

# FROM RESISTANCE TO SUSTAINABILITY AND LEADERSHIP: CULTIVATING DIVERSE LEADERS IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

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## INTRODUCTION

During the spring of 2019, the Diversity Collaborative, a voluntary group of international educators, initiated a research study by partnering with ISC Research and George Mason University. Our goal was to survey the field of accredited international schools to establish a baseline of information in the international school sector about school leadership and diversity. The study was distributed to approximately 2,676 accredited international schools.

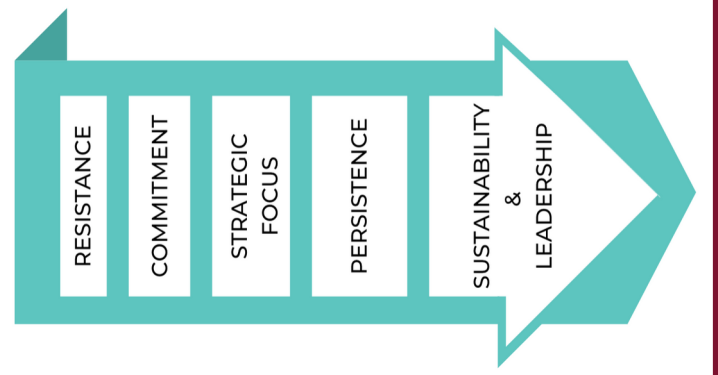
## HIGHLIGHTS

- Definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion vary as well as recognition of the value of these attributes in international schools.
- Whatever their definition, international schools are more likely to be focused on students demonstrating these attributes than on faculty and leadership reflecting and modeling these attributes.
- Awareness of the importance and positive contribution of having a diverse leadership team is not always clear or valued.
- Intentionality followed by action/implementation across time makes a difference in the development of a diverse leadership team.
- Recruiting/hiring for a diverse leadership team as well as creating pathways within a school are not always easy, but such objectives are doable.
- Processes (e.g. policies, accreditation, strategic planning), followed by reflection and evaluation, support these efforts.
- There were demonstrable differences in self-efficacy and power.
- Strong models of diversity, equity, and inclusion exist among the international schools that responded. School leaders have enormous power in schools; those who prioritized diversity, equity and inclusion were able to make a difference regardless of their contexts.

## IMPLICATIONS

Based upon the survey data and by merging two established frameworks for diversity: Intercultural Development Continuum (IDCTM) and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEI-J), we developed a related Integrated Organizational Framework to help international schools and organizations serving international schools become more intercultural, equitable, and just by diagnosing the challenges they face and moving forward given their specific contexts.

Integrated Organizational Framework for Increasing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice in International Schools



## RESISTANCE



Often international schools initially face resistance from some stakeholders to focusing on DEI-J issues and/or deliberately developing a diverse leadership team. It's important to understand the source of that resistance and to learn from other schools in similar contexts that have become more intercultural.

## COMMITMENT



Once they've overcome resistance, an international school's stakeholders articulate a commitment to DEI-J and interculturalism that reflects their unique context.

## STRATEGIC FOCUS



At this stage, international schools establish specific goals and long-term plans to ensure that their commitment to interculturalism and DEI-J practices become embedded in the school.

## PERSISTENCE



Even with the best laid plans, international schools inevitably hit barriers and challenges doing DEI-J/intercultural work. How a school's stakeholders respond to those challenges determines whether a school's DEI-J/intercultural commitment persists through the inevitable leadership, curricular and other transitions.

## SUSTAINABILITY/LEADERSHIP



Schools with sustained commitments to DEI-J/intercultural issues leverage that commitment to attract students and educators and they serve as role models, mentors and leaders in the international school community.



## SCHOOL-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

### To address RESISTANCE:

- Encourage key school constituents to attend local/regional trainings on diversity, equity, inclusion and justice.
- Connect with schools or other organizations in your city or region whose efforts in this area you admire to learn from their journeys.
- Articulate why having a diverse leadership team is important for your school.



### To establish COMMITMENT:

- Evaluate your leadership pipeline to understand the experience of different groups of educators at your school.
- Host courageous conversations about diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice among all your school stakeholders.
- Adapt and articulate definitions of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice that make sense in your context.

### To develop a STRATEGIC FOCUS:

- Include a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in your strategic plan and/or reaccreditation self-study.
- Establish priorities and goals around your DEI-J efforts.
- Actively recruit/promote diverse teachers, teacher leaders and leadership team members.



### To ensure PERSISTENCE:

- Celebrate your successes and expect and learn from your challenges and setbacks.
- Use a tool and associated training like the IDI to deepen your commitment and track your progress toward interculturalism.
- Share your journey through conference presentations/workshops.



### To achieve SUSTAINABILITY/LEADERSHIP:

- Use your DEI-J reputation to promote your school and recruit diverse educators.
- Help to lead the DEI-J efforts in your region and globally.
- Develop a case study or write a journal article about your DEI-J efforts to assist other schools.

## REGIONAL AND GLOBAL RECOMMENDATIONS



Develop international school definitions of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice that are not US or Eurocentric, because the issues in international schools are substantially different than in local US/European schools. Trying to transfer “diversity” from the US perspective around the world is likely to be unsuccessful.



Through global organizations, continue to gather data from international schools and associations to better inform the international school community about existing inequities and track progress over time.



Include sessions about diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice at international school conferences and in association-sponsored professional development programs for aspiring, new and experienced school leaders and board members.



Work with international school search firms and other consultants to educate boards and search committees about the value of diverse leadership teams and to connect to the growing networks of diverse international school educators.



Work with accreditation agencies to reinforce the value of diversity and encourage schools to include diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice goals in their school improvement plans.



Identify a “critical friends” group in each region with experience in DEI-J work. Create a series of traveling workshops for schools who are beginning this adventure. (Be sure to represent the broad definitions of diversity).



Identify a range of schools and create case studies – How did they create more diverse leadership teams? How have they sustained it? What advice do they have for others?



To maintain momentum, share and promote all of the work above, through international school conference workshops, publications and social media.

