include; the Early Childhood and Elementary Green Team, Elementary and Middle School class field trips related to Humanities curriculum (including week long theme trips), High School clubs such as MUN, IB fieldwork, local case studies, and the inclusion of local and international guest speakers. Additionally, in the Early Childhood Center, the school takes special effort to interact with Brussels and Belgium as a whole, moving in outward circles from an educational tour of the Château (a historic Belgian home) to a Christmas visit to the Grand Place in the centre of the historic city of Brussels. Additionally, at all levels, parents of learners bring their own cultural contributions by being encouraged to visit classes and talk about their experiences. The High School elective Peace and Conflict truly fulfils this standard as it also encompasses a majority of English language learners and those with learning disabilities.

The Visiting Team found ISB students to be naturally curious and the use of technology clearly provides a way to enhance their pursuit of personal interests. The goal of Humanities at ISB is to foster “respectful confidence” as students express their opinions, evaluate sources, back up opinions, thus becoming critical and reflective thinkers. The Visiting Team concurs that there is ample evidence of this throughout the Humanities classes. As a very visible representative in the core curriculum of the school’s international mission, the structure and implementation of Humanities at ISB are worthy of praise.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Humanities department, including library, interns, and office staff for fostering a climate of academic curiosity, inclusiveness, life-long learning, and respect for ideas and self
2. the Humanities department and the Educational Leadership Team for providing diverse options in the High School which enable diverse students to be challenged and to succeed
3. the Humanities department and the Educational Leadership Team for the implementation of classes in French for qualified students
4. the ISB Students for committing themselves to the mission of the school and demonstrating this through their active participation in Humanities classes and clubs
5. the Educational Leadership Team, staff, faculty, and technical support team for the availability and implementation of wide ranging uses of technology to further learners' curiosity and success
6. the Educational Leadership Team and the Humanities faculty at all levels for providing a variety of extra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities to take learning beyond the classroom
7. the Library staff for maintaining an extensive catalogue of age appropriate sources, both in print and electronically.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Educational Leadership Team ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided for horizontal and vertical curriculum coordination
2. the High School and Middle School faculty consider the elaboration of a set of specific standards for the skills needed to enter IB and AP courses
3. the Middle School Heads and Humanities department evaluate the Grade 8 Social Studies courses in French and English with a view to maintaining alignment of skills and content.

## SECTION B: CURRICULUM

### SECTION B - LANGUAGES

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | M                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | M                   |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | M                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | M                   |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | E                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | M                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | M                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | M                   |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | M                   |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | M                   |

COMMENTS:

## **SECTION B - LANGUAGES**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

ISB's powerful mission statement is well incorporated into the Languages curriculum as well as in extra-curricular, ISB+ and tutorial classes. All learners in ISB achieve an understanding of the importance of communication skills in becoming an international citizen and value the ability to communicate in more than one language. Furthermore, in an international school where English is the common language but not necessarily the student's home language, many students have the opportunity to become skilled communicator in their first language and potentially in a third language.

As a department which provides for the teaching and learning of languages other than English, the Languages Department offers a program that is schoolwide and offers French, Spanish, Dutch and Japanese, although Dutch and Japanese at present are offered only to first language/near native speakers.

French is offered daily in the Early Childhood Center starting at Kindergarden level in a well resourced specialist classroom. As French speaking students go to English Language Development classes the teacher works with proficient English speakers. In the teaching seen by the Visiting Team the methodology used reflects best practice in Early Years teaching.

From Grade 2 upwards there are French mother language classes and French foreign language classes. A varied choice of resources including impressive technology allow teachers to use a variety of styles to encourage language development and stimulate learners' curiosity. The Elementary Library provides a good section to support language learners and assist in projects. Trips to France during Elementary School also allow students to practise their French language skills in a real context.

In May preceding students' transfer from Elementary to Middle School, teachers organise placement tests for students to determine individual levels followed by a conference with the Elementary teachers to confirm the course in which each student is going to be placed the following academic year. Middle School offers 7 levels of French ranging from absolute beginners (A1) to approximately B2 level. Courses in Social Studies and Science in French are also offered in Middle School.

Week long trips for all Middle School students take place in France (Grade 7 in Brittany, Grade 8 in Normandy and grade 9 in the Loire Valley) allowing students to carry out activities and projects in French during their stay. The travel experience is further enhanced by providing separate buses for French immersion students. The elective programme in Middle School also includes Spanish.

In High School the French and Spanish courses are offered from beginner to IB level allowing recently arrived students to take these languages without any previous experience at the same time as intermediate or native speakers

can take advanced courses. The IB Theory of Knowledge course can be taken in English or French.

All students proceeding from Middle School are given placement tests whose results are discussed subsequently with Middle School teachers to confirm student levels for the following academic year.

The mother tongue and foreign language courses in Middle and High Schools are described in detail in attractive divisional brochures.

For students taking IB Diploma the school offers an A1 Mother Tongue Tutoring program, providing access to specially contracted tutors or as a self study option for those students whose first language is not offered by the school. During the Team Visit there were 50 students enrolled in IB Diploma courses in a range of languages which includes Hebrew, Polish, Russian, Korean, Spanish and Danish.

The school has a good record of success in IB Diploma and Certificate courses and the 2009 results were particularly good, surpassing those of previous years.

Japanese is offered only in High School as a pre-IB course in Grade 10 followed by IB Japanese A1 in Grades 11 and 12. One Japanese teacher is responsible for all these courses, with a total of 39 students, and in general they return to Japanese universities.

Dutch mother tongue instruction is currently offered from Grade 2 up to IB Dutch A1, although teachers have requested it extend provision to the Early Childhood Center. They also wish to offer Dutch as a foreign language. There are currently approximately 120 native Dutch speakers in the program and 3 teachers. The Dutch Ministry of Education subsidises the program and accredits the teachers. The school program is complemented by an after-school provision. The Middle and High School Library contains a well resourced Dutch fiction section which it is planned to expand in the near future. Many trips are planned to Flemish and Dutch cities and a parent organises a program of visits by Dutch authors to school.

The whole school makes extensive use of local visits to cultural events and city centre venues, such as the market and shopping centers, to enable students to practise their oral language skills. At some levels students also engage with local school-to-school exchanges to swap opportunities in English at ISB opportunities in French. No other exchange programs take place at present in spite of the close proximity of Brussels to other European countries.

As a means of articulating the curriculum vertically, all Language departments reference their programs to the Common European Framework (CEF), which provides a practical tool for setting standards to be attained at successive stages of learning and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally comparable manner. It is to be expected that a schoolwide focus on vertical articulation in future will support this approach in the Languages Department.

Blackboard and Atlas Rubicon contain the current curriculum documentation with cross curricular themes in Middle and High Schools.

The Visiting Team noticed some excellent language teaching throughout the school, engaging learners actively in the process of language acquisition skills. A variety of technology and other resources were used, going far beyond regular textbook use. Instruction was age and level appropriate and reflected the enthusiasm of the teaching staff. Most classes observed were sufficiently small to allow appropriate interaction and oral practice although it is understood that some groups are larger to the detriment of quality pupil talking time and teacher feedback time. Classrooms in general were adequate in size and well decorated with classroom language and student project work in the target language. In some cases in Middle and High School teachers share classrooms thus creating some issues of lack of resources and storage facilities.

Elementary, Middle and High School teachers meet once a year to coordinate the curriculum and Middle and High School Heads of Department also meet annually to coordinate curriculum and assessment procedures. These meetings are essential for professional dialogue and to guarantee proper curriculum development across divisions

A wide variety of professional development opportunities exist locally for French and Dutch teachers and some of the teachers have attended international conferences.

The Visiting Team was pleased to note the extensive offer of foreign language courses available to students and their families provided in the after school and ISB+ programs.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the High School for provision of mother tongue tutoring for IB students
2. the Board and the Educational Leadership Team for provision of mother tongue classes in Dutch, French and Japanese
3. The Heads of Middle and High Schools for provision of subjects taught through the medium of French
4. the Languages department for using opportunities in the host country to support language development.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Educational Leadership Team continue to support the Languages department in developing a detailed vertical articulation of the curriculum
2. the campus development Project Team and the Building and Facilities Committee review Languages department needs when planning the new High School building.



## SECTION B: CURRICULUM

### SECTION B - MATHEMATICS

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | M                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | M                   |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | E                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | M*                  |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | M                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | M*                  |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | E                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | E                   |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | E                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | M                   |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | E                   |

#### COMMENTS:

2. The Mathematics curriculum is vertically articulated within each division and there is evidence of vertical articulation from Early Childhood through Middle School. However, there was a lack of vertical articulation between the Middle and High Schools and horizontal articulation needs attention.
7. Professional development is widely available in ISB but it tends to be more associated with other departments.

## **SECTION B - MATHEMATICS**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

Mathematics is taught at every level in ISB, from Early Childhood Center to High School. In the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School the classroom teachers are responsible for all subject areas including Mathematics. Middle School offers 11 different courses with 6 faculty members and High School offers 10 different courses – including AP and IB courses – with 7 faculty members. There are Math clubs and Math teams starting from Grade 5. There are numerous opportunities where willing students can participate in extracurricular Math offerings including teams which engage in competitions.

ISB's strong statement of mission and goals is actively incorporated in the Mathematics curriculum as well as in the Mathematics extracurricular activities.

Everyone included: all students are encouraged to actively participate within the classrooms and Math clubs are open to all students, in accordance with their schools and grade levels, regardless of their ability.

Everyone challenged: the students' math levels are closely monitored so that they can be placed according to ability. All divisions except the Early Childhood Center set students into levels for the teaching of this subject. There are mid-year assessments when students are given the opportunity to move across levels based on their level of competency. Middle School has up to 9 different placement levels. In the Elementary School, leveling is also evident, especially in the co-taught classes. Furthermore, it is possible for students with higher level mathematics skills to enroll in courses offered in higher grades. In fact, there are a few cases where Elementary students can take courses at the Middle School and Middle School students can enroll in courses offered at the High School. ISB offers summer courses in a wide variety of subject areas. If, however, a student wishes to take a specific course which is not offered in ISB they can take it elsewhere and, on their return to ISB, take a placement test which may enable them to take a higher level Math class in the following year.

Everyone successful: there are numerous ways in which ISB assesses learning, including MAP, PSAT, ISA, AP, IB tests. ISB monitors the ISA results to compare the school's standing with respect to other schools.

The Self Study indicated that the Elementary School did not meet several standards pertaining to the curriculum, but this conclusion was not shared by the Visiting Team. There is ample evidence to show that the Elementary School Team Leader and Numeracy Coordinator has taken the initiative to create a link between Early Childhood Center, the Elementary School and the Middle School. He has created curriculum planning in coordination with the Early Childhood Center faculty. Elementary faculty members have visited ECC numeracy lessons to observe and learn about their 2<sup>nd</sup> year curriculum to integrate and ease the transition of students into 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The curriculum building between grades 6 and 7 (Elementary and Middle Schools) is a new

process. In general, the Visiting Team observed evidence of ongoing vertical curricular articulation across divisions and it is evident that there are very good personal relationships amongst colleagues. The climate would appear to be timely for extending these initiatives across the whole school to provide for curriculum coordination from Nursery to grade 12. In this light, the High School and Middle School Mathematics departments would benefit from regularly scheduled meetings to focus on curriculum and instruction. Most of the vertical articulation between Middle and High School is currently based on expectations of what the students have learned and assumptions of what they will be learning rather than on an articulately planned transition.

Middle School and High School, due to excellent relations amongst colleagues, share information about students' levels and competencies to aid the course level placement. Similarly, towards the end of the academic year 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students visit 3<sup>rd</sup> grade for orientation and enhanced transition. Likewise, 6<sup>th</sup> grade students go into 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes not only to improve the transition from Elementary to Middle School but also to confirm the level placement.

The Visiting Team observed that horizontal articulation of the curriculum between the Mathematics Department and other disciplines could also benefit from further attention. The Visiting Team discovered some discrepancies in the perception between the mathematics and science department members in terms of what they understood to be happening in terms of horizontal articulation. In previous years, some faculty members were part of both departments in Middle and High School and this facilitated communication links. However, this communication link has been lost and a more formal approach to articulation would enhance over coordination. In the Elementary School, a new workshop series has been launched in order to strengthen the interdisciplinary horizontal link. Since most of the Elementary faculty does not have a specialized mathematics background, the Numeracy Coordinator devotes 15 minutes of each team meeting to coaching the faculty members, especially in approaches to mental mathematics. In Elementary School there are mental mathematics boxes in every classroom and faculty members are being trained regularly in the correct usage of these materials and supplies.

The "learned curriculum" is evaluated regularly using a wide range of tools. In the Early Childhood Center video tapes of student interactions are used for assessment as well as for effective parent feedback. Report cards are concise and clear, presenting feedback both in letter form as well as clearly written explanations. In the High School, several test results – ISA, IB, SAT and AP – are used and some of these enable benchmarking with respect to other schools or to standard criterion-based assessment measures.

Technology is widely used in all schools at all levels. This has been enhanced by the introduction of the 1:1 tablet PC project, and students (especially in High School) use their tablets in solving geometry, algebra and calculus problems. IT usage is widely implemented in general. The Early Childhood Center uses numeracy projects and tools from New Zealand Maths including reference to websites. Tablet usage starts at an early age. Similarly, all grades use smart graph computer software, advanced grapher and office tools.

In conclusion, the Visiting Team observed that the Mathematics Departments in all divisions have been very proactive in the implementation of new initiatives. During the self study the Mathematics Curriculum team members concluded the some areas needed further improvement and they went on to write an action plan named the “accreditation Self Study strategic plan for improvement”. The implementation of this plan has already begun and this accounts for some more positive perceptions by the Visiting Team than in the Self Study. A good example of this can be found in the High School, where the Self Study team had come to the conclusion that there was insufficient working area for the Math department, and the lack of facilities was seen to result in lack of collaboration and access to shared materials for both students and staff. Initiatives towards improvement are already under way from the 2009-10 school year and there is a new floor dedicated to the High School Math department, enabling productive collaboration.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Mathematics Faculty in all schools for the comprehensive use of technology within the classrooms and projects
2. the Elementary School Team Leader and Numeracy Coordinator for creating the vertical curriculum study and for working on creating a clear and smooth transition between the Early Childhood, Elementary School and Middle School divisions
3. the Elementary School Head and faculty for providing and using the comprehensive mental math boxes in Elementary classrooms
4. the Mathematics Faculty in all divisions for its commitment to implementing the ISB missions and goals comprehensively.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Mathematics Department Heads interact further with each other to enhance the vertical articulation of the curriculum
2. the Mathematics and the Science Department Heads in Middle and High School interact to enhance the horizontal articulation of the curriculum
3. the Educational Leadership Team consider how to schedule opportunities for the Mathematics and Science Faculties to interact with each other to enhance coordination of the curriculum.

## SECTION B: CURRICULUM

### SECTION B: PERFORMING ARTS

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | M                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | M                   |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | M                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | M*                  |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | E                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | M                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | E                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | M*                  |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | M                   |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | M                   |

#### COMMENTS:

4. The Visiting Team observed evidence of horizontal and vertical articulation. However, the department would benefit from more planning time in order to strengthen the curriculum.
9. The "Hall of Nations" in the Elementary School basement does not have any windows and has poor ventilation. The visiting team observed approximately 45 students in the Band Room at the Metairie.

## **SECTION B: PERFORMING ARTS**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

ISB boasts a robust Performing Arts curriculum which provides a wide array of course offerings. Music is a requirement in the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School. In 5th grade students make a two year commitment to participate in Band, Strings, or Choir. Continuing music electives are offered to Middle School and High School students. Theatre Lighting & Sound and Theatre Performance elective offerings are offered to Middle School students while Theatre and Stagecraft are offered to High School students. A Dance program has just been introduced into the program this year. There are also numerous opportunities to take part in these various offerings as extra-curricular activities. In fact, an overwhelming number of students participate, contributing to the Performing Arts program as one of the cornerstones of the ISB community. This dynamic and intense performing arts program is consistent with the school's philosophy and mission.

The curriculum is comprehensively documented and the Performing Arts department has made a commitment to an assessment model which includes both formative and summative practices. These strategies for measuring student achievement provide for the modification of instruction based on results, which in turn allows for varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students. Teachers assist students in setting individual goals and provide the ongoing feedback necessary to support the achievement of those goals. Moreover, teachers engage the students in reflective process through the use of self-assessment practices. The Band, Choir, and String classes have assistants to aid teachers in instruction. The Visiting Team observed evidence of differentiated instruction in order to assist in student achievement. These educationally sound practices take into account the diverse learning styles of the learner.

The curriculum is articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. However, this is an area that could benefit from further coordinated planning time. Currently, the various performing arts facilities are spread throughout the campus and many classes occur at the same time. This makes it extremely difficult for colleagues to engage in regular and ongoing conversations relevant to curriculum articulation and lesson planning.

One of the components of the school's mission is the desire for students to become international citizens. The visiting team saw evidence that the performing arts disciplines incorporate an appreciation of cultural diversity into the classroom. Teachers incorporate world and cultural themes into lessons. Furthermore, the students have the opportunity to act as ambassadors and appreciate different cultures as they visit many different countries for competitions, festivals, and performances.

Hands-on experience, goal setting, team work, expression, thinking creatively, taking risks, and interpreting the world are just some of the many skills a performing arts curriculum helps to develop. The visiting team observed dedicated teachers who consistently engage students in the

learning process, promoting teamwork, while fostering independence. In fact, many of the faculty remarked how the students are instrumental in creating and running many of the performances on campus.

Additionally, there is a tremendous commitment to linking educational objectives to industry. A rich variety of guest artists, made available through the Visiting Artist and Scholars Program, provide Master Classes throughout the year. This practice not only supports classroom instruction, but it provides students with invaluable “real world” experiences.

The Educational Leadership Team is very receptive and accommodating of individual professional development requests. However, due to the nature of a specialized discipline, planned school professional development opportunities may not always be congruent with Performing Arts needs.

Overall, ISB is very supportive and extremely generous in providing appropriate resources to implement the curriculum. The budget provides for the purchasing of an ample supply of instructional equipment. For instance, a digital music lab has been created and the theatre was recently outfitted with a professional new sound and lighting system.

However, other venues, space limitations, and scheduling are having an effect on curriculum implementation. The visiting team observed that the “Hall of Nations” located in the basement of the Elementary School does not have any windows, was warm, damp, and the ventilation was poor. Additionally, it was reported that periodically frogs have been found inside the room. Moreover, the visiting team observed approximately 45 students in the Band Room in the Metairie and it was indicated that even larger classes occasionally use the same space. Furthermore, as a result of the misalignment of schedules between the Middle School and the High School, not all students are able to gain access to performing arts options.

Teachers establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents. This communication takes place via discussion, handbooks, letters, and at Faculty / Staff joint activities, i.e. Parent Teacher Conferences. Additionally, the Visiting Team saw evidence of strong support from parents.

The school is currently implementing a new teaching appraisal system that will assist in the continuing assessment of effective teaching and learning.

The school and the department widely implement the “Common Ground Curriculum” which is focused on the ISB mission and is heavily predicated on formative assessment. Many professional development opportunities are in the process of being implemented so that administrators, teachers, and relevant stakeholders may analyze curriculum and assessment in order to continue meaningful dialogue and enhance student achievement.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Board, the Director, and the faculty for a dynamic and robust performing arts offering which serves as a cornerstone of the ISB community
2. the Performing Arts faculty for their passion and commitment in the promotion of student achievement and appreciation of the arts
3. the Performing Arts faculty for their ability to create interactive and engaging lessons utilizing formative assessment strategies
4. the Performing Arts faculty and the members of the Visiting Artist and Scholars Program for providing students with “real world experiences” through a rich variety of guest artists.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Educational Leadership Team provide common meeting time for the Performing Arts departments and opportunities for the department as a whole to discuss curriculum and instruction
2. the Head of Performing Arts and the Middle School and High School Heads review class sizes at the Metairie
3. the Head of Performing Arts and the Head of Elementary School address the health and safety issues relating to use of the “Hall of Nations”
4. the Heads of Middle School and High School review their respective schedules with a view to creating a more unified schedule that would allow students more opportunities to access performing arts options.



## SECTION B: CURRICULUM

### SECTION B – PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | M                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | D                   |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | M                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | M*                  |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | M                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | M                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | M                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | M                   |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | M                   |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | M                   |

#### COMMENTS:

2. The school wide Health curriculum is not yet fully documented. Many more parties than the PE staff are currently involved in its delivery and coordination of the mapping process which is still a work in progress.
4. The newly appointed school-wide Head of PE has already taken concrete steps to improve curricular dialogue across divisions.

## **SECTION B – PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The ISB Physical Education curriculum is thoroughly consistent with and expressive of the school's well articulated philosophy and objectives. Students are visibly challenged and successful. The presence of two adaptive PE professionals among the staff underlines the school's commitment to inclusion. The Visiting Team observed classes at all levels where the enthusiasm of both teachers and students for the subject matter was apparent.

The Physical Education curriculum is fully documented and available on Atlas Rubicon but the school wide Health curriculum is incompletely documented. Currently the Health curriculum is delivered by classroom teachers in the Early Childhood Center and Elementary school but by the PE staff in the Middle and High Schools. A more systematic approach to delivering the Health curriculum school wide would appear prudent and is recognized by the staff as a source of concern. There is a plan in place for the department to coordinate the curriculum mapping across divisions which will avoid redundancy and smooth transitions between divisional curricula.

The PE curriculum clearly offers a wide variety of activities which positively promote the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of students. The department is justly proud of its capacity to accommodate students with special needs, both within mainstream structures and in alternative settings, which is determined in close consultation with special education faculty on a year to year basis.

While the goal of achieving better a aligned Health curriculum articulation and delivery is high on the list of department priorities, the improvement of cross division communication within the department ranks higher. Opportunities for teachers to meet across divisions are few and far between, although the teachers work in close proximity to one another. The fact that the divisional schedules are not compatible with each other is one major hurdle to encouraging dialogue. The recent appointment of a school wide Head of PE and Health (as of January 2009) is one significant and very positive step that the school has taken to address the many needs arising from insufficient vertical articulation.

Lifelong learning is a significant strand that runs throughout the full curriculum from the Early Childhood Center through High School. Enjoyment of physical activity as well as understanding the numerous benefits it affords each individual's health and well being are two examples of well documented curriculum themes that are present at every level of instruction. The department makes excellent use of the surrounding forest for various activities including hikes, cross country running, and biking. Interscholastic competitions arranged through the PE department with local and some national (French and German) schools in Brussels over the course of the school year in a variety of sports are popular activities among the upper elementary students and take advantage of the local culture.

The school is generally very supportive of professional development for teachers but this has not been consistent when it comes to providing opportunities that specifically support PE and Health instruction. The newly appointed Head of PE has surveyed his team to identify the kinds of professional development opportunities which the teachers feel would best enhance their delivery of curriculum objectives and has begun implementing in-service days where the PE staff complete a full day workshop together. This pilot opportunity involved members of a local circus school working with teachers on age appropriate activities (such as juggling and balancing) that can be applied in their respective classes. This initiative was well received by the staff and serves as a positive example of the changes that the school wide Head has already been able to make. Further support for such initiatives will certainly enhance vertical articulation while promoting best practice.

Beyond the strikingly positive and nurturing atmosphere observed in classes, the Visiting Team also witnessed teachers at all levels applying varied instructional methods that take student learning diversity into account. The Visiting Team found that the communication of expectations, both to students and parents is clear and accessible. Regular curriculum review takes place as required by school wide policy indicators of student success, as measured by innovative fitness testing and the high participation levels in extra-curricular sports and other non-competitive activities, are used to reinforce the PE programs. Over 65% of the eligible student body (5th grade through High School) participate in the athletics program which is clearly linked to a Physical Education program that successfully encourages students to seek challenge and to take pleasure in being active.

The Visiting Team found that the department is adequately resourced with equipment and facilities. However, the scheduling of the facilities does not allow for an optimum use of available space throughout the school day. The dissonance between divisional schedules limits the capacity of this school-wide department to offer course options for juniors and seniors, for example. Having some of the Middle and High School classes aligned simultaneously is a suggestion that the department indicated would significantly improve its ability to coordinate facilities use during the day. The need for substantive dialogue between divisions regarding this issue at the next levels of administration is evident and currently being addressed by the new Head of Department.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Director and School Heads for responding to department needs and concerns identified in the Self Study by appointing a new school wide Head of PE
2. the newly appointed Head of PE for actively and successfully addressing department concerns in a thoughtful and professional manner and enabling greater vertical articulation across divisions
3. the Physical Education teachers for their clear commitment to and enthusiasm for providing quality instruction to all of their students.
4. The Physical Education teachers for their outstanding efforts to promote inclusivity for all students in response to the ISB mission.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Physical Education department and other involved parties (i.e., Early Childhood and Elementary grade level team leaders) complete the school wide documentation of the Health curriculum and better align vertical articulation
2. the Heads of School, in conjunction with the Head of PE, seek long range solutions for optimizing facility use during the school day
3. the Educational Leadership Team actively support efforts to increase and improve discipline-specific professional development offerings which will benefit the whole PE teaching staff
4. the campus Project Team responsible for future building of teaching and sports facilities develop plans which reflect the expected number of students who will be served in order to ensure appropriate and wise facility use for all students.

## SECTION B: CURRICULUM

### SECTION B - SCIENCE

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | M                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | M                   |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | E                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | M*                  |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | M                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | E                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | M                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | M                   |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | M                   |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | M                   |

#### COMMENTS:

4. Curriculum articulation between the divisions is not formalised.

## **SECTION B - SCIENCE**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

Science is taught at every level in ISB and it appears to be popular and successful. In the Early Childhood Centre and Elementary School, it is integrated into the thematic curriculum. In Middle School it is taught as a compulsory subject covering a range of topics from different sciences in Grades 7 and 8, while students can choose Biology and Physics in grade 9. Biology is also available as a course taught in French. In High School the students can choose from a wide range of options. Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Ecosystems and Society are all available in the IB Diploma programme. AP Biology is also available and Environmental Sciences, Science and Society are taught leading to the ISB High School Certificate. At this level Science is also taught through an English Language Development program.

Science is taught by class teachers in the Early Childhood Centre, where lessons take place in classrooms using general resources. The Elementary School has its own designated Science Lab in the Chalet. Science Specialists teach the subject in Middle and High Schools, where there are a range of well equipped laboratories. Because of larger classes and the popularity of the science courses in High School, there appears to be a shortage of lab space and not all science lessons take place in labs. At the same time, there is usually no distinction between the teaching time scheduled for IB Higher and Standard Level courses. Many IB HL students have to meet during recess times for extra tuition or laboratory work with their IB teachers. Currently IB SL science courses are allocated too much time but HL science courses have too little time. This does not comply with IB recommendations.

Each division of the school has a different approach for the implementation of the Science curriculum. Elementary classes are engaged in science through the thematic aspects of the Common Ground Curriculum and the older students have access to the designated lab for science and robotics courses. Grades 5 and 6 learn laboratory skills and are introduced to lab reporting using a common format. In the Elementary School, at the time of the Team Visit, Grades 5 and 6 were engaged in preparing for a Science Fair based on the participation of every student working on a personal investigation. In the Middle School the courses emphasize practical skills and scientific inquiry. Almost all classes are held in labs and the approach to learning is firmly based on hands-on experience. In the High School, most of the courses are geared to external examinations but some general science courses have been created leading to the ISB High School Certificate.

Technology is integrated into the Science curriculum and the teachers are constantly searching for new ways to apply technology to their classes. The Early Childhood Centre classes use digital microscopes, owl pellet analysis and computer programs about the human body. In the Elementary School, there are simulations, robotics and software simulation programs. The Middle School also uses robotics, problem solving with ICT and computer-linked probes. From Middle School onwards, students make regular use of their Tablet computers to record notes, to access Blackboard and even as an IT

resource to analyze data when needed. They also use computer or software packages, such as Gizmo, to access simulations, especially in physics. The High School uses probes, data analysis and 3D simulations.

The school environment is also used as a resource and is in many ways a model for scientific inquiry and good practice. For instance, the campus is ecologically aware with recycling and energy saving systems. The forest location provides access to diverse ecosystems and unique opportunities for learners to be engaged on an ongoing basis with the environment, including lessons in a special area of the woods fitted out as a forest classroom. Experiential learning through composting waste, seeds and plant growth is well developed in the Early Childhood Centre. Early Childhood Centre and Elementary School have a "Green Team" to engage the young students in environmental issues. In the Middle School there is a special education activity, Orchid Mania, which is based on the cultivation of orchids that are rented to school offices on campus as part of an ongoing business education project. Field trips provide outdoor education and experiences in real world contexts. Chemical waste disposal is handled through a specialised company which guarantees minimum ecological impact. Safety features within the labs appear to be satisfactory with regards to the handling and storage of chemicals.

Since the last accreditation visit, the science teachers have developed the curriculum in written form in line with the school parameters for learning and assessment. This has undoubtedly generated numerous positive consequences. For instance, the Science Department stores its curriculum documents and resources on the school's intranet "T" Drive. Whereas Atlas Rubicon allows for curriculum mapping and storage and Blackboard provides interactivity with students and families. Most teachers would commonly use T Drive to access ideas for planning lessons and for sharing their work with other members of the department. However, curriculum development is still seen as "work in progress". This is especially the case for liaison across the sections and even within the sections. The Visiting Team sensed that the programmes were often the result of individual rather than departmental initiative.

Assessment practices appear to be in line with departmental learning objectives. In Middle School, laboratory work is equal in importance to tests and quizzes, while in High School assessments tend to be driven by external examination programs such as the IB and AP courses.

Elementary School science is derived from the integrated school-wide themes and is integrated along with other disciplines. Integration of science with other subjects is not as wide-spread in Middle School. The Visiting Team found some discrepancies of the perception between the mathematics and science department members in terms of what they understand to be happening in terms of horizontal articulation. Some faculty members feel that there is horizontal articulation at some level, whereas yet others feel that the articulation needs formalization. In High School, science is taught mainly as a stand-alone subject.

Student access to the curriculum, particularly as it concerns language, is important at ISB. As an example, due to the demographic change of the student population, Middle School teachers are piloting a new project, English for Academic Purposes, which provides a link between science teachers and English Language Development teachers to allow all English language learners taking science a greater access to the Middle School curriculum. Extensive professional development is under way for this project, most of it being generated in the school itself. This program will support teachers in assisting students approach the discipline, though their English language skills need further development. For those students whose language abilities in French are highly developed, or who have French as a mother tongue, Biology and Science in Grades 7 and 8 can be followed in that language.

Regional resources of the host country are utilized within the curriculum for most divisions. These activities include local field trips, museum and zoo visits, etc. The Visiting Team was informed that the time constraints in teaching the IB Science program allow for fewer opportunities for extra curricular activities in High School.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Science Department across the whole school for its incorporation of hands-on scientific technology
2. the Elementary School 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers for developing a shared format on lab reports
3. the Middle School Science and English Language Development teachers for their collaborative efforts to support English in science classes
4. the Middle School Science Department for the emphasis on practical work and laboratory experience
5. the Early Childhood Centre faculty for the innovative project on composting waste.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Head of High School consider how to address the imbalance in time dedicated to IB Higher and Standard Level courses
2. the Educational Leadership Team and Heads of Science ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided for the horizontal and vertical curriculum coordination
3. the Campus Planning Team ensure that sufficient space is available in the new High School to enable all science lessons to be held in laboratories.



## SECTION B: CURRICULUM

### SECTION B - TECHNOLOGY

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | M                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | M                   |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | M                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | D                   |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | E                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | E                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | M                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | E                   |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | D                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | D                   |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | M                   |

#### COMMENTS:

- 4. Technology is fully integrated into the curriculum. However, vertical and horizontal articulation among divisions and disciplines is not documented.
- 11. It is envisaged that technology assessment standards will be implemented in order to measure student achievement.
- 13. It is envisaged that learning will be gauged through assessment standards in order to revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.

## **SECTION B - TECHNOLOGY**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

ISB provides a technology-rich learning environment. Technology is used as a tool for learning, rather than a subject in itself. It is fully integrated into the curriculum and is used extensively by Learning Support and by Student Support Services. Extra-curricular activities and electives all make use of technology.

Not only is technology a powerful learning tool but technology skills are key to preparing each ISB student for the future and in this way the curriculum aims to develop ISB students into life-long technology users and learners.

Every ISB student, from Grades 3 - 6 has access to a ' Tablet PC'. These student Tablets reside in the classroom for daily use and are charged overnight. Personal "tablets" are provided to Grades 7 - 12 students for use in school and at home. All students are provided with an orientation session on the use of their Tablet PC. The "tablets" are pre-loaded with specialised software for students' use so they can access resources. Furthermore, a wireless network is accessible throughout the campus. In keeping with the Mission, there is a 1:1 ratio between students/faculty and Tablet PC. These laptops provide extra support for learners where needed and to stretch and challenge individuals when this is appropriate, in keeping with the mission statement of the school.

All four divisions of school are deeply committed to the use of technology. Students can email their teachers at any time for help, and they can also receive and send homework in digital form. Students can access curriculum materials in or out of class-time. The Visiting Team observed students using "Voice Thread" technology which allowed them to participate on discussion boards. In the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School the Visiting Team observed students using technology as part of their regular lessons. In Middle School the students are required to develop a set of minimum technological competencies ( ie. the ability to use Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint) in order to graduate from Middle School in grade 9. Furthermore, plans are in progress to assess students' technological abilities at different grade levels. All of this advanced technological provision is intrinsic to the learning experience of ISB students. However, given the wide cross curricular implications of IT learning, the documentation of curriculum is complex and incomplete. There is a fascinating opportunity at ISB to incorporate skills from different areas of the curriculum into the IT learning goals and although this generally does produce positive results in practice the articulation of specific IT learning could benefit from greater articulation between departments. Because of the incomplete documentation and the interdisciplinary nature of IT across the school, it does not always appear to be clear who is responsible for evaluating technology as a distinct learning area. Although there is a more formal evaluation of student skills at the end of Middle School, evaluation is something that the school still sees as "work in progress": consequently it cannot be said that the school utilizes feedback from evaluations as a factor in reviewing program delivery.

ISB has incorporated "Blackboard" to enhance curriculum, learning and communication between teachers, students and families. Blackboard is a powerful web-based learning platform which complements face-to-face teaching which occurs in lessons within the classroom.

The faculty make use of "Powerschool" for a variety of needs (ie. registration etc.) and "Atlas Rubicon" for mapping and storing the core curriculum.

The 'high tech' environment at ISB is supported by an extremely effective IT Support Team who ensures a very reliable system. The network functions efficiently and not a single hardware or software problem was observed by the Visiting Team during its week in school.

Instructional Support is provided by a team of Divisional IT Facilitators, recently headed up by a School-wide Technology Facilitator, who is also responsible for further development of technology and its use at ISB.

There is individual technology support available for faculty at any time and there is a "Tech Play Group" which meets regularly in order to improve on personal technological skills.

With such facilities, there comes the need for responsible and ethical use. All students and parents are required to sign up to the school's "Acceptable Use Policy".

In summary, ISB aims to provide its students and teachers with world-class learning facilities, supported by cutting-edge technology in a wirelessly networked environment. The Visiting Team recognises that the International School of Brussels is right to be proud of its Technology-rich environment.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Board, the Director and the School-wide Technology Facilitator for their commitment to ensuring students have wide access to technology
2. the Board for supporting the 1:1 Tablet program at ISB
3. the Educational Learning Team (ELT) for providing excellent on-going professional development to its faculty and staff.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the School-wide Technology Facilitator continue planning to implement technology standards throughout the curriculum in order to better assess student achievement
2. the Educational Leadership Team consider how to provide time for faculty members to engage in dialogue about curriculum articulation.

## SECTION B: CURRICULUM

### SECTION B – VISUAL ARTS

|     |  | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | The curriculum, in its content, design, implementation, assessment and review, shall reflect the school's philosophy, objectives and policies.         | M                   |
| 2.  | The curriculum shall be comprehensively documented.  | M                   |
| 3.  | Curriculum design shall provide for the varied developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs of students.                              | M                   |
| 4.  | The curriculum shall be articulated vertically and horizontally throughout the school to ensure continuity within and among divisions and disciplines. | M*                  |
| 5.  | The curriculum shall utilise the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students.   | M                   |
| 6.  | The curriculum shall develop those skills and abilities which will prepare students for lifelong learning.   | M                   |
| 7.  | The school shall provide ongoing professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum.   | E                   |
| 8.  | The teaching staff shall implement the curriculum through a range of approaches and teaching strategies that recognise diverse learning styles.        | E                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide appropriate support and resources to implement the curriculum.  | M                   |
| 10. | Teachers shall establish and communicate clear expectations to students and parents.   | M                   |
| 11. | The school shall regularly assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning.  | M                   |
| 12. | Curriculum revisions shall be made on a regular basis after consideration of current educational thinking and pedagogy.                                | M                   |
| 13. | Administrators and teachers shall use the results of student assessment to evaluate and revise curriculum and methodology on a continuing basis.       | M                   |
| 14. | The school shall record, analyse and report to appropriate members of the school community the results of school and student performance.              | M                   |

#### COMMENTS:

4. The written curriculum is not yet articulated vertically across the divisions.

## **SECTION B – VISUAL ARTS**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

A well qualified faculty teaches Visual Arts at ISB. Two teachers are employed in the HS and one in each of the other three divisions of the school, enabling whole class, small group and individual learning opportunities. There is an additional, part time assistant in the HS. The school has recently appointed a whole school Head of Visual Arts, who was initially employed in the HS. There is currently no comprehensive, written job description for this position. An established mentoring program is in place to support new members of staff but this does not always seem to be appropriate for specialist teachers.

Paraprofessional staff support the art teacher in the Nursery, Pre-school and Kindergarten grades. In the Elementary School, there is one art teacher (with no assistants) for up to 450 students.

Visual Art is taught as a required subject in the Early Childhood Center and the Elementary School and as an elective subject in the Middle and High Schools. Grade 9 students are required to take an Arts credit, either in Visual Arts, Performing Arts or Music. Not all students are able to benefit from the program as there are not enough electives offered to cater for the number of students.

Curriculum documents were most recently updated in March 2009 and are currently being revised with a continuing emphasis on the area of assessment. There is evidence of written vertical curriculum articulation. However, more time is needed for teachers to engage in meaningful discussions to ensure that this is actively being put into practice. The newly appointed Head of Visual Arts holds monthly meetings with the Visual Arts Team to continue to update the existing curriculum and to improve cross-curricular divisional goals and links. The Visual Arts Team recognises the need for an increase in multi-disciplinary activities at all levels.

The Visiting Team was made aware that although an art project was taking place between the Middle and High School students, this is currently on an ad hoc basis. It would appear that clearer structures and accountability needs to be in place to ensure that this positive articulation becomes embedded in the school culture.

The Visiting Team perceived insufficiency of alignment between the written curriculum and classroom practice, but it also recognizes that there is evidence of much improvement since the appointment of a Head of Visual Arts. The school has provided adequate support for this new role and the major target for the future is to align the Visual Arts curriculum with the school's vision and to see this more embedded in classroom practice. Staff and parents report huge changes and a new vitality in the Visual Arts department.

In the Early Childhood Center, units of enquiry are often linked to classroom learning. Children use a wide range of art materials to express thoughts and

ideas. Art history is introduced through the works of well known artists. The Early Childhood Center art teacher teaches the Nursery and Pre Kindergarten classes in their own rooms. Kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2 are taught in the art Art Atelier, where the Visiting Team observed a range of students' work of an exciting and diverse nature in a welcoming and inspiring environment. Each Grade level has an additional art lesson on a rotating basis. The weekly lesson is sometimes extended when the art teacher works with the class teacher on specific projects. The teaching practice of art in the Early Childhood Center actively supports the school's mission and provides for the needs of the whole child.

Cross curricular links are made, wherever possible in the Elementary and Middle School divisions. In the Elementary School the focus is on helping students understand themselves as artists, on personal expression, creativity and critical thinking. Students are progressively introduced to computer graphics programs. Regular connections are made to art history and art in different cultures. They study works of art and explore their reactions to them. Individual sketchbooks are used with older children to document progress.

The aim of the Middle School Visual Arts program is to develop appreciation for the Visual Arts as well as a sense of aesthetics. Students are challenged through a series of structured and varied assignments. Visual Arts is also offered in French in the Middle School.

Studio art, graphic design and three dimensional Design and Sculpture are offered as electives in the High School. The course entitled "Exploring the Arts" is not offered this year due to lack of interest. Students can also study for the IB in Visual Art. There are no prerequisites for entrance to the courses offered but it is stated that one year Visual Art classes would enhance skills and knowledge of students wishing to take the IB.

There are well resourced, designated art rooms in all divisions of the school. There is a well equipped, purpose built art studio in the Early Childhood Center, including a kiln. The Elementary School has an art studio with access to a computer lab and 10 computers. Given the enrolment level in this division, the resources would seem to be stretched at the present time in light of the ISB mission to respond to individual learning needs. Inevitably, a single Elementary art teacher finds it hard to integrate project based lessons or to work with smaller groups. The Visiting Team observed inadequate storage facilities in the Elementary School. The Middle School has a purpose built art studio and the High School uses two, fully equipped art studios with access to computers. There appear to be no prescribed safety routines for potentially hazardous art materials.

Both the Middle/High School and Early Childhood/Elementary libraries offer a wide selection of art books, periodicals and DVD's.

Concern was expressed in the Self Study over the structure of the High School building and its suitability for teaching a ceramics course. Indeed, the floor cannot support the weight of recently purchased equipment. The Head of Visual Arts was allowed a considerable amount of money for establishing

this course and most of the equipment is currently in storage. There are, however, plans to resolve this in the projected new High School building.

There is evidence to show that the ISB Visual Arts utilises the culture of the host country and the diversity of the school community, including visits from Belgian animators. In the Early Childhood Center, the art teacher arranges museum visits for K, Grade 1 and Grade 2 to study nature, famous Belgian artists and to explore emotions through art. Various activities utilize the diversity of staff, including pottery, service projects and designing recycled fashion garments for a charity show. The Middle School takes advantage of opportunities in Belgium to follow art trends and arranges trips to other countries. An annual art exhibition is organised and art is exhibited around the campus. The standard of art and display is very high.

The Visiting Arts and Scholars program at ISB welcomes a diverse range of artists and scholars to the campus each year, from local community links to world class performers. A committee comprising teachers, staff and parents chaired by the Head of Performing Arts ensures a program, which reflects the school's ideals and complements the curriculum. The ISB Family Association has an Arts Council, whose primary function is to support and promote arts within ISB and its community. The Council works closely with the Visual and Performing Arts faculties and helps to raise funds to finance the Visiting Artists and Scholars Program.

There are excellent professional development opportunities at ISB, both in-house and external. In addition, a life-long Learning Centre offers a rich variety of activities to anyone wishing to refresh skills or learn new ones.

Assessment is both formative and summative. Teachers analyze student performance through a variety of assessment methods. These include verbal feed-back, portfolios and summative rubrics, which address skills and attitudes. Older students prepare written self assessments and are involved in group reflection, and they are tested for knowledge and skill acquisition, in addition to summative feed-back through rubrics and formative verbal responses.

The school provides regular information on student achievement to parents and has effective methods of reporting on student performance.

ISB has a diverse after school extra curricular program, which provides opportunities for personal development for students by introducing them to different interests and experiences in a safe, non-competitive environment. Arts and Crafts and Ceramics workshops are included in the program in addition to a course where students work towards a specific project and are able to gain CAS creativity learning experience.



## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Educational Leadership Team for appointing a new Head of Visual Arts
2. the Educational Leadership Team for providing excellent professional development opportunities
3. the Family Association for supporting and funding the Visiting Artists and Scholars program.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Educational Leadership Team consider how to balance appropriate staffing needs in the art department
2. the Educational Leadership Team review the provision of computers allocated to the art department in the Elementary School
3. the Head of Visual Arts work closely with the Visual Arts Team and the Curriculum Director to develop a fully cohesive vertical Visual Arts curriculum
4. the Educational Leadership Team ensure that a comprehensive job description is provided for the Head of Visual Arts.

## SECTION C: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

|    |   | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | The governing body shall be so constituted, with regard to membership and organisation, as to provide the school with sound direction, continuity and effective support.  | E                   |
| 2. | There shall be a co-operative and effective working relationship between the governing body and the school head.  | E                   |
| 3. | The school head, although accountable to a higher authority, shall be the responsible leader of the school.   | E                   |
| 4. | The school shall have educational and financial plans for the short, medium and long term, with strategies for accomplishing the school's goals and for assessing the effectiveness of the actions taken.             | M*                  |
| 5. | The school shall observe legal and ethical principles in all its dealings with the school community.  | M                   |
| 6. | The governing body shall have clearly formulated policies set out in a policy manual to give consistency and order to its operations, and it shall ensure that these policies are understood by the school community. | M                   |
| 7. | The financial resources of the school shall be capable of sustaining a sound educational programme, consistent with its stated philosophy and objectives, and of providing for the long-term stability of the school. | M                   |
| 8. | The management of the school's finances shall be, at all times, in accordance with the standards which operate in the host country and shall be consistent with best practice in international schools.               | M                   |
| 9. | Parents or others enrolling students shall be informed in advance of the precise nature and scope of the financial obligations and be given an estimate of the total expenses.  | M                   |

### COMMENTS:

4. The asterisk in this case identifies a strength that potentially exceeds the "M" rating – this is the development of the Data Dashboard as a management information tool to monitor key performance indicators in almost real time. Since this has not yet been fully implemented the M rating has been maintained.

## **SECTION C: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The International School of Brussels is an independent day school founded in 1951 and offering an international education to students aged 2 to 18 years. It was established as a non profit association under Belgian law and it is governed by a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees of approximately 20 parents and 3 ex-officio non-voting members. Board members serve a maximum of three terms of three years each. The Director, the President of the Family Association, and the Chair of the Works Council are non-voting members of the Board. There are several honorary Trustees recognised for their commitment to the school or their areas of special expertise.

Board members receive a comprehensive induction briefing, carry out an annual self evaluation and have an annual retreat to analyze and establish school objectives and targets. The Board Chair and Vice Chair carry out the appraisal of the Director and agree his annual goals. The relationship between the Director and the Board is very positive and the Board approves policy and strategic decisions only after full consideration of the Director's recommendations. Although ISB has the typical high family turnover of many international schools, the governance structure and the excellent working relationship between the Director and the Board have allowed for a very stable and productive tenure.

The Board has three active committees which deal with Finance, Buildings and Grounds, and Board Membership, the latter being responsible for identifying and nominating new Board members. Board Committees meet regularly with school leadership to study and prepare reports on projects and issues which will be voted at Board meetings.

Board meetings are held regularly and are usually attended by a quorum of Board members and by all Heads of Division and Directors, although part of the meetings may be for the Executive Committee only. In response to accreditation requirements the Board published abridged minutes in April, May and June 2009. The Chairman has also recently introduced a letter to the ISB community with reference to Board deliberations and decisions. The Board regularly reviews and updates the School policy manual.

School fees are invoiced annually in advance and as a result of observations made by the Self Study team the Board approved fee rises for 2009/2010 one month earlier than usual. The fee information provided to parents in the admissions brochures and website is clear and accurate. Extra payments for such items as after school activities, learning support programs, athletic team travel costs and school lunches are detailed and billed separately.

The Visiting Team found ample evidence to show that the School Director is perceived by the whole community as a strong leader with responsibility for all areas of the school's operation. The Director is clearly identified as the person with the vision to drive forward the development of the mission statement as well as the Common Ground Curriculum and the campus development program. He is supported by two strong teams called the

Organizational Leadership Team (OLT) and the Educational Leadership Team (ELT). The Director has been instrumental in increasing these teams over the past few years to allow the school to have access to greater curriculum and business expertise. The teams meet regularly with the Director, have clear agendas and action plans related to the school's educational and financial plans. Members of the OLT and ELT are evaluated by the Director who agrees their annual objectives based on strategic school-wide and team goals. The Director delegates responsibility for the day to day operations to these teams.

Strong leadership is a characteristic of the school that is widely recognized as a strength of ISB and the close cohesion between the Board, the Director and the Leadership Teams is a good example of this. The vision that these teams develop is respected by ample segments of the community and a sense of trust in the competence and capability of its leaders was evident. However, it is also evident that this model of leadership can sometimes privilege the wisdom of the decision itself over the process by which the decision is reached. Consultation with stakeholders is not an established practice and this has extended to matters of educational policy in the past, which appears to be somewhat in contrast with the ISB mission to seek and respect the perspectives of its learners. The Visiting Team suggests that attention could be given to this in order to extent even more the sense of commonality and ownership of this very special educational project.

The Curriculum Director is a recently created post set up to assist the Director and Heads of Division in implementing the Common Ground Curriculum and leading a full Professional Development program to ensure the curriculum is fully embedded in school practice.

The Head of Human Resources has brought greater professionalism in the recruitment, retention, appraisal and compensation of Faculty and staff.

The Director of External Relations, over the past 5 years, has successfully led a rebranding of the school which has led to increased awareness and confidence among families and employees. An extensive marketing and communications plan is also under way and this makes widespread reference to the ISB mission statement. Students play an active part in the plan, and are trained formally to work with the Admissions and the Communications Departments in the promotion of the school to prospective parents and current families. External Relations has also developed a powerful management information tool known as Data Dashboard using key performance indicators, project information updates, financial and admissions data as well as academic results and opinion surveys to provide the Board and management teams with information for discussion and decision-making purposes.

The Director of Finance has provided the school with greater confidence in the financial management and stability of the school following the deficit in 2007. The Visiting Team looked at the reasons for this deficit in some depth and is satisfied that the school took appropriate action and learned valuable lessons which will make it harder for similar surprises to emerge in future. Financial audits are carried out annually in accordance with Belgian law and

the latest audit had no qualifications. The Visiting Team found evidence across all school divisions and departments of well planned budget setting related to school-wide goals and accompanied by strict budget monitoring and control. It also found evidence of formal and informal training by the Director of Finance of Division Heads and the Works Council in financial planning and risk management. A new Procurement Manager has recently joined the Finance Department and succeeded in making substantial savings in the procurement of school resources.

The Visiting Team was able to review the document entitled “*The Next Five Years - Overview of Vision and Major Plans*”, which details the major curriculum and campus developments. The 5-year plan is supported by a 10-year financial plan, balance sheet and cash flow statement. Various short term scenarios to protect school finances in the event of a forecast drop in numbers as a result of the economic downturn have likewise been produced.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. The Board for its commitment to good governance and its application of this principle over many years
2. the Board for its commitment to supporting the Director and his teams in the development of the school mission statement, the new curriculum and campus development plans
3. the School Director for leading the whole school community rigorously and passionately towards achieving the school vision
4. the Director of Finance for developing a spirit of trust as a result of his transparent ethical procedures
5. the Director of External Relations for the development of the Data Dashboard as a school management tool for decision making
6. the Educational and Organizational Leadership Teams for their commitment to ensuring that a consistent mission and vision permeates the different divisions and departments of the school
7. the School Board for approving the appointment of the Directors of Curriculum, Human Resources, Finance, and External Relations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Director review procedures to ensure appropriate representation of stakeholders in consultation to develop educational and financial plans
2. the Board continue to review and improve its procedures for publicising decisions and deliberations for the school community.

## SECTION D: STAFF

|    |   | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | The school shall have management, teaching and support staff, sufficient in numbers and with the qualifications and competencies to carry out satisfactorily the school's programmes, services and activities.  | M                   |
| 2. | The school head shall ensure that there is a co-operative working relationship with all staff to facilitate proper utilisation of their abilities.  | M                   |
| 3. | Staff shall act professionally in carrying out all their duties and responsibilities.   | E                   |
| 4. | There shall be written and available personnel policies and practices for all staff.  | D                   |
| 5. | All staff shall be employed under written contracts which state the principal terms of agreement between members of staff and the governing body, and which provide for adequate salaries, and fringe benefits. | M                   |
| 6. | There shall be a clearly defined and effective system of appraisal of staff, based on pre-determined and explicit criteria.   | M*                  |
| 7. | The school shall have a programme of professional development for staff related to appraisal procedures and other priorities identified by the school.  | E                   |

### COMMENTS:

4. There is a Faculty and Staff Handbook but it has not been updated on a regular basis and does not refer to procedures that staff may take in case of grievences.
6. The appraisal system has been under review for many years and has been indicated as an area for attention in previous accreditation visits: there is now a new appraisal system in place but it has yet to be put into practice.

## **SECTION D: STAFF**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

In the Self Study Report on this section the Visiting Team noted a disproportionate representation of the school as a whole. Of the eleven committee members, four were from the Human Resources (HR) Department, including two members in management positions. The Director of Human Resources acted as Chair of the Committee, which also included the HR Operations Manager; the Communications Manager; the Development and Admissions Coordinators; the School Director's Personal Assistant, a school receptionist; a library assistant and one faculty member. In light of the school's inclusive mission this may have been a missed opportunity to involve a wider range of stakeholders in the review process.

The ISB staff come from a wide range of backgrounds. In the 315 employees (276.25 full time equivalent), there are over twenty nationalities represented, with 67% originating from English-speaking countries, 20% from Belgium and the remaining 12% from diverse nationalities and language backgrounds. Faculty, who constitute the largest percentage of staff with 194 total members (181.72 full time equivalent), are mainly recruited at international recruitment fairs while some local hires are attained through the school's website or the local press. The total number of faculty members permits the ISB to sustain an average teacher to student ratio of 8.17:1 at the present time, with the projected ideal ratio for budgeting and future planning set as 8.5:1. The faculty and staff appear to be well qualified for their work with the possible exception of the English Language Development department in which not all members are certified to teach ESL. However, in acknowledging this need, the school has begun to train staff in this area.

Prior to the start of the academic year, the school provides a structured three-week orientation for new faculty members that is well organized and purposeful. The scope and breadth of activities encompass a wide range of events and workshops that are geared to give newcomers a sense of preparedness to meet the challenges of their new environment and professional responsibilities. Following the orientation program, and in keeping with its mission of inclusion, challenge and success, the school provides two distinct mentoring programs that are tailored to meet the needs of the individual teacher. Novice teachers to the profession take part in year-long mentoring supported by a trained mentor-teacher while an experienced teacher new to ISB has the support of a divisional mentor for the first semester.

There are two distinct contracts at ISB. The "blue collar" contract, for building and grounds staff, and the "white collar" contract. Both contracts adhere to Belgian labor laws and are defined by the different work situations and statues of the concerned staff member. The principal difference between each contract lies within the notice period for termination and holiday pay calculations. Initially, faculty receive two successive one-year employment contracts that may then be followed by a permanent contract from the third year. The contracts clearly specify salary and benefits. Salaries are indexed annually for cost of living adjustment according to Belgian legislation, and

they are reviewed every three years. The school also compares ISB salaries against peer international schools so as to maintain its goal of being a 70th percentile school. In order to maintain a competitive edge, and bearing in mind the tax structure in Belgium, the employment package includes a comprehensive benefits scheme, including a pension plan, health insurance and supplementary medical cover.

The Visiting Team noted that the personnel records, which include original, signed contracts, as required by Belgian law, are not housed in a fire-proof structure. This recommendation was made in June 2005 by the accrediting agency in response to its five year report.

Staff can access the day-to-day policies and guidelines which help run the school through ISB's Faculty and Staff Handbook. However, the Handbook has not been updated and this has led to confusion and misinterpretation among some staff members. The Self Study Committee acknowledged that this communication gap has, in turn, led some staff to feel that they have been unfairly treated, especially in terms of employment policies and benefits. In addition to the Faculty and Staff Handbook, employees can obtain specific information concerning their legal labor rights through the Reglement de Travail or Work Regulations, available in English, French and Dutch. These regulations have, as an example, procedures that an employee may take in case of a grievance concerning harassment; however, the Visiting Team did not find any documentation in the school's information bank that guide on procedures for other forms of grievances.

There are three different appraisal instruments used for staff and they are used in accordance with the position and contract held. Every staff member is knowledgeable of the appraisal that will be used to gauge his/her work. Blue-collar workers, for example, are appraised against a staff "behavioral appraisal" that determines attitude of the employee and disposition to work. The administrative staff is appraised using an individual protocol where objectives are set, a self-evaluation conducted and comments from both the staff member and line-manager added. This protocol has been in effect for two years. Under a newly introduced protocol, the faculty and leadership will be appraised against the new Learning, Teaching and Leading (LTL) protocol devised especially at ISB. The LTL instrument replaces an older format that appears to have been used inconsistently (as recorded in recommendations by previous accreditation visitors) and it sets out to evaluate the faculty member against ten fundamental school-wide standards. This new system has been approved by staff with the agreement that it would be in "draft" form during the current academic year in order to allow for changes to be made, if needed. It is cyclical in nature, based on a 360-degree format, allowing for feedback from students, parents, peers and management. Given its recent introduction, the LTL appraisal has yet to be utilized. Both the behavioral appraisal and the individual protocol are employed yearly while the LTL will follow the previous procedure of formally appraising new members of faculty yearly during the first two years of employment and thereafter following a three-year cycle. Informal observations of faculty also take place between formal appraisal periods. All three appraisal instruments provide staff with an appeals process should there be disagreement with the observations or comments. The Human Resources Director takes on the role of arbiter, or, in



the case of an HR employee, the staff member can ask the school Finance Director to act as arbiter.

All appraisals are linked to professional development, the availability of which is rich and diverse. Professional development actually stems from multiple avenues at ISB. For example, it may originate from management in order to meet a new school initiative. It may also be initiated by a teacher who has identified an area within his/her practice needing strengthening and requiring financial assistance from the school. In this case, the faculty member makes a formal request to his/her line-manager for approval. Similarly, faculty may identify to management the desire to pursue a higher or additional degree within the field of education. If approved, the school will take on full payment obligations while freezing the faculty member's salary step until the loan is paid off. Once paid, the salary will be adjusted to the step the faculty member would otherwise be on. Finally, staff members can participate in an array of workshops or courses offered at the school's International Community Center or in the summer Institutes. Clearly, the Professional Learning Programme at ISB is one source by which the school makes its mission a living statement.

Staff representation in formal decision-making processes has been modified in the 2008-2009 academic year and is now fully in line with Belgian legislation. This has led to the introduction of a Works Council format to replace the long-standing Faculty and Staff Association (FASA). The Council consists of six elected staff members (five representing faculty and one representing blue collar workers) and six appointed members from management including the school Director. The role of the elected members is to represent staff in consultation with management on issues related to financial and labor concerns. The Council, to date, has worked within the consensus culture of the school with the elected representatives making "real contribution towards policies" on behalf of the staff.

For matters relating to social and well-being concerns the staff is represented by an elected delegation to The Health and Safety Committee. This body parallels the Works Council in composition and procedural framework with a focus on handling operational matters rather than strategic concerns.

Finally, the Visiting Team has observed that staff, throughout the entire school and regardless of position held, exemplify ISB's mission. Their passion, dedication and affection to their school and students is highly commendable.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Educational Leadership Team for acknowledging the need to train mainstream faculty who are teaching in the English Language Development department
2. the Human Resources Department and the Educational Leadership Team for the well structured orientation program
3. the Human Resources Department and mentors for the individualized mentoring programs reflecting the school's mission
4. the Board for providing staff with a comprehensive benefits package and benchmarking conditions against peer international schools
5. the Works Council for adopting the "Learning, Teaching and Leading at ISB" appraisal instrument while allowing room for adjustments during its initial implementation
6. the Board and Educational Leadership Team for the richness of the Professional Learning Programme and for supporting staff when they choose to select their own professional growth program
7. the Works Council for sustaining the consensus culture during their deliberations
8. the Faculty and Staff for their exceptional performance of duties and responsibilities with regard to the school's mission and for their strong commitment to students and school.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that

1. the Director and Educational Leadership Team consider how to include wider representation of stakeholders in future reviews and consultative processes
2. the Educational Leadership Team maintain its commitment to have all staff working with English language learners obtain the necessary training to meet the needs of the students
3. the Human Resources Department find a way of safeguarding personnel records against fire in keeping with an earlier recommendation from the accrediting agency (MSA)
4. the Human Resources Department and Works Council review and update the Staff and Faculty Handbook
5. the Human Resources Department and Works Council make available to staff, through Staff and Faculty Handbook, procedures necessary for all forms of grievances
6. the Educational Leadership Team ensure that the "Learning, Teaching and Leading at ISB" appraisal be fully implemented and the Works Council aim to finalize the "draft" version within its projected timeline.

## SECTION E: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

|     |   | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|-----|---|---------------------|
| 1.  | There shall be effective procedures for identifying the learning needs of students, both at admission and thereafter.   | E                   |
| 2.  | If children with learning or other disabilities or remedial needs are admitted, the school shall provide specific curricula and programmes to meet those needs.   | E                   |
| 3.  | The school shall have the trained special needs personnel needed to serve students with identified learning disabilities.   | E                   |
| 4.  | There shall be effective practices to address the needs of students of exceptionally high ability, achievement, and/or talent.  | M*                  |
| 5.  | If students whose native or first language is not English (and whose English is not sufficiently developed to follow the full school curriculum) are admitted, the school shall provide English Language Support ELS.                     | M                   |
| 6.  | The school shall provide appropriate guidance services, including academic and personal counselling as well as career/tertiary education advice for secondary students.   | E                   |
| 7.  | The school shall work cooperatively with parents and keep them informed of the academic and social development and progress of their children.  | E                   |
| 8.  | The school shall provide opportunities for students to take all appropriate tests, including those for admission to institutions of higher education, and shall assist parents and students in processing required application materials. | E                   |
| 9.  | The school shall provide adequate health care, and shall insure provisions for emergencies on-site and at school functions which take place away from the school premises.  | M                   |
| 10. | The school shall have a health policy which includes collection of medical information for all staff and students, immunisation against common diseases and the maintenance of comprehensive records.                                     | M                   |

### COMMENTS:

- The Learning Support Department has indicated, with sufficient documentation, that a pilot study is currently in place along with data collection and discussion of procedures and policy development. The Gifted and Talented Program is currently slated for full implementation during Fall 2010. The Visiting Team consequently assessed this rating to be a "M" instead of a "D" due to the recognition and diligent efforts of ISB's Learning Support department and Educational Leadership Team.

## **SECTION E: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The International School of Brussels' mission statement commits the school to "*Everyone included, challenged and successful*". The Visiting Team found that this mission is followed and supported by the efforts of the Learning Support (LS), English Language Development (ELD), Counseling, and Health Center departments to integrate students into the school's ethos.

ISB's admission of students with mild to moderate to severe learning needs sets the school apart from many other international schools. The response provided by ISB is characterized by the LS Department's extensive support provision and its focus on inclusive education through three tiers of support. Its guiding principles at all times are to support students' needs, to work with their families, to take a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach, to use students' strengths to help them overcome their weaknesses, and to apply differentiated instruction to allow the curriculum to be available and accessible to all pupils.

The LS Team, comprised of 23 faculty and staff members, is overseen by the Head of Learning Support who also serves as a member of the school's Educational Leadership Team. In addition to learning support and special education teachers, the LS department also includes two Speech and Language Therapists, a School Psychologist (a position recently introduced at ISB) and two outsourced Occupational Therapists who travel to the school to work with select students three days each week. Support is delivered to roughly 15% of the school's student population in all four school divisions and varies from mild, moderate, and intensive. It is documented onto individually-tailored Individual Learning Plans. A clear, concise, and documented referral system is in place for teachers, staff, specialists, and parents. Students may also refer themselves for LS considerations, once they reach the secondary schooling level.

Mild LS consists of both in-class and pull-out provisions in mathematics and literacy, consultative services with LS personnel, assistive technology, and a formal, written accommodations plan communicated to teachers. Moderate support comprises in-class co-teaching, study skills support, remedial instruction, assistive technology, social skills development, and curriculum modification (when necessary). The last level of assistance is intensive support for children with cognitive and developmental disabilities. Intensive support emphasizes vocational and life-skills, in addition to social skills, taught through three special education classes, one each for the Elementary School, Middle School and High School divisions. These special education classes each have at least one assistant providing support to the special education teacher and students. Students enrolled in these special education classes are levied a supplemental charge on top of the school's tuition. This charge includes Speech and Language Therapy services, but Occupational Therapy and School Psychology diagnostic-assessment services are invoiced separately from the supplemental and tuition charges. The Visiting Team observed that financial aid is explored as an option to families unable to

afford these programs, along with information on obtaining educational grants. Students not in the special education program may obtain Speech and Language Therapy services for an additional charge.

The Visiting Team duly considered that while a Gifted and Talented program for students with advanced achievement abilities was not fully in place at the time of the Visit, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the LS department recognizes the need and has begun piloting a program in some divisions of the school. Eight faculty and administration members are working on the implementation of this program, and they will attend a professional development session titled, "Gifted Education and Higher Order Thinking: Improving Learning Outcomes for Every Student" in January 2010. Those who attend will become trainers to other ISB faculty and staff. Ongoing training will commence during Summer 2010. Furthermore, the LS department plans on conducting focus group sessions with parents in Winter 2009 to discuss the program and to gather feedback. It expects to have a Gifted and Talented program available for full implementation in Fall 2010.

English language instruction to students whose mother tongue is not English is provided at ISB through the English Language Development (ELD) department. The ELD department also provides support to native English speakers in the Early Childhood Center who need ongoing literacy skills development. The ELD contains seven full-time and 15 part-time teachers providing a combination of pull-out and inclusion support. Each school division has its own ELD Head. Students are identified for ELD support through specific entry and exit criteria designated in each school division.

An area of concern observed by the Visiting Team, and which the ELD is currently addressing, is that many content area teachers are not certificated to teach English Language Learners in their classes. The ELD has noted this, and during the writing of this report, was running the workshop, "Teaching ESL Students in Mainstream Classrooms: Looking at Language Across the Curriculum," for teachers in the school's upper divisions. This program is currently being targeted towards Middle School Science faculty who have been given release time and substitute teachers to participate in this nine module program. This training will be extended to the Middle School Social Studies department later in the year.

All four academic divisions have Counseling staff. The Early Childhood Center and Elementary School have one counselor who primarily addresses mental health and some learning assessment needs for over 700 students, the Middle School has one individual performing guidance and mental health support, and the High School has three Counselors supporting students with career and college options, in addition to emotional health needs. There is also a School Psychologist who functions within academic learning support and also sees students requiring emotional assistance. The inclusion of the School Psychologist in ISB's Counseling team yields a total of six Counselors and two administrative support staff members, one at the Middle School and High School. While each Counselor reports to the Head of her respective school divisions, there is a Counseling department meeting once each month which transcends all divisions of the school.

The Visiting Team observed that the Counseling department has access to necessary resources to address students' career and college planning needs. Specialized examinations required for college placement, such as the Standardized Achievement Test, American College Test, and Test of English as a Foreign Language, are some of the assessments in which students and members of the greater Brussels community participate. The HS counselors meet with students in grades 10 through 13 to begin developing a college application plan which is placed on Naviance, a database system that facilitates the tracking of the college application process. The Counselors also work closely with the LS department to assist in locating appropriate vocational and career programs for students not attending traditional, post-secondary institutions.

In addition to providing guidance services, the Counseling department addresses students' mental health concerns and provides support to families transitioning to Brussels. Students can make appointments or drop in to see the Counselor designated to them. The Visiting Team noted that the High School Counselors provide coverage for each other should a crisis arise in which immediate attention needs to be provided to a student. The Counselors maintain contact with teachers to inform them of students' absences from classes, and with students' parents or guardians, when students have consented to information being shared. It is significant to note that the Counselor working in the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School is also licensed in psychology and has conducted educational evaluations.

With regards to Counseling, the Visiting Team observed that sensitive documents are kept in a locked room, and that communication with the school's Nurses is maintained to share critical information regarding students' emotional needs. The Counselors and Nurses work closely together in monitoring students when they need to rest in the Health Center, and when outside psychological or psychiatric interventions are needed.

The Health Center is staffed by two Nurses able to communicate in multiple languages. Nursing care is provided Monday through Friday, with one Nurse opening the Health Center at 08h30 and leaving at 16h00, and the second Nurse arriving at 10h30 and closing the center at 18h00. The extended closing time allows for medical coverage to be provided during sports practices taking place on the campus after classes. Sports practices occurring prior to 08h30 do not have nursing coverage. Most team coaches are first-aid trained or have access to mobile telephones to call for emergency on-campus and medical assistance.

The Nurses have access to updated medical equipment, two examination tables, with one located in a private examination room, and a sick bay of three beds, sofas, and several chairs. A waiting room separates students waiting to see the Nurses from those receiving medical attention. The Health Center has provisions to offer snacks to students should they miss a meal. The Nurses notify students' parents when they fall ill and are on sick rest in the Health Center. Students running a fever are required to be picked up by parents as soon as possible, although if a parent or guardian cannot be reached, the students stay in the Health Center. The administration and classroom teachers are informed if a child is absent due to health reasons.

The Nurses log student visits into a database, and students' historical medical records are also inputted and located in this same information system, after the medical documents have been received either from Admissions or directly from the parents. It should be reflected that the Visiting Team observed that not all students' medical records are on file prior to their enrollment. Records indicating life-threatening medical conditions, such as allergies, are communicated to school personnel via the school's "L" drive intranet communication tool. Issues concerning non-life threatening conditions are communicated to individuals on a need-to-know basis, which creates challenges in defining which individuals require access to the medical information. All students participating in team sports are required to have documentation of physical examination by a licensed physician on file. The Nurses fill a first-aid kit for all school trips and provide health information to teachers concerning students attending these excursions. Lastly, the Visiting Team noted the vigorous effort of the Nurses and the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School in creating a peanut-free zone in their section of the school, and recognizes ISB's efforts with its Food Services partner to ensure all products available in the cafeteria are peanut-free.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Learning Support department for its strong and active presence throughout the school
2. the Learning Support department for developing a program which supports the admission of students with a wide range of special education considerations
3. the Learning Support department for its advocacy of students identified with special learning and language needs, and especially those with moderate to severe disabilities
4. the Learning Support department's quick response to investigating a Gifted and Talented program and beginning to develop a policy and implementation plan and schedule
5. the Director for supporting Learning Support through the provision of Speech and Language Therapy services, a Psychologist and the use of outsourced Occupational Therapists
6. the Counseling department, and notably the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School Counselor, in meeting ISB's students' guidance and emotional needs amidst a large caseload
7. the Counseling department for collaboration with Learning Support to locate post-secondary options for students with moderate to severe learning needs
8. the Health Center for its cleanliness and provisions

9. the Nurses for their implementation of a required medical check-up for students participating in team sports
10. the work of the English Language Development department in addressing the need to train subject teachers in ESL strategies to support mainstream inclusion
11. the ISB Community and the Health Center for collaboration with the Food Services to ensure that all food products provided for in the cafeteria are peanut-free.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Learning Support department and Educational Leadership Team maintain its commitment to developing and implementing a Gifted and Talented program within the scheduled timeline
2. the Educational Leadership Team continue to examine the allocation of counselors within each of the school's divisions to ensure adequate student to counselor ratios
3. the Health Center review, with the Educational Leadership Team, its policy concerning medical provider-patient confidentiality and determine which members of faculty and staff have a right to "need-to-know" information
4. the Admissions department examine ways to ascertain that all students' medical records are on file prior to their enrolment
5. the Educational Leadership Team investigate options for Health Center coverage prior to the start of the class day.



## SECTION F: RESOURCES

|    |   | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | The school shall provide or arrange for such services as are required in support of its programme offerings, and shall ensure that these services with respect to food, security, transportation, cleaning, and others meet acceptable standards of safety and comfort. | M                   |
| 2. | Personnel employed to provide student services shall be adequate in number, have appropriate qualifications, and receive sufficient training to perform their functions effectively.  | M                   |
| 3. | The school shall meet safety requirements of the local authorities and of the accrediting association(s).   | D                   |
| 4. | Written rules and policies governing access to and use of school resources shall be available to the school community.  | D                   |
| 5. | The school grounds, buildings, technical installations, basic furnishings, and supporting equipment shall be adequate for effective support of the total school programme.  | M                   |
| 6. | The school's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) shall appropriately support the school's operations.  | E                   |
| 7. | The library/media centre shall be conveniently accessible, be of adequate size, and have sufficient staff and resources to meet the educational needs of students and staff.  | E                   |
| 8. | The library/media staff shall provide an ongoing programme of instruction in effective use of resource materials and equipment, and shall apply appropriate policies for library use and the means of assessing effectiveness.  | M                   |
| 9. | The facilities shall be maintained and operated in a manner that assures the safety and comfort of students and staff.  | E                   |

### COMMENTS:

3. The Visiting Team found a number of matters requiring attention in the emergency evacuation plan. These were shared with the School in the hope that they can be satisfactorily addressed during the time that this report is being evaluated by the accrediting agencies.
4. The campus at ISB is open to many community users throughout the extended day and at weekends. Not all of these users are aware of written rules and this area of operation could benefit from an all-encompassing review.

## **SECTION F – RESOURCES**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The Visiting Team acknowledges that ISB has an excellent campus with first class resources set in a relatively safe rural area of Brussels. In line with its mission statement the school continuously reviews the quality of services offered to the students on campus. It is generally felt that concern for students' comfort and safety, along with provision of ample resources to support the delivery of the curriculum, is a top priority for the management of the school.

ISB is situated on a vast 40 acre campus. The campus houses a wide range of buildings: four teaching blocks for the school's main divisions, two listed buildings (the Château serving the central administration and the Metairie used mainly for the music and choir program), a central Student Activities Center housing two gymnasiums, a sizeable theatre/auditorium and some high school classrooms, the International Community Centre (which is primarily used for ISB's life-long learning program offering adult education), the Chalet or Health Office, and a "tennis bubble" housing two tennis courts. Next to the Château there is a sizeable play area for younger children and towards the top of the campus there are more sport facilities consisting of two football pitches, running track and an open air basketball court.

The campus is situated on the edge of a woodland which enhances the environment, creates a greener atmosphere and an adventure space for the students. The capacity of the school is around 1550 students with plans in hand for the expansion of the campus which may provide better opportunities for higher enrollment.

The Board and Leadership Teams agree that a number of facilities on campus are in need of renovation to support the changing and evolving curriculum and reckoning on a typical thirty-year optimum life-span for educational facilities. The High School in particular would benefit from a major overhaul and not surprisingly this should be the priority for attention in the new building plan. A Project Team has been working on this in collaboration with the Building and Grounds Committee and there is now in place a long range plan for major renovations, developments, resources and facilities. The Board of Trustees expressed full support of these developments and have in principle approved the long range plan subject to financial planning and the necessary permits and building clearances from the local authorities. The school owns the buildings but rents the land and does not envisage any difficulties in the extending its lease for the foreseeable future. As outlined in the Preamble to this report, the project to enhance the campus has been informed by the school's mission as well as by educational and business considerations. It envisages a holistic plan encompassing educational mission, architectural facilities and natural environment.

The school offers its students first class food and dining facilities. Catering is managed by a sub-contracted provider who offers a nutritious, varied and balanced daily menu. The caterers have designated an experienced catering staff on site including a chef and cooking staff. The cleaning staff in the

kitchens are employees of the school and the extra hours devoted to the kitchens and dining rooms enables them to be employed on full time contracts. The chef presents menus for 10 day periods and this makes it easy for staff, students and parents to plan and create their own lunch. Lunches in the refectory are supervised and there is an easy flow of student traffic. The school has two fully serviced kitchens, one in the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School block and the other serving the Middle and High Schools. The kitchens are regularly checked by a company registered with the Belgian authorities to ensure that they comply with the strict norms required by Belgian authorities. A working group has been set up to monitor nutrition within the school and make regular proposals towards healthy menus.

The school maintains a high standard of cleanliness. The cleaning team is made up to 32 members who have split jobs between the educational and administrative areas and the kitchens. The cleaning staff use non toxic environmental products and the school supports a disposal system based on the separation of waste. The curriculum integrates environmental standards and benchmarks at every level of learning, educating all students to understand and respect the environment. The school earned its first eco star in 2000 and a second in 2007 so it is now aiming for the third and final star. Recently the school has fitted a computerized system to monitor and manage heating across the entire campus and this is expected to generate significant savings in fuel and benefit the environment at the same time.

ISB operates a fleet of 31 buses for the transportation of approximately 60% of the student body. This service is also outsourced and awarded to a licenced Belgian company operating mainly 45 seater buses plus a small number of 19 seater mini-buses. Some of these buses have been upgraded to "green" buses and the administration is committed to the continuation of this upgrade policy. Most of the vehicles are in good condition but the physical condition of some buses was seen to be deteriorating so it may be wise to accelerate this upgrade both for the safety and comfort of students and to contribute towards a greener environment. Although the busing service is extremely complex it is well monitored by the Facilities and Services Director, the representative of the bus company, the security guards on duty, the secretaries in the main office and, in the classroom buildings, the teachers who escort the students to the buses and the designated bus monitors. All these people contribute to an efficient and safe transport service.

There is an adequate number of staff employed in the support services sections set up at the school. The staff have a clear job description and know quite well what is expected from them. They are respected by the faculty and management staff. They go about their work in a courteous manner and have the safety, cleanliness and well being of the students at heart. They receive regular training in their line of work both in-house and from external agencies. A new system of support staff appraisal is in operation and they are annually assessed by their direct supervisors. This also makes them feel accepted and part of the team.

The Crisis Management Committee developed a four level strategic security plan to respond to any major crisis. This plan gives clear guidelines to the

major players in the safety and security of the school and the community. It outlines the parameters of authorised or limited access onto the campus by any person or group of persons both during and outside of school hours. The director has contact with embassies, local police and other government security agencies who inform him of sensitive information regarding security. ISB's four level plan clearly indicates low, medium, high and extreme threats with instructions on the level of necessary action to be taken in each case. The school employs a full-time security officer who supervises a team of security personnel supplied by an outsourced security company.

The school has set up a school safety program valid for all the different buildings with the campus, with written procedures for all emergency situations requiring either full evacuation and others where evacuation is not the best first response. These emergency procedures are posted in all classrooms with clear instructions on the necessary action to be taken by the occupants but it is not clear to what extent the emergency procedures are shared and communicated to the parents. A proper system of student pick-up by parents in the event of a real life crisis is not yet in place and thus not rehearsed.

A number of fire and evacuation drills are performed each year by the whole school. The Visiting Team called a full evacuation drill on Monday 19 October at 11.00 am. The students and teachers evacuated the classrooms in a very orderly manner in an average of 2.5 minutes and within another 1.5 minutes were in their respective assembly points. The roll call was taken using different reporting systems across the school but all seemed to be effective. However, several problems were identified:

- \* The visiting team noted that a number of adult members of staff were rather insensitive to the evacuation plan and proceeded with their work
- \* No member of the emergency crisis team checked on the presence of members of staff and visitors, including the Visiting Team
- \* A pre-K class and 2 teachers who were having a lesson in the forest classroom were not called or informed that there was an evacuation drill in session so they remained in the forest throughout the procedure
- \* The open areas of the campus are not serviced with audible equipment indicating a possible safety issue – this may also explain why the class in the forest did not respond to the alarm
- \* The two new offices housed in the loft of the Château have no escape route and staff using these rooms have to exit the building from the same wooden staircase leading up to the rooms which is considered as a safety hazard.
- \* A delivery van drove onto the campus just before the alarm went on and no one questioned the driver even though he proceeded unloading his goods into the Château building.

The school buildings are adequately equipped with fire fighting equipment and these are regularly inspected and serviced. A fire brigade inspection is performed each time there is a new construction, renovation or other changes. The security manager performs regular routine safety checks on the buildings and records findings for immediate attention. He demonstrates the

use of fire extinguishers to all staff members at the beginning of each scholastic year. However, in older buildings the team noticed that the fire extinguishers were fixed higher than the required norms.

The school buildings and fittings are generally safe but the Visiting Team observed that a row of coat hooks in the Early Childhood Center are fixed too low for the safety of the students.

The local embassies give substantial contribution to ISB both financially and technically by providing training to personnel and subsidizing security upgrades on campus. During the Team Visit the US Ambassador opened a new play area that had been sponsored by the Embassy. The school gives regular attention of school safety and regular meetings are set up to discuss issues. A member of the visiting team attended a meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held during the team visit.

Although the school premises and facilities are used regularly outside of school hours by students, parents and other visitors, the rules and policies governing access to and use of resources are not clearly communicated to the community. This in itself can create a safety concern and the Visiting Team suggests a review of procedures and policies, which also need to be communicated effectively and adhered to by visitors.

The school has a very strong ICT team with a clear vision on the technical needs to support the ICT program across the whole school. All sections of the school are networked, every classroom or instruction space has a networked data projection system, docking station, DVD player and an LCD display. Each member of staff is supplied with either a desktop, laptop or tablet PC and recently the school has introduced the policy of providing every student in Middle and High Schools with a tablet PC as their personal learning resource. The ICT team supports the professional development program with the necessary training to members of staff on the use of technology equipment. The system appears to be extremely well managed by the technical staff responsible for this large and impressive system.

The school has a clear statement that libraries are an important component in every student's journey towards becoming independent learners and thoughtful international citizens. The school employs 8.4 professional librarians and technicians in the media centers. The librarians are key members of the faculty and liaise frequently with teachers on the best ways to enhance the program. Library staff also benefit from opportunities for professional development by attending learning institutes, conferences and workshops both locally and overseas. The Middle and High School Library is relatively new, well furnished, spacious and very user friendly. The Early Childhood and Elementary Library has been refurbished over the summer to maintain a welcoming and cheerful atmosphere. A new library is envisaged for this section of school in the long term plans. The librarians involve the whole ISB community in identifying the choice of material to be added in the media centers each year. Records and surveys are kept to log the use of the media centers by members of the ISB community.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Administration and the Catering Service on the dining system and choice of food offered at school, including regular follow up meetings of the Nutrition Working Group who regularly survey and make further proposals to improve the service
2. the Crisis Management Committee on the development of a four level strategic security plan in response to any major crisis
3. the Facilities and Services Director for the computerised system to management heating
4. the Building Committee on its plan for the campus development and the Board of Trustees for supporting the proposals to maintain the high level of facilities at ISB
5. the ICT technical staff for their efficient management of a highly complex network at ISB
6. the Library staff for their well-maintained and stimulating learning environments in support of the curriculum program
7. the custodial support staff for their dedication to their work and the school in general
8. The Board of Trustees for approving funding over time for the high level of resources at ISB.
9. The Facilities and Services Director and all those involved in the bus system for their efficient and highly organized management of this complex service

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Board continue to negotiate extension of the land lease contract in support of the extensive campus renovation
2. the Facilities and Services Director consider acceleration of the change to green buses
3. the Security Committee ensure response to the issues raised in this report regarding emergency evacuation procedures, including plans for notification of parents and alternative relocation of students in case a full evacuation should be required
4. the Facilities and Services Director ensure that the rules for access to and use of school resources be well communicated to all members of the school community and other users
5. in line with the all inclusive mentality in the school a better study for the provision and installation of proper facilities to create more accessibility to physically impaired users of the facility.

## SECTION G: STUDENT AND COMMUNITY LIFE

|    |   | Rating<br>E, M or D |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Relationships among the school management, staff and students shall be ethical, and shall be characterised by fairness and mutual respect among individuals and between groups. | M                   |
| 2. | The school shall have processes and forums to enable students and parents to remain well informed on all appropriate issues of school life.                                     | E                   |
| 3. | The school shall have effective processes which enable students and parents to offer appropriate input before important decisions are made.                                     | M*                  |
| 4. | The curricular and/or co-curricular programme shall serve the broad needs and interests of the student body.  | E                   |
| 5. | The school shall actively promote intercultural and international awareness.  | E                   |
| 6. | Residential services shall serve the best interests of all boarding students and staff.   | N/A                 |

### COMMENTS:

3. The school does not consistently solicit input from students and parents before decisions about programs are made, yet there is a pervasive sense of openness and parents feel that if they have concerns there are multiple avenues to voice them.

## **SECTION G – STUDENT AND COMMUNITY LIFE**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The International School of Brussels community is rich in diversity, languages, and international awareness. Each stakeholder group has invested in the school mission which is based on the principle of maximizing student learning while ensuring that everyone is included, challenged and successful. There is a pervasive culture of collaboration and respect between all constituents including parents, students, faculty, and the leadership of the school. Also in keeping with the ISB mission, the students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their growth towards meeting the expectations of becoming international citizens and independent learners.

There is a strong ethos of mutual respect and collaboration at ISB. The Visiting Team was consistently provided with anecdotal evidence of collaborative relationships within the faculty and sees that it offers a model for collaborative and positive student interactions. Mutual respect and friendship between students is fostered through age-appropriate activities in each division.

In the Early Childhood Center and the Elementary School students learn to interact with each other using the essential learning questions; *“Is it safe ? Is it fair ? Is it respectful ? Is it Kind ?”* Embedding discussions and activities into the class activities ensures that students develop enduring understandings that are necessary for working together in a learning community. There is also a long history of students in the Elementary School learning conflict resolution strategies and then using them to engage in a peer mediation program at recess, known as the Peace Patrol. There is a zero tolerance for bullying in the Elementary School. The Visiting Team observed a truly caring culture in the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School.

The Middle School advisory program, also part of a long-standing culture of the school, continues the promotion of respectful and responsible citizens, caring and empathetic individuals who thrive in an inclusive community. There is a commitment to providing a caring, secure and respectful environment and a clear message from the student handbook that bullying has no place at ISB. The Visiting Team found that the Middle school students have risen to this expectation as well as the expectations that students show respect and act respectfully toward each other and faculty.

The High School advisory program strives to ensure that every student is known as an individual and serves the purpose of providing advocacy, helping students set learning goals, engage in reflective practice, and to build a sense of community. The High School program is still in its infancy and staff development is still needed to ensure consistency in the expectations for the facilitation of the advisory period. The National Honor Society, and the Safe Place Policy, stating that bullying in any form is unacceptable, ensure that the High School has a community characterized by fairness and mutual respect.



The Student and Community Life Self Study Committee expressed concern that the expectations of student behavior are not well understood or documented. However, the Visiting Team found that the expectations for student conduct and consequences for inappropriate behavior to be adequately designated in division and athletics handbooks. Furthermore, each Division Head supported the Visiting Team's perception that the student body understands and complies with expectations for their behavior. The Visiting Team concurs with the Student and Community Life Self Study Committee and finds that student information is treated with the appropriate degree of confidentiality.

The Family Association plays an essential role in setting the climate of the ISB community and maintains genuinely collaborative partnerships with the school. *The mission of the ISB Family Association is to build a well-informed school community where all families are welcome, all families are encouraged to participate, and all nationalities are celebrated.* The Family Association has a strong presence in nearly every aspect of school life. It provides orientation for new families two times per year and has parent representatives in each division. The services provided by the Family Association extend to areas such as fundraising for the (competitive) athletics program and working with the visual and performing arts departments to raise funds to finance the visiting artist and scholars program. The Association also provide nutritious international meal options for the school community by collaborating with kitchen staff once each week as well as staffing the student cafe for sports practices in the early morning or at weekends. The Executive Board of the Family Association represents multiple nationalities and perspectives and is very supportive and proud of the multi-cultural nature of the school. A weekly newsletter is provided to all parents by the Association and this includes information about upcoming school as social events available for parents. The Visiting Team was impressed by the dedication of the ISB parent community.

The Visiting Team found that there are effective publications to facilitate the flow of information from the school to student and parents on all appropriate issues of school life. Communication about student progress is articulated to parents through face-to-face dialogue, e-mailed information, student handbooks, the Blackboard learning platform and the ISB website. In addition, student newsletters detailing their perspectives about school life are regularly published in the Elementary, Middle and High Schools. Parent-teacher conferences are held in the fall and spring. Division heads report over 90% turnout for the most recently held conferences this fall. The Visiting Team heard several testimonies from parents of students in each division that the recent conferences were an informative exchange of information about their child, where they were also made to feel that their opinions were valued.

The Visiting Team found further examples of communication between school and home. Department heads in Middle School hold a parent meeting each year to explain the curricular goals and objectives. There is regular communication between the Heads in each Division. In the Elementary School direct personal communication can occur via a phone call, email or by appointment. Early Childhood and Elementary parents are encouraged to communicate and are called in to discuss their child should the need arise.

The Visiting Team was made aware by parents that communication from the school is extensive but at times it may even be overwhelming. The problem for the community may not be that information is not available, but that too much of it is available at the risk of some confusion in communication. The school is responding to this in several ways, such as investigating a systematic use of memo headings in emails to help parents distinguish essential information sent electronically.

The Visiting Team confirms that there are ample forums for exchange of ideas of opinions between the school, students and parents. The Family Association Executive Board members meet with the Director monthly and reported to the Visiting Team that they feel the school is very approachable and responsive to concerns that arise from the parent body. The Visiting Team heard numerous testimonials praising the welcoming, positive, and inclusive atmosphere at ISB.

The Middle and High School students know that their respective Heads are available to share their ideas or concerns. The Visiting Team does not feel that student and parent ideas are consistently solicited on a systematic basis including those pertaining to curricular and co-curricular programs. However, parent comments by and large expressed a pride in the school and the attention to individual academic needs, climate, attention to social-emotional well-being, and the value of the multicultural awareness that their students receive at ISB. High School students have some opportunity to provide input into decisions that affect programs but this is limited at the present time.

The ISB mission states that all students will become Independent Learners, develop problem-solving skills, self-confidence, critical self-awareness, and become effective communicators. Clearly, education of the “whole person” appears to be an essential and enduring understanding, addressed through a wide variety of curricular and co-curricular activities, while ensuring multiple opportunities to meet the needs of the diverse student body.

Service is considered a requirement at the school and the Visiting Team observed that students have wholly accepted this challenge that is part of the culture of the school. Opportunities are offered both within the curriculum as well as in co-curricular activities. Students have participated in trips to Ghana, Togo and Kiev to provide service to those in need and have often given their time in summer willingly. Service opportunities are also available in the school context and the local community. The Visiting Team was impressed by ISB students’ understanding of the needs of others and the genuine empathy they have for those who are less fortunate. They are exemplary international citizens.

Reports to the Visiting Team suggest that more than 80% of students participate in co-curricular activities whether they are athletic, in visual or performing arts, academic or of service in nature. Athletic Intramural programs and an extensive competitive sports program address the physical health and well-being of students. There are over 50 athletic teams, each committing time to a service project of their choice as this is a requirement for involvement in the team. The Performing Arts department also offers a varied curricular and co-curricular program that addresses the needs of whole child.

Students can choose via electives to participate in various theatre and music and studies and the offerings in the co-curricular activities are broad. There are opportunities to exercise social responsibility through a plethora of extra-curricular activities such as Student Councils in the Elementary, Middle and High Schools, ecology clubs, the Green Teams in the Early Childhood Center and Elementary School, and the Global Issues Club.

The High School students are explicitly given responsibility for their own learning and this extends to the management of time during the school day. Students who have free periods were observed to spend them in the library, in classrooms (and even in laboratories), in the common room or even in the open spaces around campus. This aspect of the ISB culture poses the question of balance in terms of the amount of supervision that should be provided to guarantee appropriate security while allowing independence and personal time planning. Some discussion on this question would seem to be timely because members of the faculty do not always seem to know what is expected of them in terms of intervening in a supervisory capacity outside the classroom.

The Visiting Team found strong evidence that the school actively promotes intercultural and international awareness. Valuing cultural diversity is indeed a fundamental belief of ISB. There is an extensive mother tongue program in Dutch and course offerings in French beginning in the Early Childhood Center and continuing through and becoming more extensive as students move through the Middle School. There is an extensive multicultural collection in each of the Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle and High School libraries. The school celebrates cultures in many ways; the UN Day, International Festival, the upcoming Africa Day and in many other ways.

The Visiting team found tremendous evidence that ISB programs, faculty, the school leadership teams, and the parent community value a respect for the individual needs while tending to the development of students as global citizens and leaders. The pervasive nature of collaboration, mutual respect and service lend meaning to the ISB Mission and the Visiting Team found that at ISB there really is a culture of including all students in this very special educational project.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

1. the Family Association for their dedication to supporting ISB students, families, and programs as well as for its commitment to the mission of the school: everyone included, challenged and successful
2. the ISB students for putting into living practice the mission of ISB by being exemplary international citizens
3. the Director for maintaining open communication with the parent constituency and for valuing the richness of the multicultural ISB community
4. the Director and Board for providing resources for programs that celebrate the multicultural nature of the school community
5. the Director and Board for providing resources for the comprehensive co-curricular offerings that addresses the “whole Learner” while ensuring success for all students
6. the Athletics Director and his team for offering a comprehensive sports program and for incorporating a service component into all sports teams
7. the Visual and Performing Arts departments for offering extensive options for both curricular and co-curricular programs that address the needs of the “whole” learner.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that:

1. the Director and Educational Leadership Teams consider ways to solicit multiple perspectives when making decisions that affect student life.
2. The Director and Educational Leadership Teams continue to investigate ways of ensuring that information and communication go hand in hand in the interest of better understanding with parents in general
3. The Head of High School promote reflection with faculty on the appropriate amount of supervision for students outside of scheduled lessons in order to develop written guidelines about faculty supervisory roles.

*During the final Team meeting, each section of the report was reconsidered and those commendations and recommendations which were believed to be of particular importance were identified. They are listed in the following pages.*

## **LIST OF MAJOR COMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team commends:

### **A - Philosophy and Objectives**

1. the ISB Board and Community for embracing its powerful mission
2. the faculty for its efforts and on-going commitment to translating the core ideals of the mission into practical features of the ISB educational experience
3. the ISB leadership team for promoting the mission and for developing a novel curriculum structure which reflects the five core ideals

### **B1 – Early Childhood Center**

1. the ECC Division Head, the Assistant Head and the entire ECC team for fostering a positive learning and working environment.

### **B2 – Elementary School**

1. the Elementary School Head and faculty for ensuring the presence of the Mission Statement throughout the Curriculum

### **B3 – Middle School**

1. the Middle School teachers for whole-heartedly embracing and implementing the school's Common Ground Curriculum; for their passion for education; for their understanding of MS students and for their commitment to ongoing professional development
2. the Middle School Head, Deputies and Heads of Department for developing the rich curricular program, which brings academic and pastoral into a coherent whole

### **B4 – High School**

2. the Educational Leadership Team (ELT) for the wide range of courses which enable each student to follow an individualised schedule

### **C – Governance and Management**

1. the Board for its commitment to supporting the Director and his teams in the development of the school mission statement, the new curriculum and campus development plans
2. the School Director for leading the whole school community rigorously and passionately towards achieving the school vision

6. the Educational and Organizational Leadership Teams for their commitment to ensuring that a consistent mission and vision permeates the different divisions and departments of the school

#### **D - Staff**

6. the Board and Educational Leadership Team for the richness of the Professional Learning Programme and for supporting staff when they choose to select their own professional growth program
8. the Faculty and Staff for their exceptional performance of duties and responsibilities with regard to the school's mission and for their strong commitment to students and school.

#### **E – Student Support Services**

3. the Learning Support department for its advocacy of students identified with special learning and language needs, and especially those with moderate to severe disabilities

#### **F - Resources**

4. the Building Committee on its plan for the campus development and the Board of Trustees for supporting the proposals to maintain the high level of facilities at ISB
8. The Board of Trustees for approving funding over time for the high level of resources at ISB.

#### **G – Student and Community Life**

1. the Family Association for their dedication to supporting ISB students, families, and programs as well as for its commitment to the mission of the school: everyone included, challenged and successful
6. the Athletics Director and his team for offering a comprehensive sports program and for incorporating a service component into all sports teams
7. the Visual and Performing Arts departments for offering extensive options for both curricular and co-curricular programs that address the needs of the “whole” learner.

## **LIST OF MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends:

### **B1 – Early Childhood Center**

2. the ISB Educational Leadership Team ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided for horizontal and vertical curriculum coordination and that vertical coordination between the sections is given priority in future planning considerations

### **B2 – Elementary School**

1. the ISB Educational Leadership Team ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided for horizontal and vertical curriculum coordination and that vertical coordination between the sections is given priority in future planning considerations

### **B3 – Middle School**

1. the ISB Educational Leadership Team ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided for horizontal and vertical curriculum coordination and that vertical coordination between the sections is given priority in future planning considerations

### **B4 – High School**

1. the ISB Educational Leadership Team ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided for horizontal and vertical curriculum coordination and that vertical coordination between the sections is given priority in future planning considerations

### **D – Staff**

1. the Director and Educational Leadership Team consider how to include wider representation of stakeholders in future reviews and consultative processes
6. the Educational Leadership Team ensure that the “Learning, Teaching and Leading at ISB” appraisal be fully implemented and the Works Council aim to finalize the "draft" version within its projected timeline

### **E – Student Support Services**

1. the Learning Support department and Educational Leadership Team maintain its commitment to developing and implementing a Gifted and Talented program within the scheduled timeline

### **F – Resources**

3. the Crisis Management Committee ensure response to the issues raised in this report regarding emergency evacuation procedures, including plans for notification of parents and alternative relocation of students in case a full evacuation should be required

## **TEAM COMMENTS ON PART THREE OF THE SELF STUDY**

This report has already drawn attention to the thoroughness with which the school undertook the Self Study and the exemplary manner in which action plans were drawn up for those areas which were identified as needing attention. In a final comprehensive overview, the Steering Committee identified those features which can be considered as major strengths of the school and evaluated those which need strengthening.

The areas which ISB considered as strengths bear considerable similarity to those identified by the Visiting Team. Mission, commitment and morale are at the root of these, along with sound governance, good resources, extensive professional development and the outstanding provision of extra-curricular opportunities.

When considering its areas in need of attention, the Steering Committee went beyond a simple list of bullet points to cluster concerns into a list of generic features which are listed below:

1. Articulating the Curriculum
2. Accessing the Curriculum
3. Implementing the Curriculum
4. Monitoring the Curriculum
5. Communicating the Curriculum, and Other Key Information
6. Translating Curriculum into Physical Reality: Common Ground Campus
7. Securing all Stakeholders

Once again, these bear considerable similarity with the recommendations of the Visiting Team, but in some ways they go beyond the evaluations of the Self Study and the accreditation process to include features that are part of ISB's longer term development plan. On balance, for instance, the quality of the campus is not perceived by the Visiting Team to be a serious deficiency, apart from the areas referred to in this report. However, the school is to be congratulated on its foresight in developing a campus renewal plan, for doing so as part of its philosophical and educational mission, and for incorporating considerations from the Self Study into this plan so as to modify its priorities in addressing campus needs.

Specific action plans were developed in each of the seven major headings for attention and the results are already visible. The new appraisal system, for instance, is a direct consequence of the Self Study's findings, as is an increased awareness to security, although in both of these cases the timeline for implementation means that they have not yet been completely addressed. Not surprisingly, student learning received most attention in the conclusions and it is encouraging to see a school where so much has been done to develop, document and articulate its curriculum and yet which is still conscious of the possibility to improve. In fact, the Visiting Team considers the ISB curriculum to be a strength of the school, even if it concurs that articulation and access remain important work in progress.

Communication is a more complex issue and the extent to which it is in need of improvement is not immediately clear. Certainly, the Visiting Team did not find it easy to navigate the Common Ground Curriculum without asking for additional explanations and support from the ISB Leadership Team in order to locate the documentation and mapping. Internal communication between divisions to improve articulation is also identified in the curriculum goals. But



in terms of communication with the community and as part of external relations, the school seems to be dealing with the usual dilemmas encountered today by an excess of information rather than a shortage. As a Board Member suggested to the Team, there is ample “information” available about ISB but that is not the same as “communication”. This points to a challenge facing many large schools and complex organizations and the Visiting Team suggests that this is better seen as another process of on-going improvement rather than as a specific area of weakness. This is especially true at ISB where so much has been done to facilitate access to key information for parents and community, especially as regards its core mission and values.

## **CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

The Visiting Team would like to begin its conclusions with an expression of thanks to the International School of Brussels community for welcoming us into their school so enthusiastically. Representatives of the school at every level made us feel welcome and valued and were generous in sharing time whenever we imposed upon them. Board Members, the Leadership and Organizational Teams, the administrative personnel, the support staff, parents, students and teachers all contributed to making the Visit into a learning experience for each member of the Visiting Team. Some additional words of appreciation are due especially to the Director, Kevin Bartlett, who was a particularly gracious and thoughtful host, to Mike Crowley, who chaired the Self Study Steering Committee with determination and vision, and to Jessica Franken, whose organization and attention to detail made sure that all the practicalities of the Visit were handled smoothly and efficiently.

The Visiting Team's list of Major Commendations and Major Recommendations gives a good insight into its overall perception of the school. In particular, the predominance of commendations reflects a positive impression which derives in good measure from the empathy with which Team Members engaged with the school community during their time at ISB. It also reflects their admiration for a school which is so obviously striving to put into practice a mission of inclusivity. This mission is inspiring and challenging when written as a few words on paper, but even more so when lived out in the daily activities of a committed group of professionals and articulated in the many aspects of a large and complex organization.

Commitment is a word that applies at all levels and is encouraged by the widespread recognition that the Board, the Director and the Leadership Teams are themselves committed to putting mission into practice. This, in turn, has generated a level of trust and respect which encourages the community to buy into the ISB project so that many members are willing to go one step more than usual in playing out their roles. The administrative team, the support staff, the parents and the students all know they are part of a very special educational venture. But it is the teaching faculty and educational staff who deserve to be singled out especially in this context as it is so visibly evident in their planning and their attitude towards learning that they want to make sure that "everyone is included, challenged and successful".

One of the reasons that the Visiting Team's list of Major Recommendations was shorter than the school's own list is that ISB has already started to react to its findings. Plans are already in place to address areas that were found to be in need of attention and this enabled the Team to focus on those areas that appear to require a special consideration. These fall into four main areas.

The first includes a number of health and safety concerns which can be addressed in a short time span but which cannot be left unattended. The Team's findings were shared with the Director so that action can be undertaken without delay and it might be possible to address all of the matters arising within the same time scale required by CIS and MSA to consider this report.

The second priority identified by the Visiting Team was the need to move forward with the faculty appraisal system. The recently developed model seems to be welcomed by most of those who will be involved but it has yet to be utilized. Since appraisal was identified as an area for attention in previous accreditation reports, the Visiting Team suggests that testing and finalizing a model is now a major recommendation.

A third issue that the Team discussed repeatedly was the manner in which “inclusivity” could be extended to the community, and to adult learners in particular, and not perceived entirely in terms of the students. There has been a tendency at ISB for decision-making to be a top-down process and its success has been due in large measure to the trust and respect which the community, and especially the faculty, invests in the Leadership Team. However, with a mission that speaks explicitly of seeking and valuing multiple perspectives, there would seem to be an ethical imperative for devising a model which demonstrates in practice what this can actually mean for the community as a whole. Taking this step doesn’t involve any revolutionary changes to the culture of ISB, but rather a more conscious process of consultation and involvement which surely, over time, will pay dividends in terms of extended ownership of the systems and the processes that are unique and special in this school.

The final main area needing attention is, of course, curriculum. It must be obvious from the report that the Visiting Team did not find the curriculum to be seriously defective: far from it ! ISB has embarked on a fascinating project that deserves to be more widely known and it is hoped that once the school feels comfortable in doing so, it will bring the Common Ground Curriculum to the wider attention of schools that might be interested in following a similar model for learning. No curriculum is ever complete, so the fact that work is on-going has to be seen in a natural educational context, but with so much innovation under way, it must sometimes be difficult to prioritize energy amongst the range of initiatives calling for attention. The two aspects in need of special focus at this time are articulation across divisions and differentiation for the highly able. Ironically, the former takes us back to a comment from the 1999 Visiting Team – but this time around there is no sense at all that ISB is “four good schools”. It is definitely one excellent school with a strong sense of identity and cohesion, but in which time is not always available for the cross-division interactions that are needed for vertical planning.

The Visiting Team wishes the International School of Brussels well as it continues to develop its inspirational program and inclusive culture. It thanks once again the ISB community for its assistance during our week together and hopes that this report will be considered “fair, safe, respectful and kind” – and most of all helpful in providing some insights for ISB’s process of continuous improvement.

## TEAM LIST

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Terry Haywood – CIS Chair  | Headmaster<br>International School of Milan<br>Italy  |
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| Anna Weston                | IB Coordinator<br>Copenhagen International School<br>Denmark                                |
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| Lee Cassidy                | Elementary Counselor/School Psychologist<br>Rabat American School<br>Morocco                |
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