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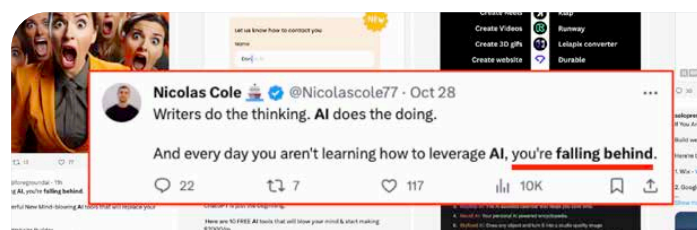
Volume XXXX · 2023-24 Edition II · ISS.edu



SPOTLIGHT SCHOOL MOMENT

From Shekou International School, shared by [Harish Kanabar](#)
Open doors to a community of international school life on #ISSedu!

EDITION SNEAK PEEKS



"Focus on practical and meaningful applications of AI in education, rather than getting swept away in the social media frenzy."

-John Burns; read more on [page 24](#)



"Inclusion is not just the work of learning support teachers — it is the work of a community."

-Dr. Heather Naro and Andrea Lillis; read more on [page 5](#)



"A well-crafted strategic plan serves as a compass, guiding schools toward preferred futures of educational excellence."

-Tom Hawkins; read more on [page 8](#)



SPOTLIGHT SCHOOL MOMENT

From Ambatovy International School, shared by [Alba Carollo](#)

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Editor and Designer: Aliisa Lee **Advertising Coordinator:** Loredana Lipari
Editorial Board: Liz Duffy, Sharon Lawler-Sudell, Joel Jr Llaban, Dana Watts

About ISS: International Schools Services (ISS) works with more than 1,200 international schools and tens of thousands of educators each year across its suite of services, creating one of the largest global footprints in international education support. Since its inception in 1955, ISS has promoted innovative best practices. Core services include starting and operating student-centered, future-oriented schools; recruiting world-class educators and leaders; providing cutting-edge professional learning opportunities; sourcing essential school supplies; administering school foundations; and encouraging more diverse leadership in international schools. As a nonprofit organization with offices in Princeton, NJ USA and Shenzhen, China and staff located across the globe, ISS invites all to join in making a world of difference. For more information, visit ISS.edu

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International Schools Services, Inc.
15 Roszel Road, PO Box 5910 / Princeton, NJ 08543-5910 USA.
Tel 609.452.0990 • Fax 609.452.2690
General inquiries: iss.edu/contact Advertising: advertising@iss.edu

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Rowing and Growing

By **Liz Duffy**, ISS President

During the last week of each year as I set my New Year's Resolutions, I first reflect back on the past year. This year, I realized that perhaps the most satisfying activity I did in 2023 was to learn to row for the first time. Learning something brand new in my mid-50s – in particular, learning how to row in an 8-person shell – was meaningful not only because of the physical challenge, but also because it was a great reminder of the power of teaching.

While erging (rowing on an indoor machine) and crew (rowing outside in a boat on the water) are rigorous activities from both cardio and strength perspectives, they're also great lifelong sports, because they are easy to learn and difficult to master, so you continue to get the satisfaction of making progress. They are also non-weight-bearing, which means that with the right technique, even older people with battered knees like me can fully participate.

As an educator, I found all the lessons about teaching and learning that my foray into crew reinforced are what made my 2023 crew adventures so meaningful. Here are a few:

Pursuing something new often requires learning a new vocabulary

Which side of the boat is starboard and which side is port, where's the catch and where's the finish, what's the stroke rate vs. what's the pace – those are a few distinctions that I still scramble under pressure or in the early morning hours in the dark and cold. But, one year into my rowing journey, I mostly have the basic vocabulary down and understand at a visceral level what it means to “set a boat” and “catch a crab.”



Liz rowing in the tanks

Sometimes as teachers, particularly as longtime teachers with specialized knowledge of a subject, we forget, on the one hand, how

off putting and confusing specialized jargon can be and, on the other hand, how motivating it is to students when a new language begins to click.

Learning requires humility

Not knowing the language is just part of what makes learning humbling. Being the least experienced person in a boat, the slowest person on an erg, or the last person to finish a drill are certainly not fun situations to be in, but they don't have to be demotivating if a coach encourages a growth mindset and expects everyone to encourage each other. The same applies in a classroom.

Practice makes perfect ... or at least better

It's one thing to understand a concept or what you've supposed to do. It's another thing to do it – whether rowing a boat, writing a paper, or solving a math problem. The more you practice a skill you're trying to learn or use a concept you're just beginning to understand, the deeper your knowledge becomes, especially with thoughtful teaching and guidance.

Frequent timely feedback is essential for growth

On an erg, you get immediate, actionable feedback on every stroke as a monitor directly in front of you shows both your instantaneous and average pace (how long it takes to row 500 meters) and stroke rate (the number of strokes you take per minute).

On the water, there are no monitors, but you can literally feel how well a boat is rowing together. In both situations, the best coaches, like the best teachers, are able to detect small changes that lead to marked improvements, and they are careful not to overwhelm their charges with too many suggestions at once.

Teamwork makes learning more fun and rewarding

I've played lots of sports in which I've had to rely on teammates, but none in which our actions had to be so tightly coordinated as crew. A boat of smaller/weaker/older (fill in the blank) people rowing together well will beat a boat of bigger/stronger/younger people who are out of sync. In rowing, you are only as good as how well you work together.



Boathouse in the early morning

There is a magical feeling called swing, that happens when a boat is in sync and everyone is rowing together. Great coaches foster and leverage strong teamwork; so do many great teachers. What does “swing” look like in your classroom?

Optimal learning happens when there is a balance of challenge and support

Learning anything new can be frustrating, so support and encouragement are essential to persist past the inevitable setbacks to the next breakthrough. At the same time, you only experience growth if you're pushed to try things beyond your comfort zone that you may even doubt at first that you can accomplish. That's where challenge comes in.

Because of crew, 2023 was a year of considerable learning and growth for me. It was also a year that reinforced for me what makes great teaching and how meaningful good teaching can be to students. I encourage all educators reading this column to not just take my word for it, but to find something brand new and difficult for you to learn in 2024, so you can experience firsthand both what it's like to be a student again and what a difference you have the power to make to the students in your care. Happy 2024!

You can connect with Liz Duffy [on LinkedIn](#) and follow on X at [@DuffyLiz](#).

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EMBRACING INCLUSION: A Transformative Journey at the International Community School of Abidjan

By **Dr. Heather Naro**, Lower School Principal at the International Community School of Abidjan
& **Andrea Lillis**, Deputy Executive Director of SENIA International

In the evolving landscape of education, the pursuit of progress is paramount. Through the adoption of transformative themes, school communities can strive for excellence. At the **International Community School of Abidjan (ICSA)**, we have embarked on an exhilarating journey centered around the theme of inclusion.

Inclusion, the practice of providing equal opportunities and support for all learners, lies at the core of our vision for the future. Our mission is to learn and lead in a collaborative culture and our vision is to do this in a diverse community that is united in direction. We are acutely aware that students' school experiences are deeply intertwined with their identities, and we are seeking ways to affirm and celebrate each individual within the ICSA learning community.

Tim Stuart, Office of Overseas Schools Regional Education Officer, states, "Diversity and Inclusion are two of the top priorities of the US Department of State's Office of Overseas School. In order to accomplish this goal we are pleased to partner with schools

like the International Community School of Abidjan and organizations like SENIA. Without partners like these, we would not be able to reach our goals."

A Journey Inspired by Audit and Ambition

In the fall of 2022, two representatives from ICSA traveled to the **SENIA International All In! Conference** in Bonn, Germany where keynote speaker and author **Angeline Aow** made a lasting impression. As stated on page 222 of her book *Becoming an Inclusive School* (Aow et al., 2022):

"It is our responsibility as educators to create an educational ecosystem that is a totally inclusive, liberated landscape where all learners have equitable chances to thrive."

With these words echoing in our ears, we recognized the need for transformative changes to ensure that learning at ICSA is accessible to our diverse student population.

Expanding Learning Support

Our inclusion journey began with an examination of our school population and reallocation of staff resources. With 250 students in the lower school, an increase in lower school learning support teaching staff was essential. Consequently, we expanded our team to include four dedicated professionals.

These learning support teachers collaborate closely with specific grade levels, enabling them to co-teach and provide targeted support tailored to each student's unique learning needs. They work in tandem with classroom and specialist teachers to ensure that all tiers of support are firmly grounded in research-based practices, with a strong foundation in universal design for learning.

[Continued on page 6](#)



International Community School of Abidjan staff



ICSA staff participating in SENIA professional development

This strategic decision guarantees that students in need of tier two and three support receive the individualized attention and care necessary for their success.

In the spring of 2023, we welcomed Remfrey Educational Consulting to conduct a comprehensive audit that provided us with an understanding of our strengths and areas for growth. Equipped with this knowledge, we have set ambitious goals to ensure that our school authentically embodies the principles of inclusion.

Empowering Our Educators with SENIA Certification

To gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of an inclusive classroom, ICSA embraced the SENIA International certification program. **SENIA International** is a non-profit organization that champions inclusion by empowering our global community to connect, learn, and advocate for one another. A significant aspect of SENIA's offerings is their robust professional development focus, which includes conferences and coursework.

SENIA launched its coursework in April 2022 and has already empowered over 300 educators with courses addressing topics such as Universal Design for Learning, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, and Understanding Behavior. Originally designed to support beginner to intermediate learning support educators, these courses have since found a warm reception among classroom teachers, administrators, and parents eager to better comprehend and support inclusion in their respective settings. In April 2023, SENIA introduced a new course platform and expanded its course catalog to include a Teaching Assistant certification, A Level Two certification and additional standalone

courses are anticipated in the spring of 2024.

By participating in this program, ICSA's homeroom teachers, learning support teachers, and learning assistants are gaining valuable insights and strategies to create an environment conducive to the success of every student. By the conclusion of the 2023-24 school year, an impressive 70% of the ICSA lower school staff will have received SENIA professional development through conferences and certification, with 26 educators obtaining full SENIA Level One Certification.

- Inclusion is not just the
- work of learning support
- teachers — it is the work of
- a community

ICSA acknowledges that building the capacity of staff across designations to support learners results in stronger systems and provides students and families with a sense of security through consistency. Inclusion is not just the work of learning support teachers — it is the work of a community.

Global Engagement

ICSA's commitment to inclusion transcends the boundaries of our school. We have proactively sent staff for training at SENIA Africa and SENIA Europe conferences, enriching their understanding of global best practices in inclusive education. We recognized that these conferences benefit the entire school community and thus ensured that administrators, teachers, and learning assistants had the opportunity to attend these enriching learning and networking experiences. When administrators embrace and model inclusive practices, it creates a fertile ground for staff to follow suit, defining

a culture of inclusion rooted in unified understanding and commitment.

On March 1 - 3, 2024, SENIA International will host a conference at International School Ho Chi Minh City under the theme "Designing for Inclusion." At this conference, ICSA's lower school principal, **Heather Naro**, and second-grade teacher, **Cindy Huling**, will present under the strand of "Designing Equity-Centered Pedagogy and Systems," sharing our school's inclusive journey to date.

Looking Ahead with Enthusiasm

Together, as a united school community, we are taking deliberate steps to build a more inclusive and supportive environment where all our students can flourish. We wholeheartedly believe that together, we will make the International Community School of Abidjan a place where every student shines. By fostering an environment that celebrates diversity, promotes accessibility, and embraces individual differences, we can collectively work towards an equitable educational landscape.

We believe that by sharing our experiences, we can inspire a wave of change that extends beyond our school and enriches the educational experiences of students everywhere.



You can learn more at seniaacademy.org, and [connect on LinkedIn](#). Find more about ICSA and connect [on LinkedIn](#).

References

Aow, Angeline; Hollins, Sadie; Whitehead, Stephen. *Becoming a Totally Inclusive School* (p. 222). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.



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For over two decades, Qatar Foundation (QF) has been nurturing young minds, driving innovation, fostering social development, and reshaping educational practice. At the heart of our work is the knowledge that our future lies in unlocking the most precious resource of all— human potential.

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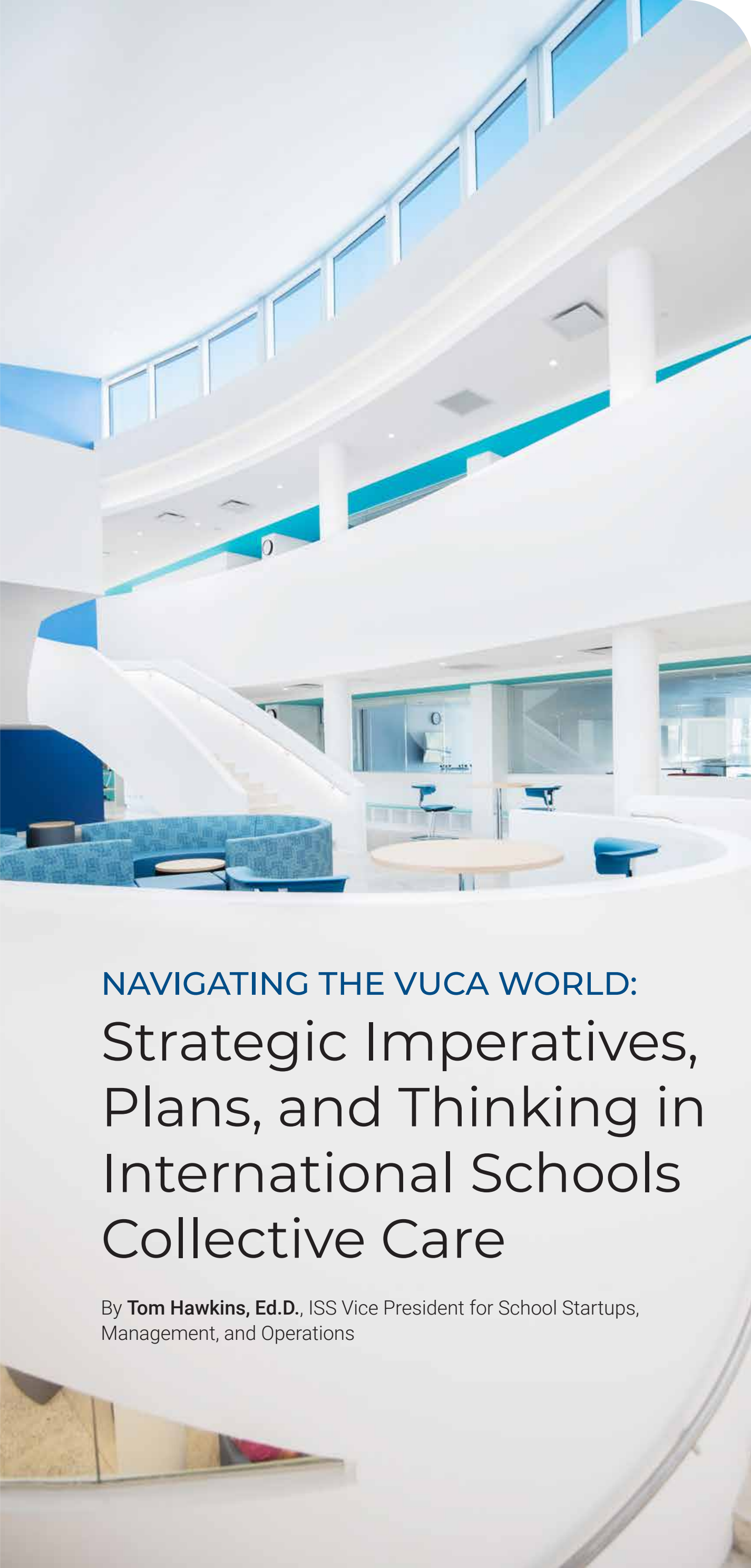
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NAVIGATING THE VUCA WORLD: Strategic Imperatives, Plans, and Thinking in International Schools Collective Care

By **Tom Hawkins, Ed.D.**, ISS Vice President for School Startups,
Management, and Operations

International schools are not immune to the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) forces of our globally connected world. Making sense of the local and regional challenges, prioritizing school initiatives, and planning for a preferred future are important elements of the success of any school.

Volatility	Uncertainty
Complexity	Ambiguity

Accreditation programs and processes help schools focus on the educational improvements needed, but strategic planning can help make sense of the VUCA imperatives which schools face. A well-crafted strategic plan serves as a compass, guiding schools toward preferred futures of educational excellence, innovation, and sustainability amid the VUCA forces at work around the globe.

Fostering Educational Excellence

Developing strategic thinking, strategic imperatives, and ultimately a strategic plan, helps schools focus on the desired future and educational excellence they purport to provide. International schools offer curricula that are diverse and inclusive, reflecting the global basis of the student and teacher population. A specific and articulate strategic plan provides a roadmap to align these educational objectives with international standards, ensuring a robust and competitive academic environment.

In addition, strategic planning enables international schools to identify and leverage their unique strengths, whether via specialized faculty, premier programs, multi-lingual fluency, cutting-edge facilities, or innovative teaching methodologies. By aligning these strengths to the challenges of the VUCA world, schools can better prepare students for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Attracting and Retaining Top Talent

Schools, and strategic plans, are only as good as the people who develop, empower, and nurture them. Attracting and retaining top talent requires creative thinking, strategic planning, and effective communication about the mission, vision, values, and benefits of being part of a specific international school.

Every good strategic plan should have what I call a “people” strategy to attract and retain great teachers, leaders, and support staff to deliver the best programs and education possible. Strategies should outline the professional development opportunities, competitive compensation packages,

[Continued on page 9](#)

and supportive work culture which make the school an attractive destination for educators seeking to make a difference in schools.

In addition, strategic plans should provide a clear and compelling mission and vision, with actions, which potential teachers and leaders are seeking in their next move. This shared, compelling mission and vision, does more to enhance school culture than maybe any single endeavor a school undertakes.

Financial Sustainability and Resource Allocation

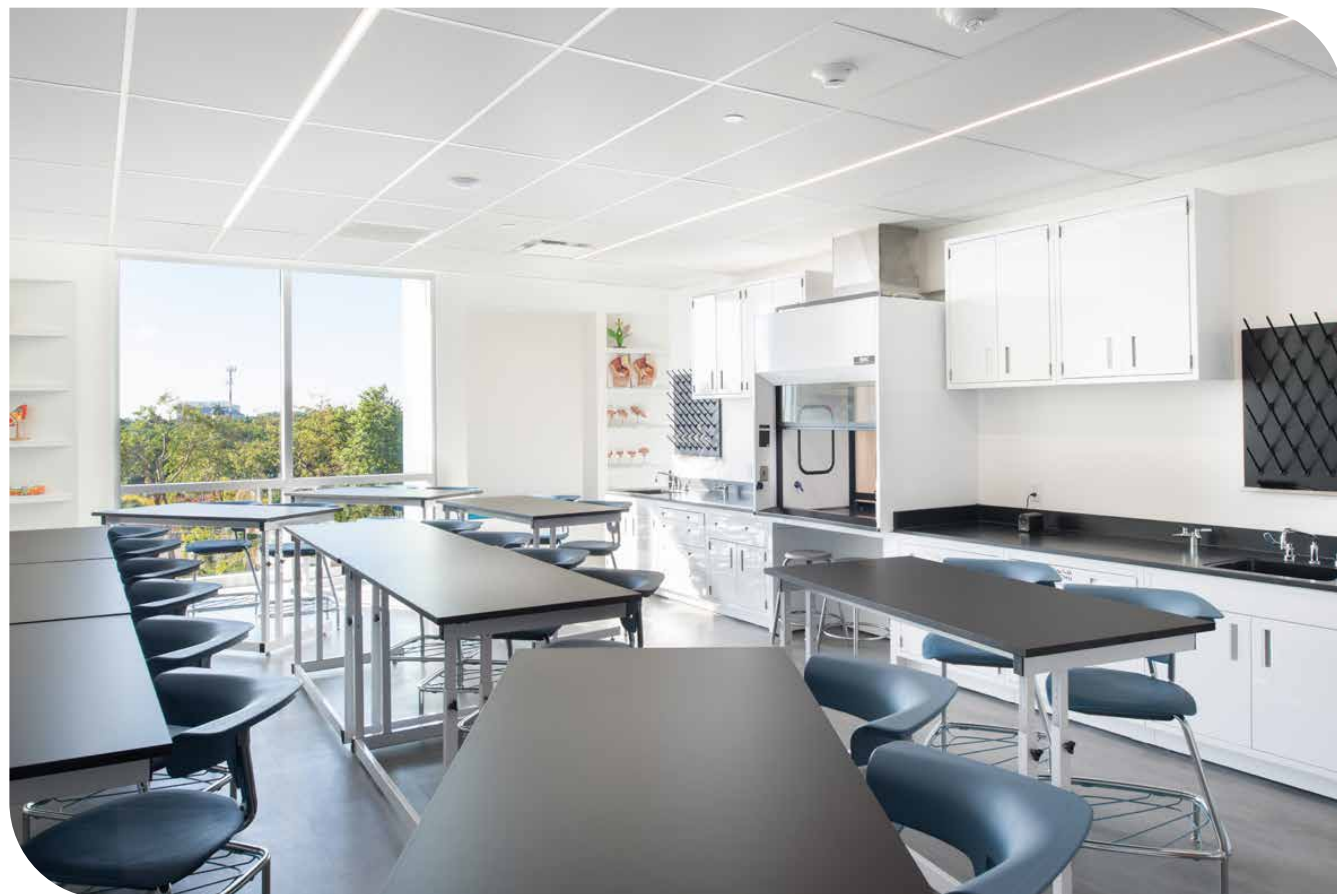
International schools are generally private, fee-paying schools set up to support the community in which they serve. Some international schools are non-profit entities while others are owned and sometimes operated as for-profit entities. Regardless of the motivation or purpose of the school, financial sustainability is imperative, though it may be the hardest issue to discuss. Without a strategy to be financially sustainable, even international schools risk becoming irrelevant in the VUCA world.

Good strategic plans address the sustainability questions by establishing clear enrollment targets, setting specific financial goals, optimizing resource allocation, and identifying potential "alternative" revenue streams if needed to support the school beyond what can be generated through tuition and fees alone.

Strategic planning can also facilitate effective budgeting through establishment of clear investment priorities (i.e. new or refurbished facilities, more or different staff, enhanced science equipment, new technology/programs, etc.) to deliver on the mission and vision of the school. With so many competing priorities for funds, the strategic plan helps to focus on the mission-critical funding needed for the preferred future of the school.

Adapting to Technological and Pedagogical Advancements

The rapid evolution of technology has revolutionized the education sector, presenting both opportunities and challenges (think of what ChatGPT has meant for schools and the world this past year). A good strategic plan can empower international schools to navigate the tech landscape by outline a comprehensive approach to integrating digital tools effectively into the teaching and learning environment.



Cayman International School

Whether through the implementation of e-learning platforms, virtual classrooms, or interactive educational software, strategic planning ensures that schools stay at the forefront of technological advances by helping leaders and teacher focus on the intentional development of technology to enhance teaching and learning.

Strengthening Community Engagement

Our international schools thrive on a sense of community which extends well beyond the classrooms. Creating, nurturing, and sustaining this community is no small task, and left untended, the community engagement can wither and diminish over time. Strategic planning helps schools focus intentionally on community engagement among students, parents, faculty, and local stakeholders. Through initiatives such as cultural events, parent-teacher associations, and community outreach programs, our international schools can nurture and maintain that important sense of community and purpose.

Good strategic plans also enable schools to establish effective communication channels, keeping stakeholders inform about the schools progress, goals, and challenges. This communication and transparency builds trust and promotes a collaborative spirit which is essential to sustaining passion, excellence, and innovation in schools.

Conclusion

International schools are fabulous places to learn, teach, live, grow, and prosper. International schools often are key elements of communities around the globe. As schools grow and face the challenges of a VUCA world, the need for stability and strategy is paramount. Strategic imperatives, strategic thinking, and strategic planning are ways for schools to take control of crafting a preferred future. Focusing the plans on educational excellence, attracting and retaining top talent, ensuring financial sustainability, adapting to technological advances, and strengthening community engagement can provide the roadmap to navigating the VUCA world.

As international schools continue to play a crucial role in shaping the global citizens of tomorrow, strategic planning emerges as a guiding force, helping schools navigate the complexities of the VUCA educational world with Vision, Understanding, Clarity and Agility.

Tom has more than thirty years of experience as an educator, with a career spanning several international school leadership positions throughout Europe and Asia. You can learn [more about Tom's work here](#) and [connect on LinkedIn](#).

If you would like to learn more about how strategic planning may help you and your school, [learn more about ISS OPTimize](#).

FOSTERING TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP: Cultivating Caring, Critical, and Courageous Change-Makers in Our Communities through Learning to Action: Advanced

By **Joel Jr Llaban**, ISS Director of DEI; **Margaret Park**, Educational Leader, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Consultant, Facilitator, Educator; and **John Burns**, ISS Chief Innovation Officer

Learning to Action: Advanced is a comprehensive and transformative virtual program for leaders in international schools and organizations dedicated to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. As educational leaders within the Learning to Action program, we embark on a journey, not merely a course but a transformative experience for individuals and teams dedicated to advancing equity, inclusion, and justice in our own educational contexts.

Embracing Depth in Learning

In our advanced leadership sessions, we immerse ourselves in an exploration of essential skills, concepts, and strategies. These sessions confront critical issues – anti-racism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice – in educational settings. Each strand becomes a pathway: one to equitable recruitment, another to culturally responsive leadership, and the third guiding transformative initiatives within schools and organizations. These sessions are led by diverse facilitators who offer their experiences and expertise with the cohort.

Translating Vision into Action

Within our school-based or geo-based design teams, theory meets reality; concepts meet contexts. Here, we aim to translate ideas into tangible plans and outcomes grounded on the needs and realities of our communities. We hope that these learning aren't simply living in abstraction, but they're blueprints for real change, striving for environments genuinely equitable and inclusive as a consequence of intentional actions designed by leaders. **Lily Zheng**, author of **DEI deconstructed**, emphasized that "accountability is important".

They added, "diversity, equity, and inclusion work in organizations is about achieving diversity, equity, inclusion as tangible outcomes at a scale beyond the individual." It's this hands-on collaboration that fuels real transformation within our schools.

Nurturing Community and Collaboration

Our Coaching, Collaboration, & Community (CCC) Hours is a dedicated space nurturing collaboration, coaching, and mutual support. Here, we share more than ideas; we share experiences, challenges, and successes. These sessions, thoughtfully placed between learning strands, allow us to reflect, refine, and grow together.

Learning to Action transcends traditional professional development; it's a catalyst for agency and action. It doesn't confine participants to being recipients of learning but empowers them as active agents of change. Within school teams, the program fosters an environment where responsibility for action is embraced. Here, participants aren't just expected to show up; they're entrusted and encouraged to create and drive their own initiatives. "...eliminating structural barriers resulting from historical and present-day inequities", and "integrating a clear and unyielding focus on outcomes." (Zheng, 2023)

The Equity Design Collaborative provides a framework for change-making using design thinking. It values autonomy and recognizes that real change stems from the dedication and action informed by their leaders and communities.

Connect with **Joel Jr Llaban** on [LinkedIn](#) or [@JoelJrLlaban](#) on X; **Margaret Park** on [LinkedIn](#) or [@MargaretLPark](#) on X; **John Burns** on [LinkedIn](#) or [@j0hnburns](#) on X.

Which is the pathway for your team?



Pathway 1 - Establish your framework

Meet as a team (or work as an individual) and create and post your STAR. Geo team spaces have been established

Pathway 2 - Support others

Provide endorsement, resources, feedback, and more to other teams. Review and comment on feedback you have received.

Pathway 3 - Continue your research

Content harvest and curate resources that could support your efforts. Assets include: L2A Padlet, Past EDC prototypes, Equity Leadership Continuum Tool, Search, Generative AI

**Advanced Learning Strand 1
Inclusive & Equitable Recruitment**

All sessions are recorded.
Tuesdays
September 5, 12, 19, 26
2023 (8:00 - 9:30 EST)

**Advanced Learning Strand 2
Leadership for Educational Equity**

DEIJ Learning to Action Institute
Advanced
Tuesdays
January 16, 23, 30 2024 (8:00 - 9:30 EST)

What has the Advanced cohort been up to?

**Advanced Learning Strand 3
Leading DEIJB in Schools**

DEIJ Learning to Action Institute
Advanced
Wednesdays
March 13, 20, 27 2024 (8:00 - 9:30 EST)

Team of Facilitators

Advanced Sessions: **Collaboration, Coaching & Community Hours**
DEIJ Learning to Action Institute
Advanced
(8:00 - 9:30 EST)
2023: Aug 28, Nov 27, & Dec 11 | 2024: Jan 29, Feb 26, & Apr 22

Events and resources from Learning to Action: Advanced

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Ensuring All Children Reach Their Full Potential Through Literacy

By Judy Newman, Chief Impact Officer, Scholastic

2024. This is the year that we need to align behind one New Year's resolution: that all children deserve to realize their full potential.

We must also come to a common understanding once and for all that kids will not reach their potential without the ability to read. They will not be successful if they lack access to choose their own books and build their home libraries or the motivation to see themselves as readers.

And finally, let's agree on the obvious: little kids are not independent. They do not have access to transportation or bus fare to get to a bookstore, library, or even to school, on their own. They cannot learn to read unless someone teaches them. They won't be able to develop their vocabulary and express themselves, learn about new places and meet

new characters, expand their imaginations, and do well in school and in their chosen careers, without grownups who provide books they can choose to read and claim as their own, starting right from the beginning, from birth.

- Let's agree on the
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- not independent. [...]
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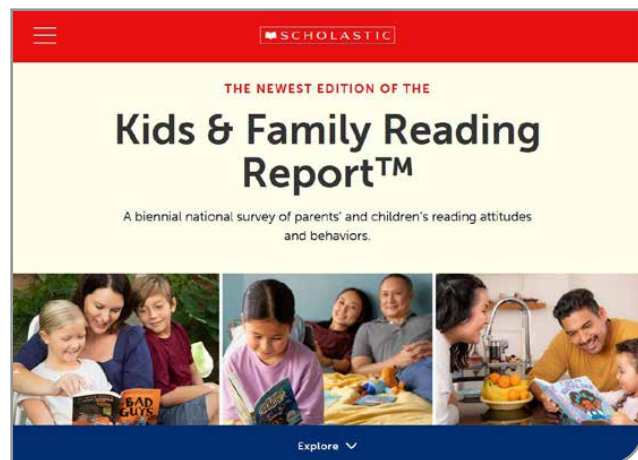
This is not a new phenomenon. Pages and pages of research from over the decades show that if kids cannot read well enough

by 3rd grade, their chances of being literate citizens are dismal. And current [research](#) shows that the number of kids reading well in 3rd grade is going down each year.

Research from the Scholastic [Kids & Family Reading Report™](#) shows us that 96% of parents agree that every community needs to have a public library, every child needs to have a school library, and every child needs to have books at home. Yet, according to the [National Literacy Trust](#), nearly one in five kids in England between the ages of five and eight report not having a book of their own at home, and [many kids in the U.S.](#) from low-income households often have no access to libraries or bookstores. Students within rural areas, families with [lower incomes](#), and marginalized communities face book deserts.

[Continued on page 13](#)

The Kids & Family Reading Report data also shows that half of children who are Black (53%) or Hispanic (49%) have a difficult time finding books with characters who are like them, and more half of Black (52%) and Hispanic (59%) children age nine or older wish there were more books with diversity available, compared to children overall (44%).



[View more from the Scholastic Kids & Family Reading Report™](#)

Unlike a lot of overwhelming problems we are confronted with on a daily, horrifying basis, the literacy crisis is solvable. We can resolve to get our acts together and support all the adults who have the ability to ensure children have access to choose and own books they want to read and develop their literacy. We also know from the Kids & Family Reading Report and lots of other research, that is what most people want.

I have spent my entire career talking to anyone who will listen about the non-negotiable importance, and joy, of reading for all children. The thing to remember about children is that they are fully dependent on the adults in their lives – their families, teachers, religious and community leaders, and the systems that support them – to make sure they have the tools to learn to read and develop their fluency and identities as readers. Kids don't have the independent mobility or resources to guarantee their own literacy. They all need grown-ups to make it happen for them.

- We can resolve to get our acts together and support all the adults who have the ability to ensure children have access to choose and own books they want to read and develop their literacy

Some kids' grownups have everything they need to develop their children's literacy: money, access to well-run schools with

ample budgets and classroom teachers who are well-resourced and supported to do the excellent job they were trained to do. For some kids, the adults in their lives have easy access to wonderful, cozy bookstores, public libraries with richly curated shelves of books in which all kids can see themselves reflected, access to reading programs and after school activities, and literacy non-profit organizations such as [Reach Out and Read](#) and [Book Harvest](#) which support their reading journeys.

But, many kids' grownups do not have these reading luxuries. They do not have ready access to the tools to support their child's journey to becoming a reader. Books are expensive. For many kids, the only books they own are the ones their teachers buy with their own money for them. Folks do not know which books to choose. Sometimes grownups do not read so well themselves. They do not have familiarity or comfort with books and reading. So if the adults cannot help, the kids are out of luck.

In my new role as the first Chief Impact Officer at Scholastic, I am working across our company and with our hugely motivated partners to define what every grownup needs—which tools and resources and access are necessary. Additionally, we are developing alliances with organizations and individuals who can provide support to all grown-ups who must ensure literacy for all their children.

The newly released [Scholastic Philanthropic Impact Report](#) highlights some of our inspiring literacy partnerships. Across the globe, our mission at Scholastic is to deliver on our perennial New Year's resolution to increase book access and develop literacy for all children, regardless of their social, economic, or educational background.

Together, we have made excellent first steps in developing these partnerships which deliver some of the key ingredients to ensure literacy for all kids in the 21st century:

- **Books and resources at home.** [Save the Children](#) has been able to help ensure vulnerable children around the world have access to the books and educational resources they need most. Scholastic and Save the Children have worked together for 25 years to ensure learning journeys don't have to stop in times of crisis, and in the last school year alone, 1.2 million books were distributed to kids through these efforts.
- **Books in classrooms and school libraries.** [Room to Read](#) is a nonprofit that seeks to create a world free from illiteracy and gender inequality by helping children in historically low-income communities

develop literacy skills and a love of reading. To support their work, Scholastic provided more than 40,000 books for schools to build libraries in impoverished countries in 2022-23.

- **Motivating and Inspiring Literacy Strategies:** [Comic Kids](#) helps engage low-income kids in Title 1 schools, homeless shelters, and hospitals in literacy—and build their self-confidence—through the captivating characters found in comics and graphic novels.

Comic Kids Co-Founder **Reed Horth** says: "I think one of the biggest lessons kids are learning in our class is that circumstances don't determine the outcome and not everybody's got a linear path. If you think about Batman, Batman lost his parents, Spider-Man lives with his Aunt May, but... these characters overcame their circumstances. So, kids start to realize that maybe their circumstances aren't so daunting, and maybe they can also find how they're super as well."

- [...] Circumstances don't determine the outcome and not everybody's got a linear path

2024 is a bright new year, filled with possibilities and challenges. There is an ever-growing imperative for transparency, empathy, and communication. We must collectively lean into our New Year's resolution to ensure literacy for all children. As responsible adults, we need to work together – not against each other – to guarantee a world in which every child can read, express themselves, and be understood. We know how to do it: make sure all the adults who support children understand the importance of literacy for all and give them the resources and access to make it happen. Let's please make a collective New Year's resolution to support literacy for all. Everyone can be a literacy advocate.

If you are not sure how, please reach out to me at judy.newman@Scholastic.com.

Judy Newman is the Chief Impact Officer at Scholastic, where she leads efforts to ensure equal book access and literacy for all children through strategic partnerships.



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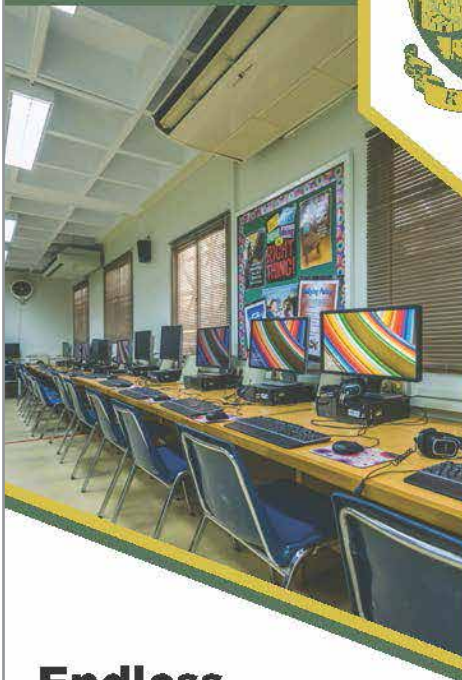
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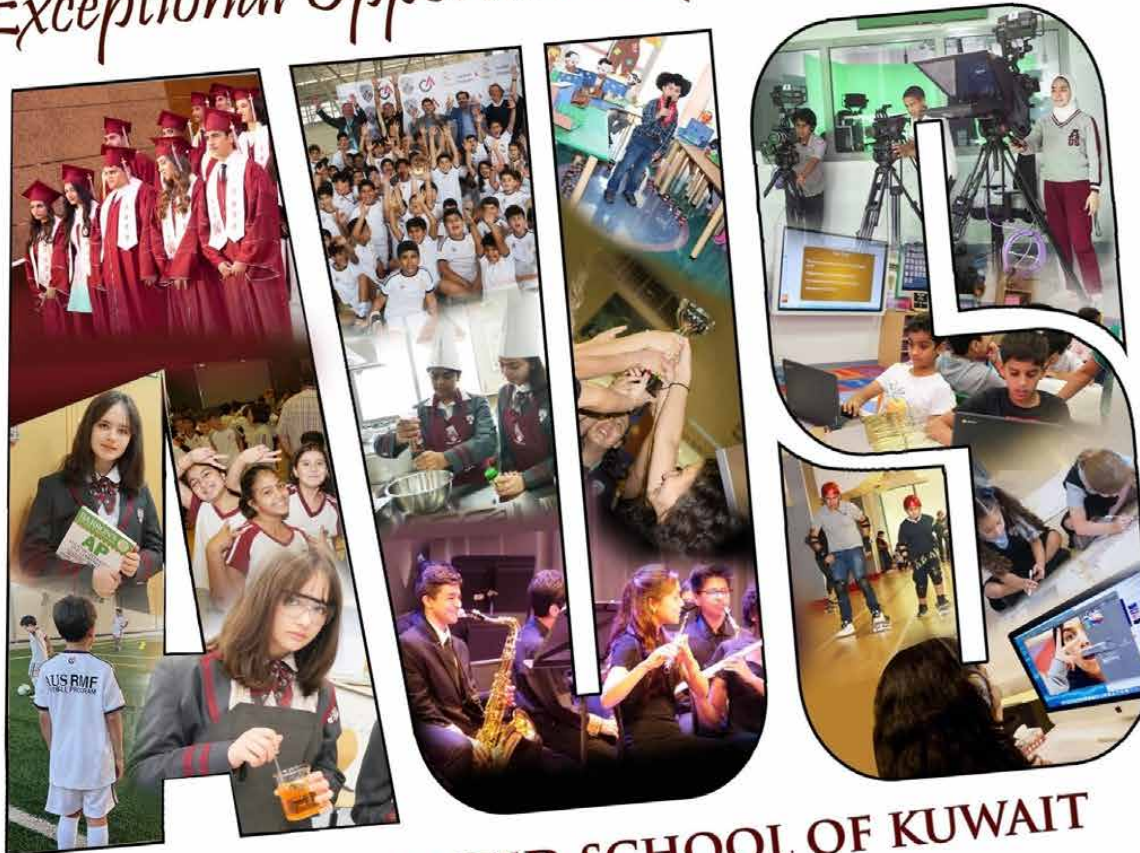
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FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY AND RESPECT: The Significance of Pronouns in the Workplace

By **Carla Lickun** (she/her), ISS Digital Designer

In today's workplace, sense of belonging and acceptance for one's true self significantly influences both overall job satisfaction and job performance. When individuals experience inclusion, they establish a deeper connection with the organization's mission. This connection comes from the awareness that their workplace is a space where authenticity is embraced and individuals can truly be themselves, visible and acknowledged.

Every person deserves to be addressed in a manner that aligns with their self-identified gender. Professionalism and sensitivity in communication are essential components of a thriving organization. Using and asking for correct pronouns is a direct reflection of respect for individual identities. Simple acts like adding your pronouns to your company signature or to your zoom handle, promote a fundamental foundation of trust and respect to those who receive your communications, internally and externally. It sends a message that you AND the organization are attuned to the diverse needs and experiences of its workforce. Inevitably, this message expands into creating a positive work environment.

- This open communication
- contributes to a more
- creative and dynamic
- work environment,
- where diverse ideas and
- viewpoints are valued

When individuals feel seen and acknowledged for who they are, they are more likely to engage in discussions, share their perspectives, and collaborate with their colleagues. Their overall job satisfaction and mental well-being are positively impacted. This open communication contributes to a more creative and dynamic work environment, where diverse ideas and viewpoints are valued.

Pronouns are powerful tools that shape the culture and dynamics of an organization. By recognizing the significance of pronouns and incorporating them into everyday communication, businesses can create environments that celebrate diversity, foster respect, and prioritize the inclusivity of all employees. It is a testament to an organization's commitment to creating a truly forward-thinking work environment.

This message holds great personal significance for me. I have many individuals close to me who identify as transgender and part of the LGBTQIA+ community. These experiences have heightened my sensitivity to the potential isolation caused by omitting pronouns and the inclusive atmosphere that can actually be fostered through such a simple gesture.

The uncomplicated and unobstructive action of incorporating pronouns into your routine business communication – whether in your email signature, on your Zoom screen, or during initial one-on-one interactions – can cultivate a sense of acceptance not only for transgender individuals but for the entire LGBTQIA+ community within your organization.

In a world that may not always be fully embracing, sharing your pronouns communicates to others that you see them, acknowledge them, and accept them.

Connect with Carla [on LinkedIn](#). Plus, you can follow along on the adventures of her rescue dogs on Instagram at [@miloandbernie](#).



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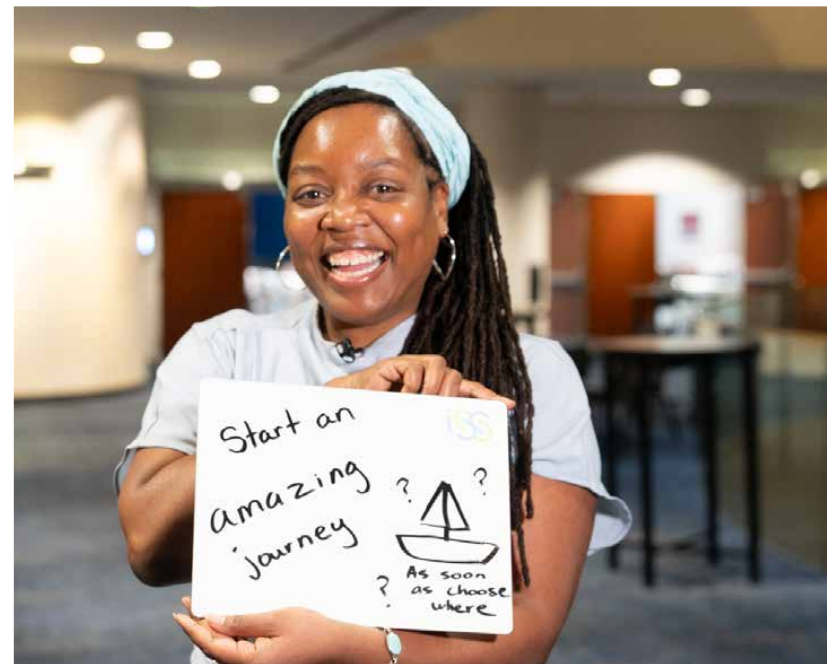
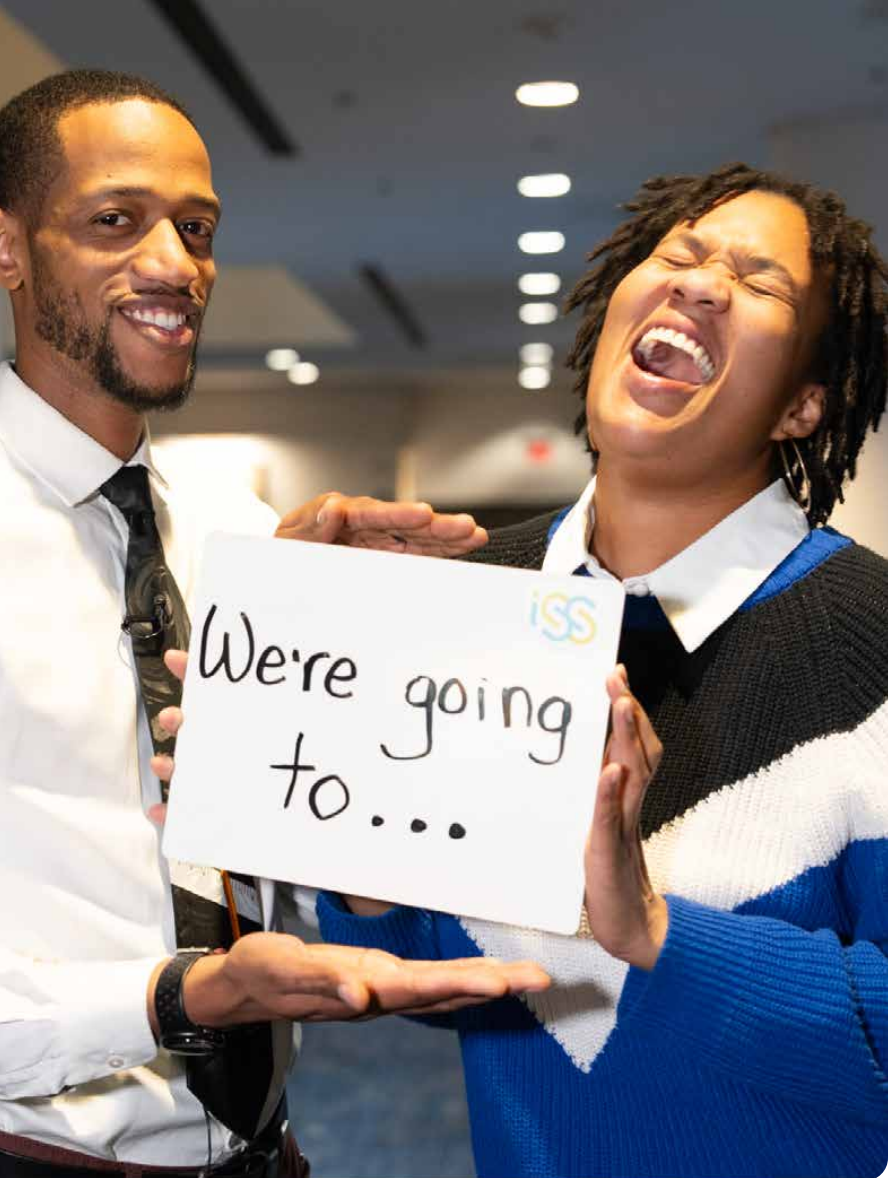
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Photos above and on the following pages are from this season's fairs in Bangkok, Atlanta, and New York City!



Thanks for a fantastic job fair season

By The ISS EDUrecruit® Team

Many thanks to all the international school recruiters and educators who helped make this season of ISS EDUrecruit job fairs a success! At both online ISS iFairs® and in-person events, we are honored to support vibrant networking, professional development, and the beginning of new chapters in international education.

There is more ahead, so mark your calendars – the job fair dates for the next season are now announced!

Save your place for the 2024-25 job fair season



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ISS EDUlearn®: Ask Me Anything

A Compassionate Odyssey in Global Education

By the ISS EDUlearn® Team

Embark on a transformative journey with *ISS EDUlearn®: Ask Me Anything*, a beacon of inspiration in the world of global education. Conceived in the fall of 2022 by **Mike Pierre**, a dedicated Virtual Events Producer & Manager at International Schools Services (ISS), and co-hosted by the insightful **Dr. Dana Specker Watts**, Director of Learning, Research, and Outreach at ISS, this podcast is not just a conversation; it's a sanctuary where stories of international education intertwine with the tapestry of the human experience.


Audience and Reach

Welcome to the *ISS EDUlearn®: Ask Me Anything* (AMA) Podcast, a platform presented by ISS that reaches far beyond the realms of traditional education. This isn't merely a podcast; it's a sanctuary where educators, administrators, and individuals from 39 countries, including the USA, Canada, UK, Ireland, and Germany, find solace. With over 35,000+ listens and downloads, it resonates deeply with the global community.


to share how much I enjoy the podcast, even though I'm not an educator. I feel like it benefits folks from all different backgrounds. I learned a lot from [Ettie's panel discussion](#) about Third Culture Kids and realized things about my childhood I never connected before. I love the [identity work that Daniel Wickner covered](#) in Season 2 and felt empowered to not feel ashamed of my hidden disabilities. I loved hearing what Dana and Nadine had to say about the push for equity in international schools."

This podcast goes beyond education; it touches lives and opens hearts.

Quotable Moments




Nneka Johnson and **Niassa Harris-Henry** in episode "Design Thinking and Primary Year Program" - [Listen to the episode](#)




"Go ahead and try. You are not going to break it. Just lean in. It's messy, but find someone to partner with and just do it."

Lori Boll in episode "Empowering Students' Executive Function in a Teenage Brain" - [Listen to the episode](#)



"When students don't have a fully functioning frontal lobe yet, we need to lend them our frontal lobe."

Danielle View in "Networking, Interview Tips, and Skills Needed in International Schools" - [Listen to the episode](#)



"Everybody has a different perspective, and you must seek to understand others."

Achievements and Milestones

ISS EDUlearn®: Ask Me Anything is not just a podcast; it's a milestone-laden odyssey. With 53 episodes and 1600 minutes, this podcast has etched a profound narrative of wisdom.

Episode Highlights

Each episode is a nuanced exploration, a compassionate journey through the realms of education. As you navigate through the sessions, co-hosted by Mike and Dana, you encounter insights that transform. Let's delve into two key takeaways:

- **Zack's Video Game Integration:** Zack, a high school teacher at ELLIS Preparatory Academy, brings a fresh perspective to education by incorporating video games into lessons. The main takeaway? Education is evolving, and innovative teaching methods, like game-based learning, can profoundly impact student engagement. [Listen here](#)
- **Ricardo's Breath Workouts Wisdom:** Ricardo's session on the benefits of breath workouts is a breath of fresh air. Beyond stress relief, breath workouts become powerful tools for students. The episode inspires a shift in perspective, emphasizing the significance of holistic well-being in education. [Listen here](#)

Impact and Feedback

Molly Fae, ISS Customer Support and Technology Coordinator, eloquently captures the essence of the podcast's impact: "I want

Collaborations and Engagement

The podcast actively engages its audience through live events, Q&A sessions, and interactive elements. The bridge between recording and release ensures that the audience's questions from live courses on the ISS EDUplatform find their way into the recorded episodes, creating a seamless connection.

Ads from ISS departments and partners like Inspire Citizens, SENIA, and REAL Discussions are set to grace the podcast, further enhancing its richness.

Future Plans

Join Season 4 starting February 2024. With a focus on DEIJ, Tech, and Well-Being, the future promises a deeper exploration of topics that resonate with the soul.

ISS EDUlearn®: Ask Me Anything is a compassionate voyage in global education, co-hosted by Mike Pierre and Dr. Dana Specker Watts. More than a podcast, it's a lighthouse guiding educators, administrators, and curious minds through the ever-evolving seas of international education.

You can connect with Mike Pierre on [LinkedIn](#) and [@Ayitis_Sigmaman](#) on X, and Dana Watts on [LinkedIn](#) and [@teachwatts](#) on X

A Personal Statement from Podcast Host Mike Pierre

Dear incredible listeners, educators, and fellow change-makers,

I wanted to take a moment to share a heartfelt note of gratitude and reflection. Behind each episode of ISS EDUlearn®: Ask Me Anything lies a tapestry of dedication, passion, and countless hours of background work. From the planning stages, recording sessions, meticulous editing, to the strategic posting and spreading the word – it's a journey that, while demanding, is undeniably worth every effort.

Seeing the podcast reach over 24,000 downloads across 64 countries, with a thriving community in the US, Hong Kong, Italy, and Germany, is incredibly rewarding. Your engagement, support, and feedback have transformed this podcast into more than just a series of episodes; it's become a vibrant global community, resonating with listeners from various backgrounds and professions.

The impact of ISS EDUlearn is profound. Molly Fae, our Customer Support and Technology Coordinator, beautifully captures how the podcast transcends the realm of education, touching lives and offering valuable insights to individuals from diverse backgrounds. Knowing that the conversations we share empower listeners, spark introspection, and bring about positive change is the driving force that keeps us going.

Recording each episode, editing every conversation, and ensuring that every listener is aware of the podcast's existence is a responsibility we take seriously. It's a labor of love because we believe in the power of education and the potential for positive transformation that each episode holds. Your ongoing support fuels our commitment to providing transformative insights, highlighting innovative ideas, and deepening our collective understanding of global education.

As we explore diverse topics and look ahead to Season 4 with a focus on DEI, J,

Tech, and Wellbeing, your enthusiasm and engagement are our greatest motivators.

So, to each listener who has shared, liked, subscribed, and left a review, thank you! It feels good to know that the collective effort, the late-night editing sessions, and the hustle to make ISS EDUlearn a part of your routine are making a positive impact. Let's keep this journey going, one insightful conversation at a time. Feel free to reach out, share your thoughts, and be a part of the ISS EDUlearn community. Together, we're creating something truly meaningful.

With sincere appreciation,

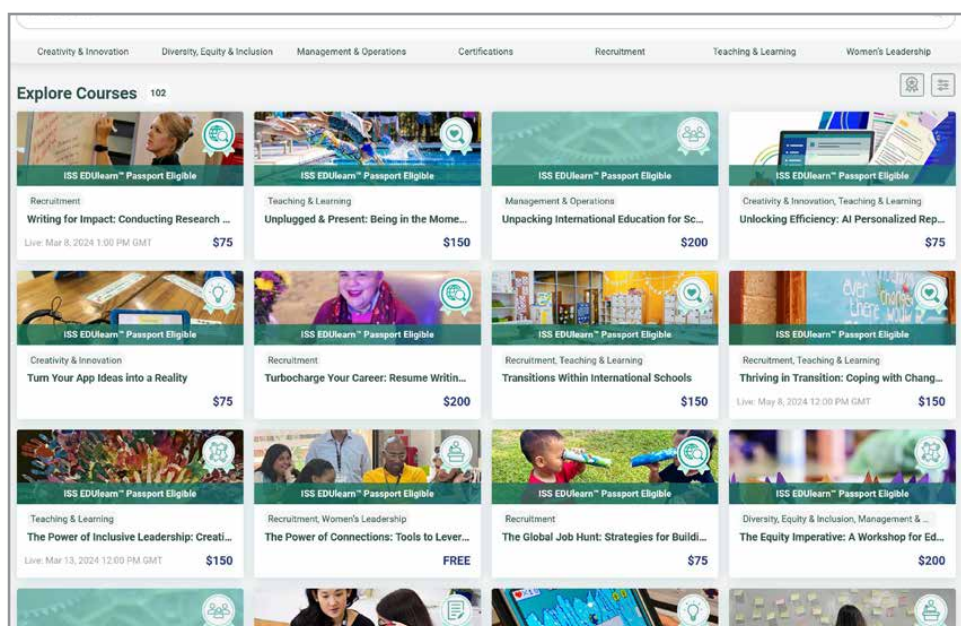
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Host, ISS EDUlearn®: Ask Me Anything;
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ALTERNATIVE TO SERVICE LEARNING: Framework for Harm Reduction in International School Service Learning

By **Emily Meadows**, LGBTQ+ Consultant for International Schools; **Tiwana Merritt**, PreK-12 Service Learning Coordinator/Teaching & Learning Coach, American International School of Johannesburg; **Emily Zien**, Health and PE Teacher; **Haakon Gould**, CAS Coordinator/Service Learning Coach/Individuals & Societies Teacher, Shanghai Community International School

Global events of the past few years have acted as an opportunity for members of the international school ecosystem to reflect on what we truly mean when we promote ourselves as internationally minded, global citizens. Courageous educators and leaders have pushed these DEI/J/B conversations to the front, with organizations like [Association of International Educators and Leaders of Color \(AIELOC\)](#), the [Diversity Collaborative](#), the [International School Anti-Discrimination Task Force](#), and the [Organization to Decolonize International Schools \(ODIS\)](#) leading the way.

Our team first came together with the desire to address the ways in which our attempts to build a better world in fact uphold manifestations of white supremacy and [saviorism](#). We wanted to develop a way to support international school community members in reducing possible harm and increasing meaningful intentionality within service learning programs.

Why First, we wanted to cultivate awareness around possible harm that may be caused by service learning. [Intentions do not always match impact](#). Throughout our work, we shared anecdotal stories about service learning trips and projects to 'fix' issues or causes outside the school campus, despite internal work within a school community around that cause not being addressed.

Who Through thoughtful reflection, we hope to acknowledge and recognize the tendency towards going elsewhere to 'solve' issues or contribute to a cause, instead of first looking internally at the root of those issues or the way that issue shows up in our own school community. Additionally, we wanted to highlight how privilege and positionality can sometimes embolden us to think that we have the expertise and tools to fix issues in communities outside our own, especially if it means we get to feel 'good' about ourselves by way of feeling a sense of elevation over others.

Service practitioners are uniquely positioned to support community members to understand their current and potential impact on important global issues. This tool is specifically designed to be used by international school communities (including students) seeking to reduce harm and to instead build more effective service learning experiences that promote responsibility, accountability, dignity, and humanity for all involved.

What Together as a team, we designed a practical tool that can be used to assess current and future service learning in an ongoing reflection to deepen the intentionality of values and impacts made during service learning in international schools. Our tool addresses how ethics, power, privilege, and identity may increase or reduce harmful practices associated with service learning.

How When considering an existing or possible service learning experience, our reflective tool allows participants to walk through a structured flow chart step by step with members of your community, including students. Critical and honest answers to each question will invite you to either carry on to the next step, or guide you to relevant resources to investigate further development of that particular area.

As a community-oriented project, we encourage international school members to access our reflective tool linked below, as it is freely available. Our intention is for this tool to evolve alongside our collective service learning work, so we welcome any thoughts or feedback regarding how this tool supports your school's endeavors.

View "The Framework for Harm Reduction in International School Service Learning" [here](#).

Connect with the authors:
Emily Meadows: emilymeadows.org
Emily Zien: HealthEdWithMsZ.com
Tiwana Merritt: [@tiwana_merritt](https://twitter.com/tiwana_merritt) on X
Haakon Gould: [LinkedIn](#)

Samples from the [Framework for Harm Reduction in International School Service Learning](#)

IGNITE SPEAKERS



Dr. Peter Bateman
Executive Director, AISA



Elizabeth Imende,
Incoming
Executive Director, AISA



Dr. Dan Jubert
Board Chair, AISA



DIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE



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FEBRUARY 12, 2024
8:00-9:00 AM (NEW YORK TIME)

**PATHWAYS TO TRANSFORMATION:
CULTIVATING INTENTIONAL CHANGE IN
GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP**

Thanks to all who joined the Diversity Collaborative February 2024 Member's Meeting!

Save the date for the next virtual gathering in May 2024.

IGNITE SPEAKER



Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz
English Professor, Columbia University &
Researcher of Racial Literacy
Development in Teacher Education

2023-24
DIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE



MEMBERS' MEETING

MAY 6, 2024
8:00-9:00 AM (NEW YORK TIME)

**THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE SELF
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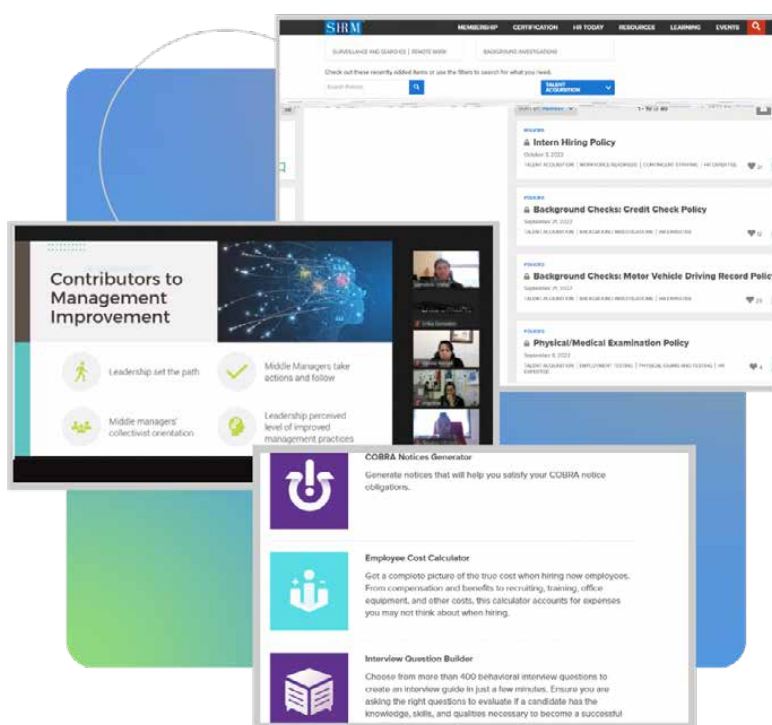
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"Calm the Noise"

7 Ways to Meaningfully Integrate Generative AI in International Schools

By **John Burns**, ISS Chief Innovation Officer

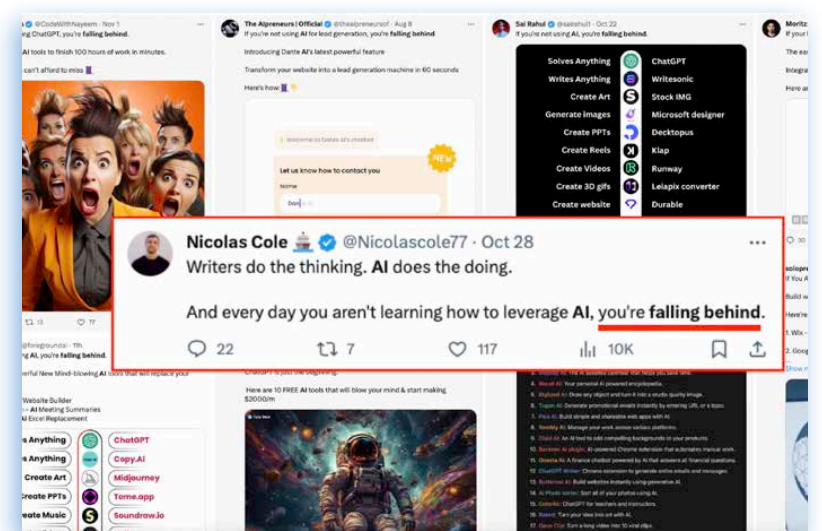
In the dynamic world of international education, embracing emerging technologies such as generative AI presents us with a range of challenges and opportunities. These tools have the potential to be transformative in many areas, offering new ways to enhance how we teach, learn, and operate. But it's not just about adopting technology; it's about reshaping educational experiences to be more inclusive, effective, and innovative.

Here are seven considerations for those interested in integrating generative AI in their context.

1. 'Calm the Noise'

It's easy to get overwhelmed by all the AI hype, particularly on social media, where if you're not adopting bleeding edge technologies, you're apparently "falling behind."

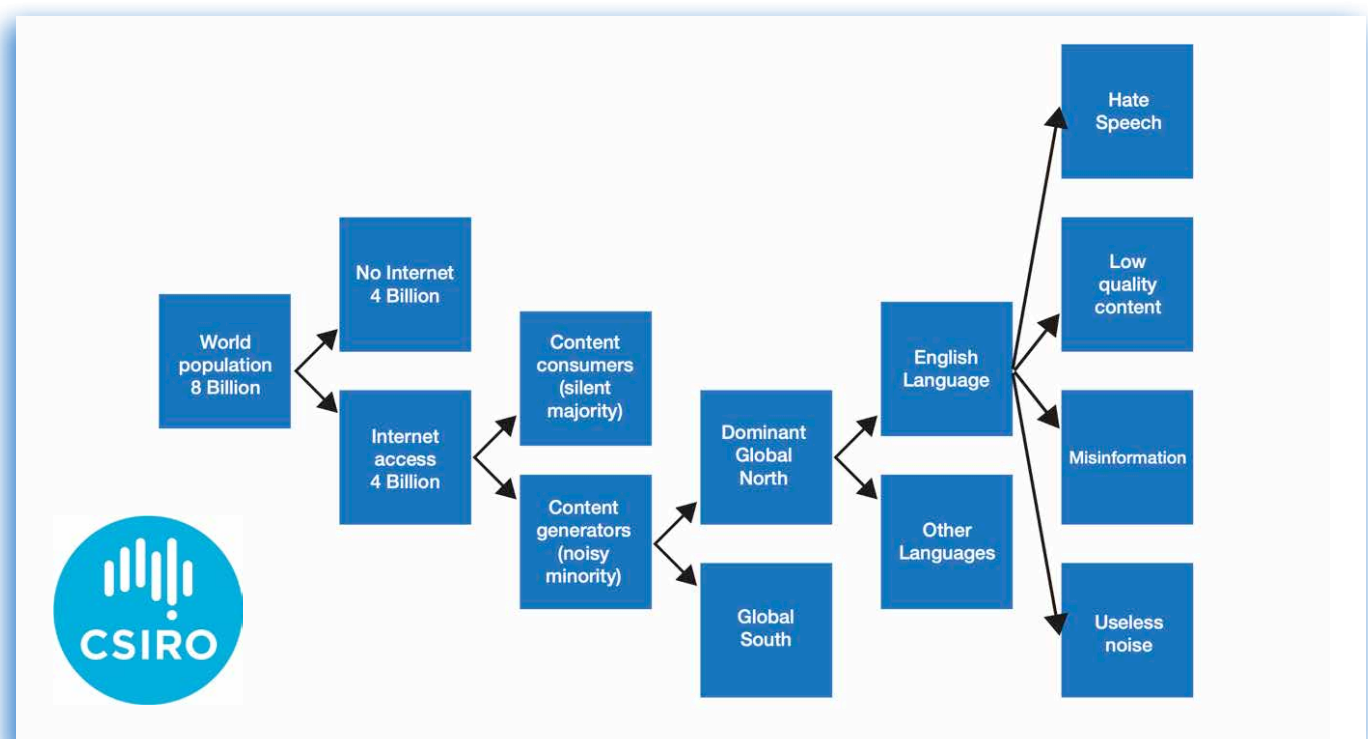
In the recent ISS EDUlearn workshop [Harnessing Generative AI to Support Multilingual Education](#), facilitator [Ceci Gomez-Galvez](#) offered a refreshing perspective. She emphasized the importance of centering efforts on the needs of those you directly impact; students, teachers, classes, communities, and/or school. This approach serves as a reminder to focus on practical and meaningful applications of AI in education, rather than getting swept away in the social media frenzy.



Samples of "the noise" around Generative AI

2. Recognize Inequity and Bias

This graph by the CSIRO vividly demonstrates just way one in which generative AI can continue to perpetuate existing biases. These models, trained predominantly on data from English-speaking and internet-rich regions, can echo these imbalances, sidelining non-English languages and diverse cultural narratives. In K-12 education, it's critical we highlight and discuss these disparities with the wider community to ensure there is heightened awareness of the ways in which we should evaluate and apply these technologies.



Examples of "exclusion" in Language Learning Models (Introduction to Responsible AI Engineering workshop, CSIRO, 2023)

[Continued on page 25](#)

3. Stay Informed

As AI continues to weave its way into the fabric of education, here are two solid reads worth checking out. First up, the U.S. Department of Education's [Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Teaching and Learning](#). It's packed with insights on how AI can transform education via personalization, adaptivity, and feedback, while highlighting the importance of keeping "Humans-In-The-Loop."

Then there's UNESCO's [Guidance for generative AI in education and research](#), which does an effective job of providing high level provocations, policy advice, risk mitigation strategies, and discrete pedagogical practices.

4. Maximize Your AI Tool Experience

Navigating the world of AI tools can be both thrilling and complex. To truly harness their potential, consider these essential strategies:

- **Leverage Your Personal Expertise:** The key to effectively using AI tools lies in applying them within your own professional domains. When you have a firm grasp of the subject at hand, you're better positioned to judge the accuracy and relevance of the AI's output. Your expertise acts as a critical lens, helping you discern the veracity of the information provided, and what needs to be modified or excluded as a result.
- **Gain AI Experience:** Familiarity with AI grows through regular use. The more you interact with these tools, trying various prompts and approaches, the more adept you become at guiding the AI to produce the desired results. This experience is crucial for learning how to effectively communicate with and direct AI systems.
- **Have a Clear Vision:** Clarity about what you want to achieve with AI is essential. A well-defined goal or vision aids in formulating precise and purposeful prompts, leading the AI to generate responses that are better aligned with your objectives.

5. Tap into the Collective Wisdom

Design sprints can be an effective strategy for uncovering and expanding the practical applications of Generative AI in your respective context. These sessions should involve a diverse range of participants, including educators and administrative staff, and a dedicated block of time together. By guiding this community through this collaborative process, you can recognize existing professional expertise and create applications of AI that are truly beneficial to the entire organization.

6. Boost productivity with a new type of prompt

Navigating AI tools for content creation can be time-consuming, especially when it involves crafting prompts, reviewing outputs, and then refining responses for better results. To streamline this process and boost efficiency, consider utilizing an interactive prompt with simple numerical inputs. This approach not only saves time but also allows for easy customization to fit different educational contexts. Just copy/paste [this prompt](#) and give it a try. Also, feel free to modify it to better suit your task, role, or context.



Two resources to stay informed: From UNESCO and the US Department of Education

7. Think BIG!

While exploring AI's potential for productivity and learning design, it's equally important to think ahead. Encourage conversations that push boundaries and envision the future of learning. How might we leverage AI as a lifelong mentor, for personalized learning pathways, real-time feedback, smart content generation, and more, while always keeping 'Humans-in-the-loop'? It's also essential to consider the influence that technology firms may have on the ways we leverage these tools in educational settings. Addressing these questions is crucial step in identifying applications of these technologies that align with our educational values and vision of learning.

Happy exploring!

You can connect with John on [LinkedIn](#) or [@j0hnburns](#) on X.

If you're interested in exploring more ways you can thoughtfully incorporate Generative AI into your educational context, check out the ISS EDUlearn® [AI Bootcamp](#) bundle. This package of three virtual professional development courses is offered for just \$150 USD.

SHAPING THE FUTURE:

Enhancing Retention and School Culture Through Strategic Professional and Organizational Development

By Yael Cass, PhD., ISS Director of School Operations Services

In our collective pursuit of enhancing school culture, employee engagement, and student success, we place a strong emphasis on the development of an organization and the cultivation of a positive school culture. This is especially crucial in international schools, where the distinction between academic and non-academic staff presents unique challenges and opportunities.

We are committed to hiring the best educators and offering them world-class opportunities for a significant reason. Schools are in a constant battle to attract top talent. This competition revolves around who can offer more benefits and opportunities. In this race, it's easy to overlook the fact that educators, while being vital organs of our schools, do not operate in isolation. They share their educational space with other professionals who are equally important to the smooth operation of a school. The Yin and Yang philosophy serves as an apt metaphor for this scenario, where opposite forces are interconnected and counterbalancing.

In the context of a school environment, the Yin and Yang metaphor extends beyond its traditional meaning. It symbolizes the harmonious balance needed between different roles within the educational ecosystem. Just as Yin and Yang represent complementary forces in nature, in a school setting, academic and non-academic staff are two sides of the same coin, each playing a crucial role in maintaining the equilibrium of the school's environment.

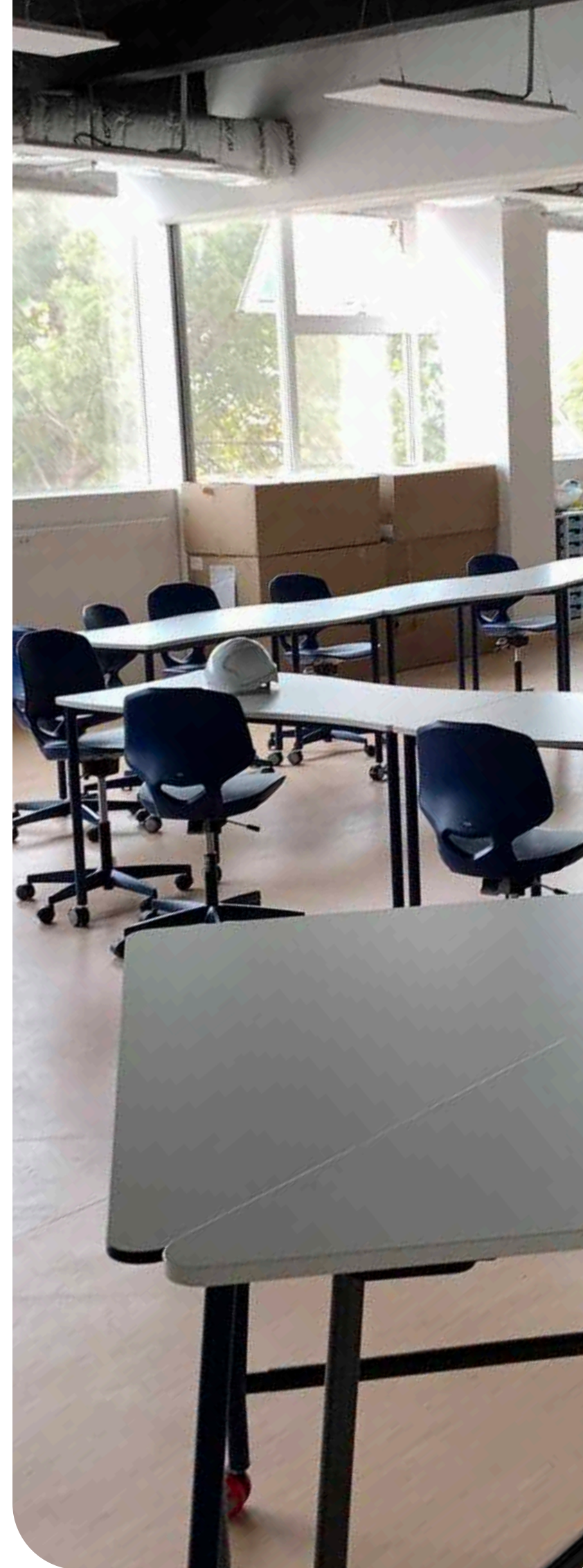


The academic staff, or the 'Yang', are the visible and celebrated aspect of school operations. As frontline educators, they directly impact student learning and development with their dynamic and outward-facing roles, actively disseminating knowledge and skills.

Conversely, the non-academic staff, or the 'Yin', though less visible, are equally vital. They provide essential support and infrastructure, including administrative, maintenance, and operational roles, crucial for the academic side to flourish and for the overall success of the school. In the ideal school environment, these two forces coexist in harmony, each acknowledging and supporting the other.

- In the ideal school
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At the heart of this dynamic is the notion that employees, regardless of their role, must be treated in a manner that not only acknowledges their contributions but also fosters a sense of belonging and motivation. Fostering career development opportunities is vital for organizational growth and employee motivation. It's about providing equal opportunities for professional growth and career advancement for both educators and non-educators. Traditionally, educators have limited career development options, primarily between instructional roles and leadership roles. Being creative and innovative in this realm can provide avenues for supporting and enhancing opportunities for educators, making them feel valued without necessarily investing more resources. The allocation of resources for professional development should be considered with a deep understanding of the internal learning gaps and skills gaps, while also paying attention to the strategic plan and direction the school is taking, as well as staff career development aspirations.



Developing a system where career development is reflected in the current salary scales through small increments is essential. This system should recognize not only the completion of full educational degrees but also ongoing professional development that directly impacts efficiency or enhances capabilities. Such an approach will boost employees' confidence, self-efficacy, and motivation. Additionally, measuring the success of professional development

[Continued on page 27](#)



"Shaping the Future." continued from [page 26](#)

local staff, this investment in professional development is not just about enhancing their skills; it's about empowering them with the opportunity to compete on a global stage, should they choose to pursue opportunities beyond their home country.

The development of an organization and the nurturing of a positive school culture in international schools hinge on a nuanced understanding of equity. It's about recognizing that while equal pay might not always be feasible, the commitment to providing equitable opportunities for professional growth is both a moral imperative and a practical necessity for productivity and growth. By investing in the development of all employees, international schools can create a more motivated, loyal, and diverse workforce, ultimately enriching the educational experience for students and their families.

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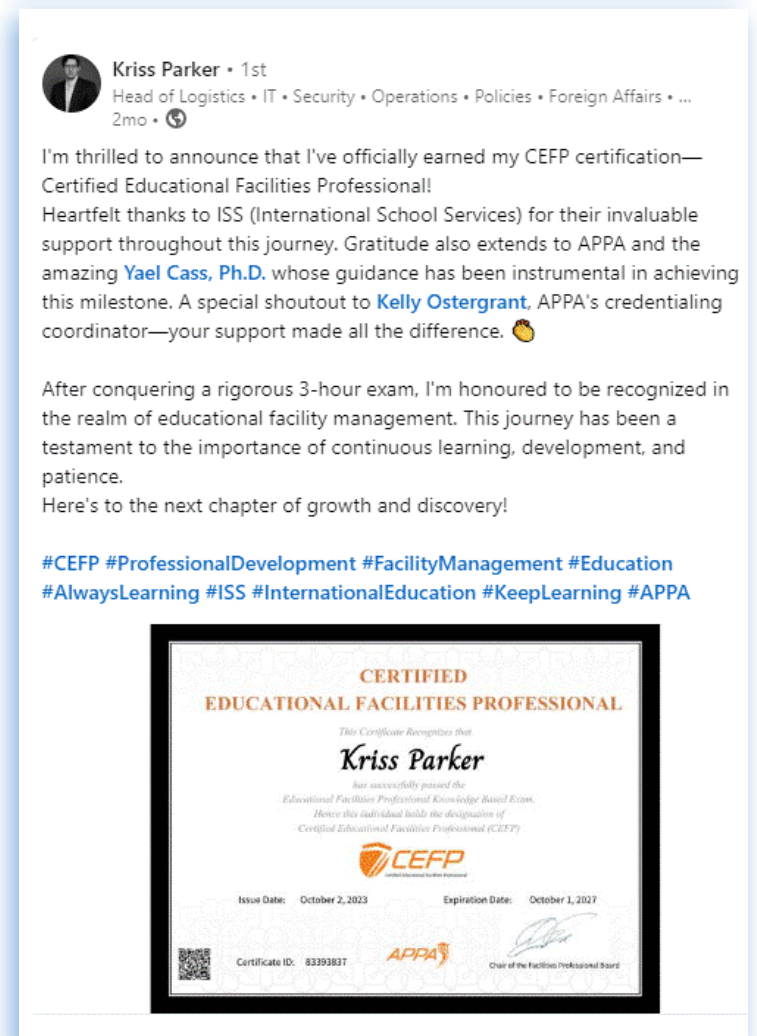
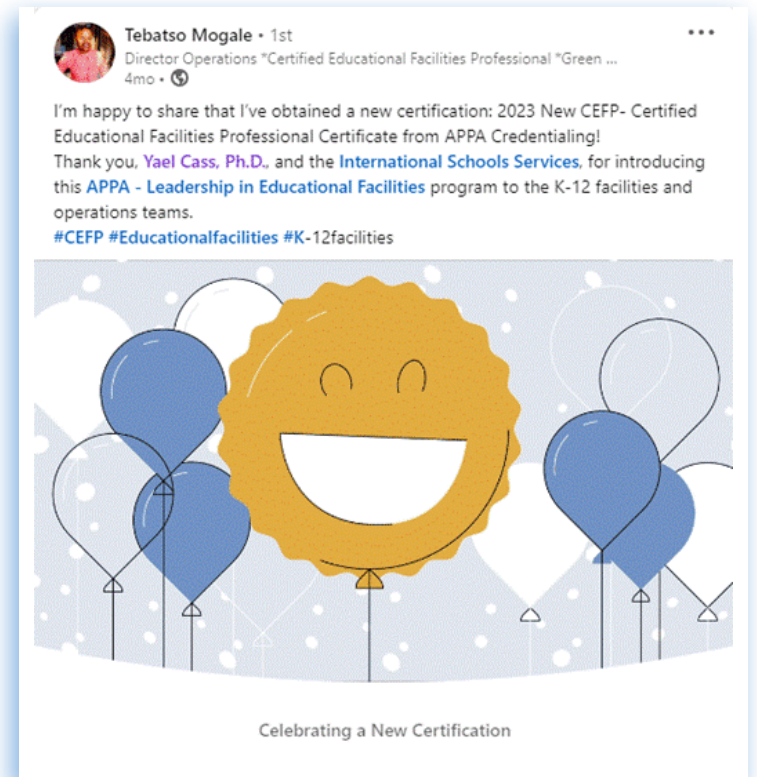
Recognizing and understanding these nuances, ISS offers industry-based, globally recognized certification and training programs for operations staff, like in HR or educational facilities management. These opportunities expose local staff to international standards and enable them to lead and become experts in their fields. We have already seen graduates with certifications who attest they feel empowered and that this has helped them to better lead and feel confident and empowered. This kind of professional development not only enhances individual capabilities but also elevates the overall standard of the institution, contributing to a more robust and effective educational environment.

If you are interested in organizational development and operations services that will assist you in developing a systematic professional development system to enhance and improve school culture and operational efficiency, [please reach out to us](#). Our team, equipped with extensive expertise and a commitment to educational excellence, is ready to provide tailored solutions that meet your unique needs and aspirations. [Learn more here](#).

You can connect with Yael Cass [on LinkedIn](#).

initiatives and their impact on organizational growth and development is crucial for the effective allocation of resources.

This systematic approach to professional development means that resources can be invested where they are required and will also allow the professional development of local staff, offering them pathways to acquire skills and qualifications that could elevate their careers to an international standard. For



Milestones from school operation professional development participants



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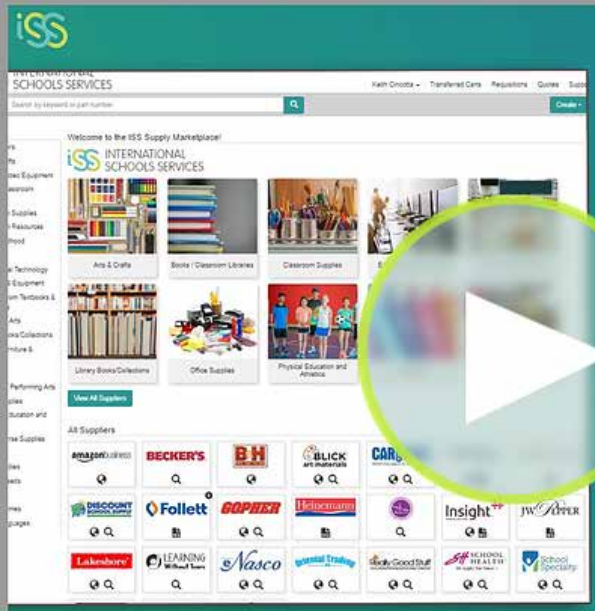
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CIS is a private, university preparatory, non-sectarian, co-educational school for students from two years old through Grade 12



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A Teacher's Role Before, During, and After a Disruptive School Safety Incident

By **Michael L. Johnson**, Founder and CEO of Clearpath EPM



Author **Chris Drew** cites some of his favorite ways to describe a teacher at helpfulprofessor.com. These include words like “passionate, committed, inspiring, warm, caring, and student-focused”. While these are beautiful words about teachers, I believe they are more descriptive of what qualities teachers possess that motivate them to become, and continue working as, a teacher versus what they must contend with every day in the classroom.

- I have learned in my
- practice that teachers really
- are on the front lines when
- it comes to school safety

While I have never been a classroom teacher, I have worked with, trained, and interviewed teachers while leading my school safety consulting business for the past 12 years. I have learned in my practice that teachers really are on the front lines when it comes to school safety. There they are, in the classroom teaching their hearts out for their students, facilitating the curriculum that the school has created, and at the same time being mindful of their role in keeping their students safe.

The “safety” role is significant for teachers when you consider that school safety has three components: social, emotional, and physical safety.

Social Safety

Teachers are constantly looking to make sure their students are socially integrated with each other. In their formative years, students are learning how to work and collaborate with each other, making friends, and nurturing each other. In the later years, the egos of students grow, and teachers are faced with the challenges of the different social dynamics of teenagers.

Emotional Safety

Teachers are constantly being asked to “read the room” to identify students who may be exhibiting behaviors of concern and then working with parents and counselors to address these behaviors. This may be the most difficult “safety” task for teachers because the emotions exhibited by a student could have a major impact on the entire class or school, creating disruptions to the order and flow of the lessons.

Physical Safety

Teachers are responsible for making sure that their students are not harmed by others (or by themselves) or by things or situations. For example, if you are a primary grade teacher, you must ensure that your students are not running around in a reckless or unsafe manner or if you are a secondary school teacher your concerns extend to all the things that teenagers can get into and do.

Most of the previous examples relate to a teacher’s role in the classroom or when he or she is on duty in the hallways, recess, or lunch times. Now add the teacher’s responsibility in a school’s emergency preparedness and response planning where they must keep their students emotionally and physically safe during a fire, bomb threat, active assailant, or other disruptive event at the school.

For this “safety” role teachers need to be trained in the various quick action response protocols, (such as lockdowns, evacuations, duck & cover) and, unfortunately, I’ve seen administrators forget the importance of the teacher emergency response training.

The same effort that schools put into the writing and teaching of curriculum for the classroom should be extended to the emergency response protocols and training for teachers and staff members. Students will follow the lead of their teachers when faced with a disruptive event or incident, so schools should make teacher preparedness training a priority. [On the following page](#), find a guide of a teacher’s role before, during, and after a disruptive event.

In the end, Chris Drew really did have it right. For teachers to take on all the roles they are responsible for, including that of school safety, they must be “passionate, committed, inspiring, warm, caring, and student-focused!”

[Continued on page 30](#)

Highlights of a teacher's role before, during, and after a disruptive event

Before

- Identifying potential disruptive behavior signs/ indicators (emotional & physical security)
- Communicating behavioral concerns
- Actively participating in Quick Action Response drills and training (as a teacher/staff member)
- Providing feedback to your Campus Emergency Team on the drills and training
- Knowing your students (and your own) capacity/ capability when under emotional stress
- Understanding what, where, and how to keep your students safe during an incident (physical safety/ security)

During


- Responding (versus reacting)
- Breathing
- Remaining calm
- Leading and communicating with students
- Maintaining contact with your Campus Emergency Team

After



- Recovering
- Reunifying students with parents (if needed)


Michael L. Johnson is the founder and CEO of Clearpath EPM, a Fort Lauderdale, Florida-based company that is the leading risk consultancy and technology firm supporting international schools around the world.

You can visit clearpathepm.com for more information. To enroll in "Safe Schools, Strong Communities: The Teacher's Role in Campus Security," the vital professional development course Michael Johnson hosted with ISS EDUlearn®, [please visit here](#).



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YIS Yangon International School

Yangon International School (YIS) is officially authorized as an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School. Our learning community has a campus in Yangon and a campus in Mandalay.

YIS YANGON

YIS, celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, is an international school dedicated to nurturing students from early childhood through grade 12. Our vibrant educational community is committed to fostering the holistic development of every child.

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YIS MANDALAY

Our Mandalay campus has brand-new facilities and an experienced team of international teachers ready to create the same thriving community as our Yangon campus has. The learning community caters to students from early childhood through Grade 10 and is also managed by ISS. We are excited to welcome students from Mandalay and the surrounding region to come and learn with us.

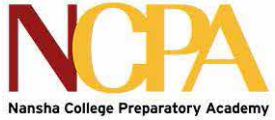
YIS.EDU.MM Yangon International School



Achieve Xiamen International School (AXIS)

AXIS is owned and managed by International School Services (ISS) through a joint venture and will serve the expatriate and international community of the Xiamen and Fujian region. We follow the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum and the U.S. Common Core Standards, adopting inquiry-based teaching and learning, and providing Advanced Placement (AP) in Upper Secondary School. AXIS is conveniently located in the heart of Xiamen and will bring ISS values and operating quality to the city.

You can learn more at <https://www.axis-school.org.cn>





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#MyFreedomDay 2024

By **Veronica McDaniel**, Faculty Sponsor of the Atlanta International School Students Against Human Trafficking Group

We are organizing the 8th annual #MyFreedomDay taking place on March 14th, 2024.

Please see the following message from **Leif Coorlim**, the Executive Editor of CNN Freedom Project, with more information:

#MyFreedomDay is an opportunity for schools around the world to show their support on behalf of the 10 million boys and girls trapped in modern day slavery. We encourage all people to participate in a day of action to support those working to free them.

The focus of the upcoming campaign is on forced child labor, and the children who do not have the opportunity to go to school. Our campaign is called "Little Hands," and we will be documenting

stories of child labor and showing the hands of the children who toil in the mines, fields, and factories around the world.

To show their solidarity and aversion to this form of slavery, we're encouraging classrooms in every country to post pictures of their students' hands to social media.

If you're interested, [please fill out this short form](#) to receive updates on the campaign. The first school in each country to fill out the form will be counted. Participation is free and entirely voluntary.

Schools will plan on-campus events, along with taking part in CNN's social media campaign leading up to the student-led

day of action. [Here](#) are some resources if you want help getting started, and some highlights from #MyFreedomDay [2023](#), [2022](#), [2021](#), and [2020](#).

Nonprofits, companies, and individuals can get involved by joining in this campaign and supporting this student movement by posting on your organization's social media, and website, and promoting raising awareness about human trafficking in your community.





AN INTERVIEW WITH CATHY ROPARS

"There is no such thing as a typical day"

ISS Communications with **Cathy Ropars**, ISS Educational Account Representative
Interview originally published in the [2023-24 ISS School Supply Supplement](#)

About 15 years ago, ISS welcomed Cathy Ropars to the team. She's been key to navigating changes and growth in ISS School Supply over the years. In this spotlight feature, get to know more about Cathy, her experiences supporting international schools, and what she's excited for on the horizon!

Hello Cathy! Could you share a bit about yourself?

I have lived in Pennsylvania, USA in Lower Bucks County all of my life. Currently I live in Yardley, Pennsylvania with my husband Mike. We celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary this summer with a trip to Disney World!

We have two children. Our oldest Jamie has been married to her husband Mike for 3 years. Our son Michael just got married to his wife Jessica in May. They both also live in Yardley having purchased homes over the last year; Mike and I have been spending a lot of time helping them paint, lay hardwood floors and redo bathrooms.

We are definitely a Disney family and have been going every year except during COVID. We like going during the Food and Wine Festival at EPCOT. During the festival, additional countries are represented in the World Showcase. This gives us the opportunity to try additional food and drinks from around the world.

- Honestly, anything
- which includes family is
- a source of enjoyment

We also enjoy the Jersey shore and try to spend a few days there a couple of times over the summer. Another area of enjoyment for me is music and theater. My daughter and I have attended numerous country music concerts as well as dance shows. We also enjoy Broadway shows. Honestly, anything which includes family is a source of enjoyment.

How did you start working at ISS? How has your experience evolved over the years?

Before ISS, I spent over twenty years processing mortgages for several mortgage companies. Eventually it was time for a change, which wound up being the opportunity at ISS.

My experience has evolved through the relationships I have developed and fostered both internally and externally over the years. There are a lot of good people that you always want to do your best for.

What does a day in your life working with ISS School Supply look like today?

There is no such thing as a typical day, as flexibility is the key to navigating through my day. I always start with a plan, but it usually doesn't take long for that to change. I can be in the middle of entering orders, but a call or urgent email needs shipment information. I can be getting ready to release an order, but another change comes in.

Generally, we are multi-tasking across several activities, across several schools, and following up across several time zones. Meeting those challenges and resolving issues is why I enjoy the job.

What advice would you offer to an international school considering its supply process?

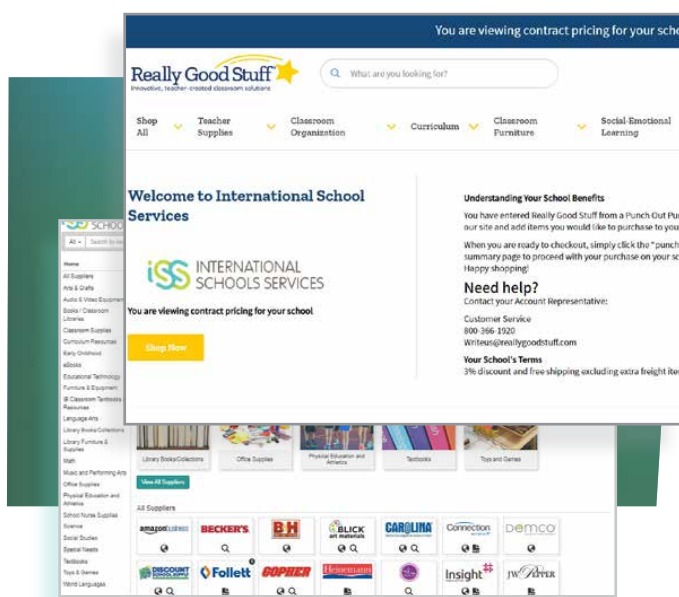
I would tell them that they should sign up with ISS School Supply! They would be working with a dedicated cross-functional team who strive to meet and exceed customer expectations.

While I may be a direct contact for schools and responsible for order processing and follow up, there are many other teams at work: from the warehouse shipping/receiving team, accounting staff, and more, ISS is full of people dedicated to a positive experience, supported by a committed management team.



Some snapshots of Cathy and her family adventures

[Continued on page 34](#)



The ISS Supply Marketplace and sample vendor page

We appreciate your engagement with the [ISS Cares](#) committee. Could you please share more about that work?

I got involved with ISS Cares because it closely aligns with one of my most important core values of giving back to those in need. At home as a family, we strive to make a difference through food donations, and supporting causes; we are on our second sponsorship of a child in need, this time from Bangladesh.

ISS Cares provided additional opportunities to be a blessing to others, so it was a natural fit. ISS Cares has allowed me to work in the Trenton Soup Kitchen, provide backpacks

and school supplies, as well as Thanksgiving dinner to those in need, and so many other causes. It makes me proud to be part of a company that understands the importance of giving back.

Much appreciation to Cathy for sharing her stories and reflections! Learn more how ISS School Supply can support you at [ISS.edu/School-Supply](#)

Anything particular you are excited about in this season ahead for School Supply?

I am always excited to exceed my school's expectations with every school year. Since COVID began end to end supply chain issues from securing required items, getting items shipped to ISS, and in turn shipping to our schools have presented unprecedented challenges. I am excited to continue to be a problem solver and overcome issues and challenges.

Additionally, I am excited for more schools to start utilizing School Supply Marketplace and developing the possibilities it provides.

Do you have any stories from your time at ISS that stand out?

The ISS drive for food, clothes, and medical supplies for Ukraine is something that has stood out to me. While I was aware of the situation, it was not until I got involved at this level that I realized the far-reaching affect that this war was causing. It really tugged on my heart to see the widespread affect on families and not just the war itself.

What do you find meaningful in your work with ISS?

I find it meaningful to learn about the diverse cultures of the schools I work with. It is rewarding to understand their needs and help them get the supplies and tools they need to be successful, which they may not be able to without our help.



Cathy Ropars and her daughter Jamie