

Connecting Students with Nature, Big and Small

By **Kevin O'Shea**, Primary and Environmental Educator, Shekou International School (SIS)

More than any other time in the past, we as educators have a duty to connect those in our classrooms with the natural world. We have a duty to engage students, get them excited about local biodiversity, and simply care for the world outside of the classroom.

And more now than ever before, we as educators need to engage ourselves with the outdoors and get connected with nature. We need to walk the walk when it comes to teaching our students about sustainability and other environmental topics.

In order to protect nature and care about the world around them, students need to have a connection with it. If they love it, they will naturally take care of it now and as they get older. Many young learners we meet every day have a clear disconnect from the natural world, as do their caregivers. But at school, we can connect them in small and big ways. We can ignite the fire and passion to be environmental change-makers.

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Kevin O'Shea leading a nature club with students at Shekou International School



Childhood photo of Alysa Perreras and her father

What If ALL Really Meant ALL?

By **Alysa Perreras**, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Consultant & Researcher, Medellin, Colombia; Doctoral Student, Education for Social Justice, University of San Diego

Most of my childhood I got two Christmases: Colombian Christmas Eve with my mom's side of the family, and Filipino Christmas Day with my Dad's side of the family. Most of my early memories around these celebrations are centered around food and eating. Memories like helping my grandmother prep the Christmas Eve Colombian-American menu that included mashed potatoes and empanadas, or the next day picking up pans of lumpia with my Dad as we headed to my aunt's house where she had spent all morning preparing arroz caldo.

I also remember young-me filling up a plate I could barely carry of all my favorite things, worried if I didn't get all of them right away, I'd be too late after my cousins got to the table. I was a Christmas food hoarder.

Luckily, my mindsets around food and scarcity have improved with age (and therapy!). Yet, as an educator for the last 13 years who is currently working as a school equity researcher and consultant, I see too many of the same scarcity mindsets that plagued me as a child appear in how we approach educational equity.

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A Mind-Expanding Adventure

By **Liz Duffy**, ISS President

Every once in a while, I read a book that forever changes how I think about teaching and learning. *The Extended Mind – The Power of Thinking Outside the Brain* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021) by Annie Murphy Paul is just such a book.

In *The Extended Mind*, Paul describes how we think not only with our brains, but also with our bodies, with our surroundings, and with our relationships. Drawing from dozens of ingenious studies, Paul shows how we limit the learning and development of ourselves, our students, our children, and our colleagues when we confine our conception of thinking to the brain.

Many of the common words and metaphors we use to describe thinking underscore just how brain-centered our conception of thinking is: “put your mind to it,” “blows my mind,” “clearheaded,” “brainiac,” “mind meld,” “brain dump,” etc. Some of the language we use to describe thinking, however, is less restrictive. Indeed, metaphors such as “on the one hand, on the other hand,” “thinking outside the box,” and “seeing eye to eye,” hint at the physical, environmental, and interactive aspects of thinking.

There are significant limits to how much the brain can absorb, process, encode, retain and/or recall at any given point in time. Over the past two decades, we’ve become much more intentional and more skillful at helping students overcome those limitations. Schools now commonly teach students how to think smarter with their brains by, for example, adopting a growth mindset, scaffolding concepts, and interleaving subjects.

- If we want to optimize student learning, we also
- need to teach students how to listen to their
- bodies; use movement and gestures; more
- strategically benefit from experts, peers and
- groups; and arrange the space around them and
- the space of ideas

Paul argues that we still privilege the individual brain far too much. If we want to optimize student learning, we also need to teach students how to listen to their bodies; use movement and gestures; more strategically benefit from experts, peers and groups; and arrange the space around them and the space of ideas to support different types of thinking.

Most of the studies highlighted in the book have been conducted in the past couple of decades, many in the past few years. The development of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) in 1991 reinforced and deepened our brain-bound orientation to thinking and learning. New technologies such as electroencephalography (EEG) and functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS), which allow scientists to scan multiple people’s brains as they interact in natural settings, are now expanding our understanding of thinking beyond the mind.

The research highlighted in the book also provides support for our recent, renewed emphasis on more inclusive, equitable and culturally responsive pedagogies. The studies explain why not only non-brain centered activities, such as chanting, dancing, and playing, but also collaborative, contextual assignments, extend thinking and learning. In addition, the findings suggest that by over-emphasizing originality and individual performance, we may be short-changing the full extent of students’ thinking and learning potential.

The many challenges that we’ve faced over the past two years underscore the importance of fostering adaptability. *The Extended Mind* provides countless strategies to do just that. So, pick up a copy of the book...or better yet, organize a book group or download the audible version, put on comfortable walking or running clothes and head outside, for what I promise will be a mind-expanding adventure. Happy reading and Happy New Year!

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The Fragility of Four Pieces of Paper

By **Dana Watts**, Ph.D., ISS Director of Learning, Research, and Outreach

In a time when we are all Zoom-ed out, it's easy to become numb to the endless online meetings and Brady Bunch squares of our new normal. But during a recent **ISS EDUlearn professional development workshop**, I had one of the most humbling experiences I've had online in a long time.

First Responders, Fragile Paper

[Dr. Orletta Nguyen](#), a program specialist and school psychologist, joined ISS PD to lead a workshop titled, "*Educator First Responders: Teaching Through a Trauma Informed Lens.*" She began our session by acknowledging that all educators had been working as first responders throughout the pandemic and went on to ask each of our participants this question: "As a first responder (aka hero), what would your hero name be and why?"

In the chat, I began to see names like The Activist, Captain Cucumber, Equalizer, Ady the Advocate, and the Defender. Participants then began to rename themselves in Zoom and the creative names continued to flow.

As I saw all of the screen-names change to hero names, my eyes began to water. *Wow. How are we validating and honoring all that these professionals have been through throughout the past two years? Who is taking care of them?*

Then, just as I was starting to get my emotions in check, Dr. Nguyen led us through an exercise which I will call "Four Pieces of Paper." We wrote the name of a loved one, a favorite activity, a favorite place to go, and an embarrassing secret that very few know.

She then carefully led us through a simulation of what it would be like to go through an incident of trauma. With each piece of paper that I ripped apart, I could feel a shiver go through my soul. Dr. Nguyen reminded us how many of the students in front of us every day had been through trauma over the past two years.

We then went through a carefully designed training on what is trauma and what it isn't, discovered how the effects of trauma have lasting, adverse effects on an individual's

physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. We looked at effects of trauma on the brain and safety as the first step to creating space for students undergoing trauma.

Trauma is an event-driven type of situation. How many of our students and colleagues, even before the pandemic, have lived through these types of situations? All three of my children are third culture kids (TCKs) and have experienced various forms of trauma while living abroad: death of loved ones far away, protests and coups, lockdowns and eventual evacuation. Perhaps especially in the world of international schools, educators are first responders. How do we protect and meaningfully help the students in our charge?

A Different Kind of PD

Dr. Nguyen's workshop was just the tip of the iceberg. There is so much to learn as we navigate a world filled with uncertainty and change, along with ground-breaking opportunities to transform our thinking and practices. ISS professional development is committed to supporting our international education colleagues through all these shifting roles and identities: educators, first responders, leaders, learners, community-members, and most simply, humans.

As a declared professional development addict, I've seen ISS EDUlearn workshops reach our international school population in a way that I've never seen before. There's something different about this PD. Across all categories, it's differentiated, expertly-led, collaborative, and uniquely in-touch with the work and mindset of international education. I see it recognize the paper-thin fragility of the moment we live in, and the strength of heroes that's in each person we welcome to a workshop, ready to learn.

We're just getting started. I hope that you'll join us ahead.

Find a full season of upcoming ISS EDUlearn PD opportunities at [iss.edu/events](https://www.iss.edu/events). You can follow Dana at [@teachwatts](https://twitter.com/teachwatts)

The Epic Design Challenge Confronting Educators

By **Homa Tavangar** and **Will Richardson**,
Co-founders of the Big Questions Institute



Delta. Omicron. The backlash to equity-informed curriculum and “honest” history. Challenges to voting rights and democracy. Mistrust of media and campaigns of disinformation. Rising incidences of mental health crises. Climate emergencies.

The litany of challenges that seems to be impacting our lives each day – and by extension, our schools – hasn’t lightened since global COVID lockdowns. If anything, we seem to be confronting more complexity and volatility than ever before.

- Which of these was not, at least partially, caused by a breakdown in critical thinking, collaboration, or creative problem-solving?

While [our brains were not built for this much uncertainty](#), and teachers felt [end-of-year exhausted even at the start of this school year](#), the relentlessness of so many crises is exactly why we can’t turn away. We have hard truths to face. Across the multitude of existential challenges cast our way, which of these was not, at least partially, caused by a breakdown in critical thinking, collaboration, or creative problem-solving? In other words, which of these is not a problem of education?

And, on the flip side, which of these will not be solved by education, by the brilliant students we send out to solve the great problems of our time? These questions are so big they might seem overwhelming. But we have found that when educators take time for honest reflection, they might actually uncover new sources of hope.

Shaking our Worldview

Some of our new sources of hope have come from thinkers that shake our worldview. Among these, **Arundhati Roy**, **Mariame Kaaba**, **adrienne marie brown**, and **Zachary Stein**.

In *Education in a Time Between Worlds*, **Zachary Stein** poses a big question: “What should education look like in the twenty-first century?” He frames a challenge that has taken center stage in our work:

“This is the task of education today: to confront the almost unimaginable design challenge of building an educational system that provides for the re-creation of civilization during a world system transition. This challenge brings us face-to-face with the importance of education for humanity and the basic questions that structure education as a human endeavor.”

While it may seem a bit hyperbolic to suggest that we are in the midst of a “world system transition,” the signs of existential change

confront us daily, while so much of what we know about schools seems stuck in the industrial era of the 19th and 20th Centuries.

It’s becoming clearer that the way we define and deliver an “education” has a huge role to play in how we as a collective respond to current and future challenges. And it’s also clear that the growing emphasis on education as a private good used primarily to boost individual wealth or stature is certainly not the path to overcoming our challenges.

That is at the crux of the design challenge that Stein articulates. How do we create an educational experience that centers not just what is best for our collective humanity but, indeed, for all of life on the planet?

- How do we create an educational experience that centers not just what is best for our collective humanity but, indeed, for all of life on the planet?

The Start of Fearless Inquiry

In light of the new realities (and demands) of the world, a re-imagining of school must focus on increasing relevance, justice, sustainability, and wellness. And that must

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“The Epic Design Challenge Confronting Educators,” [continued from page 4](#)

start with a deep interrogation of current systems, practices, and pedagogies.

As we believe that “fearless inquiry,” a willingness to ask difficult questions and offer honest answers, is at the center of our epic design challenge, here are some starting points to consider:

- **Relevance:** Does the current curriculum (what’s being taught) map to the knowledge, skills, literacies, and dispositions required to thrive in the world today, to confront complex challenges? Are teachers and students using modern tools to learn with? Is the school community engaged in ongoing discussions of ongoing events and changes in the world?
- **Justice:** Are all voices in the school community included in discussions about the experience of school we create? Is access to learning opportunities equitable for every child? Does curriculum center diverse and representative authors, histories, innovators, and lived experiences?
- **Sustainability:** Do we prioritize the well-being of the planet in the decisions we make about the design

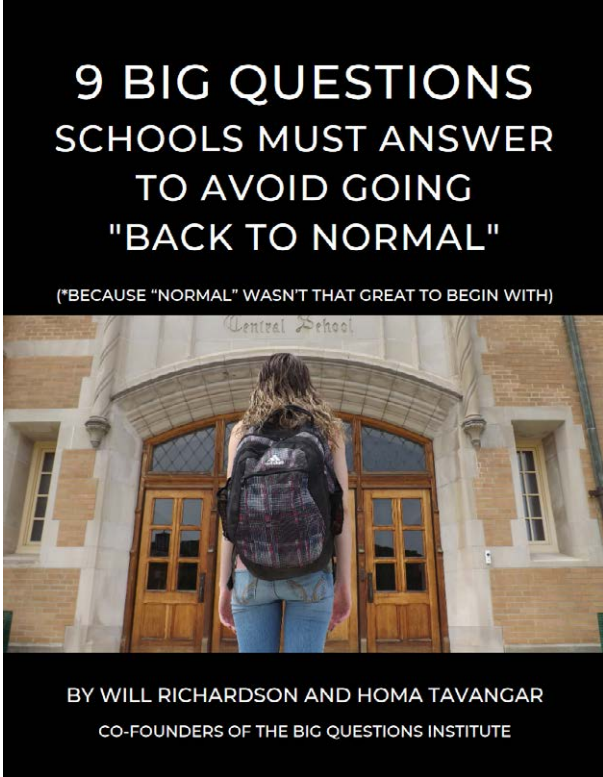
of our learning spaces, our uses of power and transportation, and the foods that we consume? Are we advocating for planet-friendly practices in our larger school community?

- **Wellness:** What stands in the way of the physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being of our teachers and students? How are we centering well-being in our decisions about practice and pedagogy (i.e. assessments, time for play, advisory, etc.)? How are we preparing ourselves to navigate an extended period of “no-normal”?

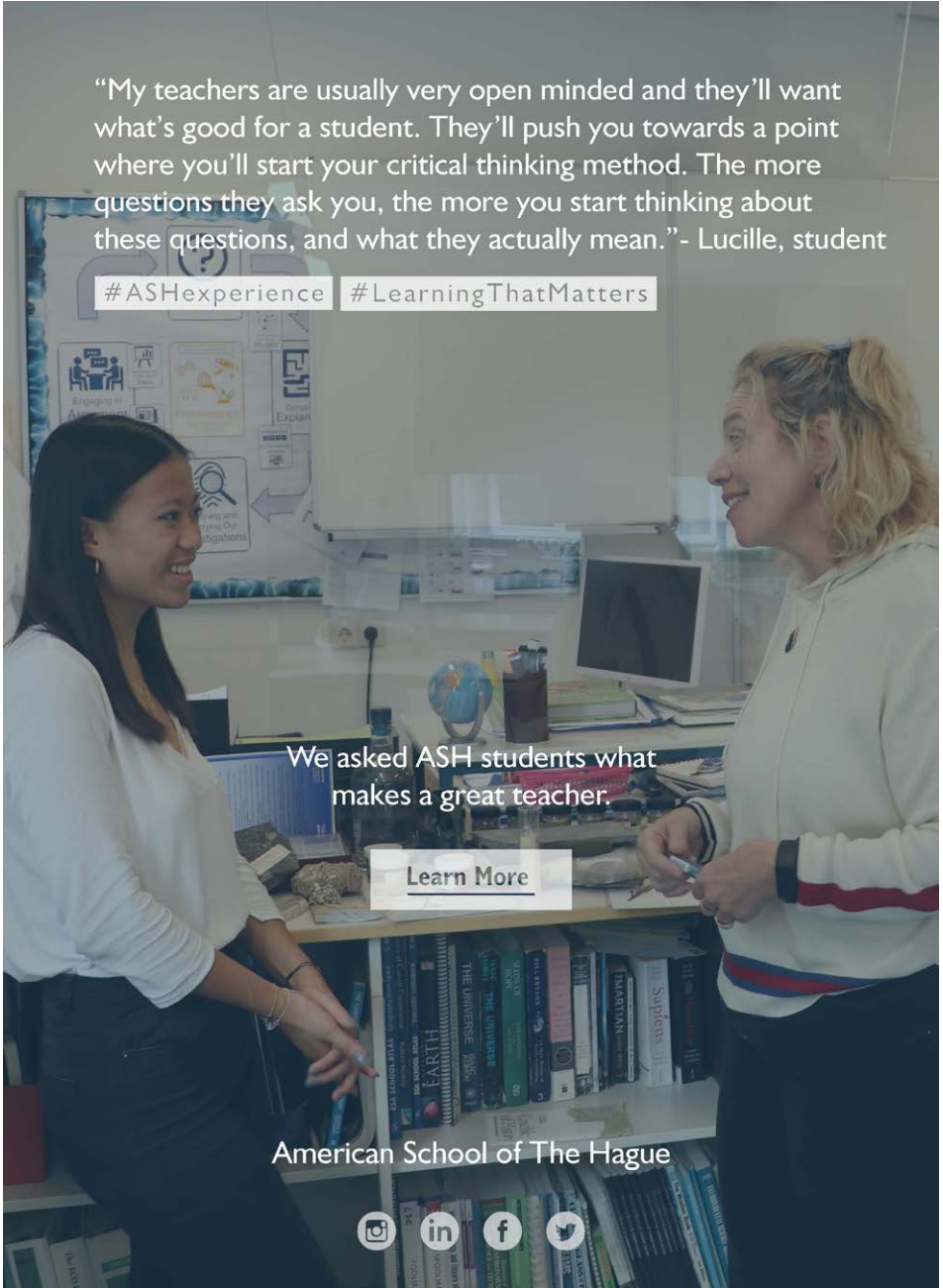
As educators, we are the ultimate futurists, staking our success on the success of our students who represent and will shape the future. They are civilization builders.

The design challenge facing educators certainly is epic. Yet if we can design for a more relevant, just, sustainable, and healthy learning experience, imagine how schools might help shape the world we step into.

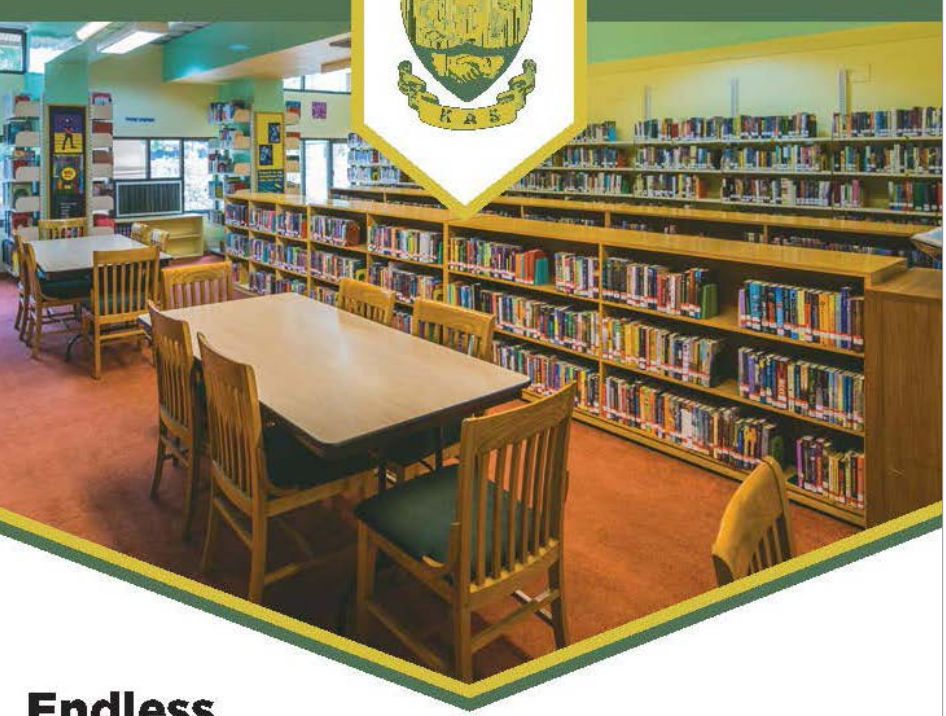
You can follow Will at [@willrich45](#) and Homa at [@HomaTav](#). Learn more about the [Big Questions Institute here](#).



You can download Will and Homa’s free ebook, “9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal” (*Because “Normal” Wasn’t That Great to Begin With)” [at this link](#).



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It's an Inclusion Revolution, and We're All In

By **Lori Boll**, Executive Director, SENIA International

What do you get when you bring together close to 2,300 educators, parents, and professionals from 55 countries who are dedicated to supporting and teaching ALL individuals? An **"Inclusion Revolution!"**

The SENIA Virtual Conference

The annual SENIA virtual conference was held from December 3rd-5th, 2021 and participants are continuing to learn from the pre-recorded content until April 2nd, 2022. With over 70 hours of presentations based on the theme "Learning Ecosystems: Supporting Inclusive School Communities", participants engaged in meaningful conversations and professional development in the following conference strands:

- Social Emotional Learning
- Inclusive Practices
- Math and Literacy Strategies
- Intensive Needs Programming.

Keynote speakers **Shelley Moore**, **LeDerick Horne**, and **Michelle Garcia Winner** inspired all of us to "do better" when working with our students by creating authentic inclusive school communities.

For many, the experience at the conference will change teaching practices and attitudes toward supporting learners of all abilities. As **Jenny-Lee Moore** ([@moore_jennylee](#)) of UNIS Hanoi tweeted about keynote speaker **Shelley Moore** ([@tweetsomemore](#)):

- "Today I had the humbling joy of listening to [Shelley Moore] speak at @seniaworldwide. I'm not sure my teaching will ever be the same. I'm not even sure I will."

SENIA awarded student **Sasin Emmy Thamakaision** with the annual student award and scholarship for her advocacy. Emmy has ADHD and has used her experiences to write a children's book, *JJ's Squiggly Mind* to bring awareness and advocate for more supports for individuals with ADHD. Emmy also took an active role in her high school's inclusion club and helped run SENIA Youth. She is a true advocate.

SENIA also provided 10 individuals with a free conference based on financial need. As an organization dedicated to inclusion, we want all members of our community who want to learn to be able to do so, whether they have the financial resources or not. We also offer a community scholarship for groups who wish to spread our mission to their local community. Our scholarship opportunities can be found on [SENIA International's website](#).

Watch parties formed across the globe from China, to Monaco, Kiev, Tanzania, Finland, New Zealand, the U.S., and Argentina. Schools registered their entire staff to attend, including their custodial staff and office assistants, proving that many international schools are becoming more dedicated to serving all learners in a community. Our conference platform enabled members, no matter where they were joining from, to create a sense of community.

"It's trendy for schools to 'inspire a lifelong love of learning.' That only comes from a position of open, inclusive, and welcoming dialogue. The conversations at the SENIA conference are living breathing models of how lifelong learning grows."

-**Jon Springer**, parent

About SENIA

SENIA (Special Education Network and Inclusion Association) is a registered non-profit organization. We are a network of educators, parents, professionals, and students who advocate for and provide resources for differently-abled individuals. SENIA's vision is to live in an inclusive world where every individual is supported, resources are accessible, potential is maximized and action is inspired.

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SENIA conference participants at Shen Wai International School

SENIA had its humble beginnings in 2002 when founding board member **Tanya Farrol** and seven others in China decided to set up a network for special educators to raise awareness and advocate for individuals with disabilities as well as create a space to connect with other professionals in their field.

Tanya Farrol shares, "SENIA still holds true to its original values by organizing yearly conferences and every year spreading the message of inclusion a little further than before. It is impressive that SENIA has come so far and now is able to connect and share its vision with over 2000 conference participants around the world. I am humbled to be part of the inclusion revolution!"

SENIA is sponsored by organizations who share our mission. With their support and donations, we are able to provide scholarships and keep our conference costs low.

Get Involved

SENIA has two exciting opportunities for individuals who want to learn more about inclusion and supporting all students; a certification program and an in-person conference coming up in the spring.

SENIA joined forces with ISS to bring the certification program to educators across the globe. The certificate program consists of a series of 6 courses aimed at beginning level learning support teachers or general education teachers who wish to learn more about supporting all learners. These courses will begin in February, 2022 and will have rolling enrollment. For more information on this coursework, [please visit here](#) or contact us at certification@seniainternational.org.

While our virtual conference was exciting, we realize many people crave an in-person conference again. The first in-person conference since 2019 is planned for March 31-April 2, 2022. It will be held at Bonn International School and the theme is "All In! We All Have a Role to Play in Creating Inclusive Schools." You can [find more information here](#).

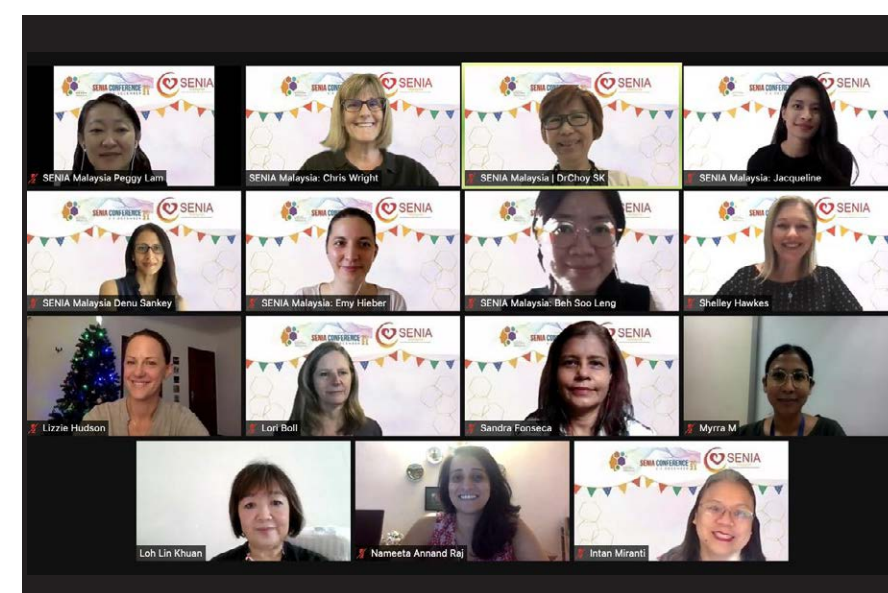
Today, schools are prioritizing inclusion and putting it at the forefront of their education programs and training

As SENIA approaches its 20th anniversary in 2022, we are proud of our history and future opportunities for students, parents, professionals, and educators. Long gone are the days when inclusion at school could be seen as an afterthought. Today, schools are prioritizing inclusion and putting it at the forefront of their education programs and training.

As **Jay Lingo**, Director of Marketing, SENIA International, says "We're in an inclusion revolution, and we're all in!"



Learn [more about SENIA here](#). You can follow Lori at [@LoriBoll](#).



SENIA conference attendees around the world. Left - International School of Uganda; Top right - Participants from SENIA Malaysia; Lower right - Kaohsiung American School



Nadine Richards

PRINCETON NJ, USA — International Schools Services (ISS) announced that **Nadine Richards** will assume the role of **ISS Director of Administrative Searches** in June 2022.

Nadine Richards brings an impressive professional background to this critical role. She has a strong understanding of the dynamics of international education, business, and recruitment. She has served as a legal advocate, teacher, dean, principal, and CEO in the USA and UAE. During her time in Dubai, she was principal at the American School of Dubai and Head of School at Al Maaref Private School. In the USA, she held leadership roles in the New York K-12 school system.

"We are absolutely delighted to have Nadine join ISS," says **Beth Pfannl**, Vice President of Global Recruitment. "Last year, the ISS team conducted more administrative searches than any time in history with a growing focus on inclusion, candidate competencies, and holistic review. Nadine will help us continue our mission to develop strong pipelines and successful placements for international schools. She will be an important champion and leader, partnering with me, our Director of Global Recruitment **Pauline O'Brien**, and our team around the world."

Nadine Richards is currently the Assistant Head of School for Institutional Strategy at Park Country School in Baltimore, MD USA, a K-12 independent school. She also devotes time to her private consultant company, Nadine Inspires. As President and Lead Consultant, Ms. Richards partners with educational institutions to improve performance and



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New ISS Director of Administrative Searches

obtain accreditation for new school start-ups. She conducts program evaluations, develops school-wide academic plans, and facilitates professional development seminars for faculty and staff.

During her tenure at Nadine Inspires, Ms. Richards co-designed a BIPOC Aspiring Leadership Program to increase diversity in the leadership pipeline, sharpen executive competencies, nurture growth, and cultivate lasting relationships. She is also an active Chair of the DEI Advisory Committee of the Association of International Education Leaders of Color (AIELOC) and Co-Chair of the Diversity Collaborative's Advocacy Committee.

Ms. Richards currently is pursuing her Doctor of Education in Education Policy Leadership at Hofstra University in New York. Her dissertation focuses on inequalities in the superintendency (HOS) pipeline and solutions to make it more inclusive to women and BIPOC aspiring leaders. Ms. Richards will reside in Atlanta, Georgia, USA to be close to her mother and extended family, while honoring the memory of her son (1993-2021).

Nadine Richards shared her reflections on her new role: "The Director of Administrative Searches role is intriguing to me because of its innovativeness, creativity, and its commitment to both institutional and client growth. **Simon Sinek** said, 'when people are financially invested, they want a return. When people are emotionally invested, they want to contribute.'"

"I have had the pleasure to work with various members and departments within the International Schools Services (ISS) team. What attracts me most to ISS is that it is an organization whose multidimensional service synergies make its mission, 'develop students into thoughtful, imaginative global leaders,' possible. The Director of Administrative Searches' role continues that effort. It allows me to work collaboratively with schools, candidates, and boards to put in place sustainable plans that promote

leadership development, diverse recruitment, inclusive hiring practices, and equity-based transition plans for onboarding and retention sustainability."

"The [role] is intriguing to me because of its innovativeness, creativity, and its commitment to both institutional and client growth"

The ISS Administrative Search team has conducted more than 1,000 leadership searches across 6 continents and is focused on creating positive, productive collaborations between schools and leaders. The multidisciplinary team of former heads of school and industry recruitment professionals enables the team to create effective, efficient and successful leadership searches for all those involved, anchored in intercultural competency, deep understanding of international schools today, a commitment to diversity, and an emphasis on professional outcomes.

You can follow Nadine at [@naywheels](#). Learn more about [ISS Administrative Search here](#).



Developing Mindful Leadership Skills to Avoid Burnout: The Case for a Core of Self-Compassion

By **Francesca Mulazzi**, Ed.D, Head of Upper School, Saint George's School

Principals across the world report feeling overwhelming levels of stress and emotional exhaustion related to their work overload and the complexities of their leadership positions (Beatty, 2000; Federici, 2013; Oplatka, 2001; van der Merwe & Parsotam, 2012; Wells, 2013c). Some of the emotions connected to this complexity include guilt, anger, loneliness, and regret, in addition to joy and satisfaction (Mahfouz, 2018). Considering the world of COVID school leadership, I add to the list: fear, uncertainty, and anxiety. Never before has leading in the educational landscape been so uncertain.

School principals are natural achievers, and we frequently focus on what we haven't yet accomplished. In regular times, many principals feel low levels of professional accomplishment and job satisfaction in their leadership roles despite devoting countless hours to the task and responsibilities of the job (Cranston, Ehrich, & Billot, 2003).

During the COVID crisis, principals have attended to the needs of teachers to support their mental health and well-being, at the expense of their own. This results in compassion fatigue. But we care about teachers and students, so we keep giving.

Again, COVID leadership adds a layer to this. I have never given as much of myself as I have during the last 20 months.

In two recent **Mindful Leadership workshops** that I led with ISS, I heard over and over that my colleagues in school leadership are also exhausted from giving, and simultaneously criticizing themselves for not doing more. So, what is the impact of the complexity of the principalship, with a layer of COVID to boot? Chronic levels of stress as well as the path to burnout. Stress prevents principals from sustaining productive work habits and effective levels of productivity (Sogunro, 2012). Principals' mental and physical health deteriorates without effective coping skills, strategies, and techniques (Sogunro, 2012).

- I earned a master's
- degree and a doctorate in
- educational leadership, and
- yet there wasn't a single class
- focused on managing stress
- and developing coping skills
- to avoid burnout

Without stress management techniques, a principal simply lacks essential on-the-job preparedness. I earned a master's degree and a doctorate in educational leadership, and yet there wasn't a single class focused on managing stress and developing coping skills to avoid burnout.

A Call to Cognitive Restructuring

Burnout is psychological response to a prolonged exposure to chronic stress in the work environment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). To anyone who has led a school since January of 2020, that might sound familiar! People are "burned out" when they feel disconnected, exhausted, and ineffective.

The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the deficiencies of our educational systems and the lack of preparation for crisis leadership (McLeod and Dusky, 2021). Most school leadership preparation and training programs are out-of-step with the challenges facing school leaders today. We must learn to address the stress ourselves with a cognitive shift towards mindfulness, mindful leadership, and actively engaging in self-compassion.

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"The Case for a Core of Self-Compassion," [continued from page 10](#)

What I learned in my 2018 dissertation, studying the relationship between burnout and coping skills, is that international school principals who engage in *cognitive restructuring* (Tobin, 1984, 2001) can successfully reduce the feelings of burnout.

Cognitive restructuring asks you to change how you think about yourself and the world around you. It's beginning to dawn on me that there isn't some end of COVID right around the corner. We are almost two years into "leading while in crisis" and I believe that this level of stress is just the new normal of school leadership. We must shift the way we interact with and think about the world around us. I propose we shift towards mindful leadership.

Mindful Leadership

In 2015, **Caryn Wells** integrated aspects of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2000), social intelligence (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008), and resonant leadership (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005) and developed the idea of mindful constructs. Wells believes that the practice of mindfulness contributes to the practice of effective school leadership. Engaging in mindful constructs is one way that school leaders can change the way they think about themselves and about the work world around them. Purposefully engaging in mindful constructs is an example of cognitive restructuring.

Mindful constructs place an emphasis on a way of being or a presence. When we call these mindful constructs, what we really mean is that these are some of the skills you are developing when you meditate or engage in other contemplative practice (such as yoga or gratitude journaling). I meditate about every day for twenty minutes. When I am sitting on my bench, I practice being **fully present** and when my mind wanders, I bring it back to the breath. That is being fully present. When I am sitting on my bench and my foot falls asleep or starts to hurt, I try to note it and simply bring **awareness** to it. I practice **non-reactivity**. I don't move or shift or adjust, I just sit.

- Being fully present helps
- to bring clarity to my mind
- and helps me be able to
- contribute to meaningful
- conversations [...] I think I
- am a better school leader
- because of it

At school, one of the constructs that I am able to transfer to my leadership role is being fully present. If I am in an Administrative Team meeting, I don't multitask anymore. My computer is closed, and I am listening, paying

MINDFUL CONSTRUCTS		
acceptance	equanimity	patience
awareness	listening	self-compassion
being fully present	letting go	trust
compassion	non-judgement	
empathy	non-reactivity	

Caryn Wells's mindful constructs (2005)

attention to the speaker. Being fully present helps to bring clarity to my mind and helps me be able to contribute to meaningful Admin Team conversations. I think I am a better school leader because of it. We can develop the skills of mindful constructs through purposeful cognitive restructuring and the simple art of daily practice in our schools.

Radical Self-Compassion

During the second phase of COVID in January 2021, I began to struggle with **non-reactivity**. When I meditate and I hear a noise, I can usually stay focused on my breath and continue without reacting to it. But in school, I was reacting to everything. Everything felt like noise. When I was in a meeting and I heard news about some new protocol or technology not working, I couldn't keep my feelings and reactions in check. My poker face disappeared, and I was adding to the community stress and heightened levels of anxiety by reacting to every single thing. Even though I was wearing a mask, everyone could see and hear my "what the heck?" face.

I was also extremely critical of myself, self-judgmental, and exhausted. Despite being able to be compassionate towards all the members of my community, I was unable to engage in self-compassion.

Kristin Neff, the founder of the Mindful Self-Compassion program explains the core features of self-compassion in her book *Self-compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself*. It is comprised of **mindfulness**, turning to our discomfort and acknowledging it; **common humanity**, recognizing our own humanity within the collective world community; and **kindness**, a caring urge and impulse to help.

I want to connect Wells work with Neff's framework. When we engage in self-compassion, we make a cognitive shift and choose to think differently. It's not natural or instinctive, though. Like Neff shared, we must choose be kind to ourselves.

This sounds like an obvious thing. However, most of us have not gotten to positions in leadership because we have been kind to ourselves. Many of us have gotten here because we have been tough on ourselves, holding high expectations for ourselves, sometimes too high. What would it look like if we acknowledge that we, too, need compassion and actively engaged in self-compassion to reduce the stress that we are feeling?

- What would it look like if
- we acknowledge that we,
- too, need compassion and
- actively engaged in self-
- compassion?

Over the summer, I forced myself to engage in self-compassion. A practice Neff encourages is writing a letter to ourselves that recognizes what we did and how it fits in into the world's common experience because of course, I wasn't alone in leading through COVID. I wrote a letter to myself, imagining that I was a mentor or trusted colleague.

My letter described all of the ways that I led with integrity, courage, and commitment. The letter praised me for the time commitment that I made to my school; it recognized the amount of care and attention I gave to students, teacher, and families. It was difficult to write the letter but at the end, I felt a little bit better, a little more nourished, and a little bit more ready to tackle the next year of crisis leadership.

Learn more with Francesca Mulazzi in a three-part PD series starting February 14. Register for "Developing Self-compassion and Mindful Leadership Practices" [at ISS.edu/events](#). You can follow Francesca at [@AFMulazzi](#).



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Experiential Online Learning with a Classroom Feel

By **Theresa Montenarello**,
Program Coordinator of ISAonline

The COVID pandemic and associated lockdowns have been challenging for all sectors, forcing organizations to rethink practices, day-to-day operations, technical infrastructure and internal policies. While some of these changes have been temporary, many have also remained in-place providing businesses with more efficient ways of operating and better supporting the individual needs of their customers.

In the education sector, this has been no different. Some schools have embraced this period of development and used it to reevaluate how emerging technologies, personalized learning, and wellbeing practices can be leveraged to provide a new type of schooling model for students. If the pandemic has highlighted anything, it's that students can learn and thrive from anywhere, not just in a brick and mortar school.

- Schools have reevaluated
- how emerging technologies,
- personalized learning, and
- wellbeing practices can be
- leveraged to provide a new
- type of schooling model

Student success in online environments can be attributed to a range of different factors that are unique to the medium. Some prefer less distractions, others the small group collaborations, some the 1:1 time with their teacher; the personalization can be endless. Many also thrive with a more flexible schedule that allows them to decide when and where to complete the work.

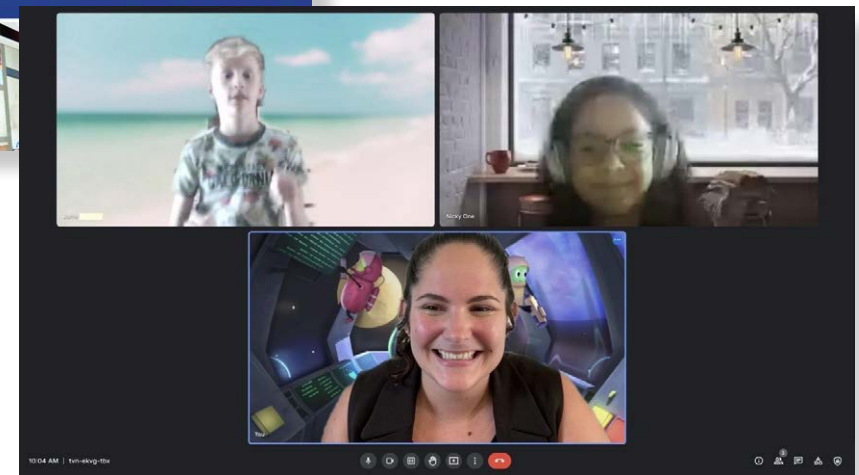
This flexibility, combined with a passion-based program, gives them more opportunity to pursue their interests and share them as part of the greater learning journey. It's no surprise that many families have now identified the benefits of online learning and are searching for a best fit for their children. Unfortunately most of the virtual schools in operation are US based, traditional, and leverage a schedule that is not friendly for other timezones. Thankfully, the International School of Aruba (ISA) is excited to provide another option.



Back photo: Behind-the-scenes work with Theresa Montenarello

Middle photo: The ISAonline website

Front photo: Theresa and two students currently enrolled in the ISAonline program



Introducing ISAonline

In collaboration with International Schools Services (ISS), ISA is proud to announce the launch of **ISAonline**, "Experiential Online Learning With A Classroom Feel." ISAonline is a new type of school that embraces the whole child. Students participate in online classes, 1:1 tutoring, independent inquiry and passion-based projects that are personalized to the individual. With a focus on developing global-minded, connected, and innovative learners, ISAonline is a refreshing alternative for families across Aruba.

A Day in the Life

On an average day at ISAonline, students interact with their teacher and peers in a variety of modes and engage in learning experiences that are customized to the individual. As well-being is prioritized, school typically kicks off with an energizing yoga session combined with mindfulness journaling. This sets the tone for the day and prepares students for their first session on real-world mathematics that values collaboration, independent inquiry and 1:1 interaction with their teacher.

Next, students meet with their Book Club to read and discuss historical fiction that is tied to the development of one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This discussion

leads directly into their passion project where students use the design thinking process to create authentic solutions to the many challenges posed by the SDGs. The design process at ISAonline includes empathy interviews, project scoping, content harvesting, data analysis, and futures thinking and is focused on the development of real-world products and solutions. Finally, the day wraps up with 1:1 meetings with the teacher or peers for reflection and next steps.

ISAonline believes every learner is unique and that their education should be too. At ISAonline, all students have the opportunity to succeed.



Currently, ISAonline is accepting students between the ages of eight and twelve located in Aruba for the January 2022 learning cohort. In August 2022, they hope to expand the program for 8- to 14-year-olds and students beyond Aruba as well. Find more info and ways to contact the Program Coordinator at isaruba.com/online.

You can follow Theresa at [@TheresaMonte](https://www.instagram.com/TheresaMonte)

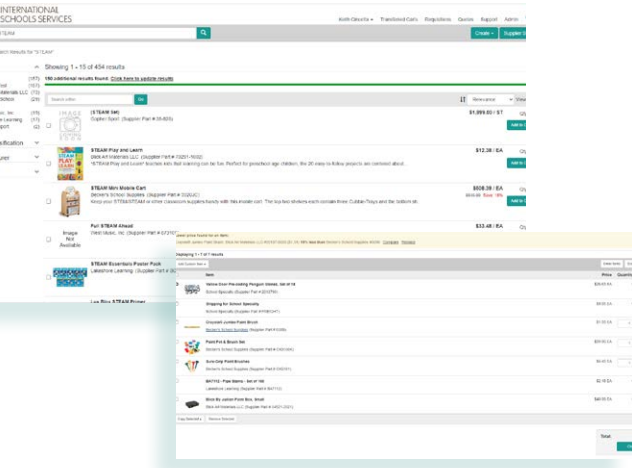


Introducing the ISS Supply Marketplace

By **Keith Cincotta**, ISS Director of School Services/Senior Leadership Executive, Managed Schools

Over the last year and a half, ISS School Supply has leaned into the disruption of the pandemic to re-think how we serve our schools. We wanted to make the school supply process more convenient and intuitive for teachers and help schools streamline the way they handle purchasing.

We are pleased to announce that, as a result, we are launching a new **ISS Supply Marketplace** that will allow teachers and schools to create, approve, and track their school orders with the same ease as they do their personal shopping.



Sample ISS Supply Marketplace pages

ISS's top vendors have partnered with us to create a marketplace that empowers teachers to create shopping carts, compare items across vendors, and order with assurance that their item is available and priced accurately. Schools are able to set up multiple approvals within the school before the order is released to ISS.

Once the order is released to ISS, we will take it from there and provide all of the customer service, attention to detail and communication our school supply clients are used to.

Instead of switching back and forth between multiple tabs on their computer or leaving bookmarks in paper catalogs, teachers using the ISS Supply Marketplace can shop with their favorite brands, search multiple catalogs simultaneously, comparison shop between brands and keep a close eye on their budget. Teachers can save time on their orders and focus more on their classrooms and students.

Getting started is easy: current clients only need to set up their approvals and have teachers create accounts with their school email. ISS Account Reps will guide schools through the onboarding process and will share our custom-made training materials to

help answer any questions. Schools are able to set up multiple levels of approval for orders and create pathways that make sense for how they operate. The Marketplace will also integrate with most major ERP or Accounting software packages, allowing schools to automate all parts of the process.

- We want to create a new way
- of purchasing that will equip
- teachers to keep their focus
- on what's most important

As an organization, ISS has striven to think deeply about the 'new normal' experience of schools and create new ways of supporting them in achieving their missions. We want to create a new way of purchasing that will equip teachers to keep their focus on what's most important in a school: their students.

Learn more about the [ISS Supply Marketplace here](#). You can follow Keith at [@kcincotta](#).

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ADMINISTRATIVE POSITION

- Elementary School Assistant Principal

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- MS Social Studies Teacher
- MS Science Teacher

MIDDLE SCHOOL/HIGH SCHOOL

- MS/HS Culinary Arts Teacher (6th-12th Grade)

K-12

- Instructional Coach

VACANCIES FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2022-2023

ADMINISTRATIVE POSITION

- HS Dean of Students

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Elementary Teachers (Grades 1 - 5)

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- MS ELA Teacher (7th/8th Grade)
- MS Technology Teacher

MIDDLE SCHOOL/HIGH SCHOOL

- MS/HS Intervention Specialist
- MS/HS French Teacher

Our recruitment Contact Email:
recruitment@aus.edu.kw

Building Relationships

Building connections and relationships is vital for wellbeing. From employee volleyball and softball games to after school wellness programs, ICS is committed to the physical and mental health of our employees.

Spotlight, continued from page 17: Reflections from the ISS Board

What are your hopes for international schools in the coming years?



"I hope that our schools and our communities are able to return to the operations and, more importantly, the values that have made our times unparalleled for educational access, collaboration and opportunity around the world. We are battling the rise of forces that would divide our globalized world. And we need to come together in every way we can."

-Marcus Mabry, SVP, Content Strategy and Global Programming, CNN Digital Worldwide



"International schools are a vital and enormously important chunk of the global education system, with a worldwide span and enormous future potential. At ISS, our incredible management team, impressive curriculum breadth, and unparalleled reputation as an educator, as opposed to being a vendor, gives us a well-deserved place of leadership in the international school community."

-Debu Purkayastha, Managing Partner, 3rd Eye



"My hope for international schools is that the vision for education becomes more global, and equips the students to learn how to co-create sustainable environments, facilitate creative solutions to world issues and have a better understanding of each other in the process. If they can combine learning with a spirit of service, I believe the students and schools will be much better off and reach a new stage of development."

-Nishat Ruiter, General Counsel, TED Conferences LLC



"My hopes are for international schools to make a significant difference in preparing students to globally contribute towards making the world a better place, driven by collaboration, diversity of thought, and inclusion at all levels with no boundaries."

-Marc Schorpion, Global Head HR, argenx



"As the world navigates the current challenges and unknowns, my hope is that international schools continue to be recognized as a pillar of the community, enabling them to thrive and support their educational needs."

-Lucinda Warren, VP Business Development Global Neuroscience and Japan Region, Johnson & Johnson



"My hope is that international schools will be able to confront, and ultimately reconcile with their complicated histories of privilege and live up to their aspirations of justice, belonging and true global citizenship which is about service, engagement, relevance, and friendship -- locally and globally. This is hard work but will make the schools and the wider community stronger."

-Homa Sabet Tavangar, Co-founder, Big Questions Institute and Oneness Lab



"I hope for them to become global leaders not only in the traditional way with regards to international education and schools, but also in the digital arena."

-Cheryl Xu, VP, Public Policy & Government Affairs, Biogen



"My hopes are that international schools redouble their efforts to inspire and educate students to be responsible, global contributors and change makers by using the lessons and insights we learned from the challenges of the pandemic and racial reckonings over the past few years to build stronger, more inclusive and more equitable schools."

-Liz Duffy, President, ISS



Joel Llaban Jr.

PRINCETON NJ, USA — International Schools Services (ISS) announced that **Joel Llaban Jr.** will join the staff in August 2022 as the inaugural Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ). The purpose of this newly created role is to champion the importance and value of a diverse, inclusive, equitable and just culture at ISS as well as the creation and implementation of antiracist policies, practices, and programs at ISS specifically and across the international school sector more broadly. As a member of the senior leadership team, the Director of DEIJ will serve as a key partner to other ISS senior leadership team members to develop and drive DEIJ strategies across all departments and functions of ISS.

Liz Duffy, President of ISS, said, "As a global organization with a wide-reach in the international school community, we can help spark progress across the international school sector, but only if we hold ourselves accountable and model the change we aspire to effect. This role represents our long-term commitment to further our own learning and to support systemic change."

Mr. Llaban has been recognized as an action-oriented, thought-leader in the global movement to foster inclusion, belonging and equity at international schools. He believes that DEIJ is a fundamental human protection and child safeguarding issue, our duty of care, and essential to ensuring that international schools are safe, restorative, transformative, innovative and identity sustaining and identity affirming communities. Joel contributes to and is a member of the Editorial Team of The International Educator (TIE) Online. He has also led workshops and collaborated with organizations where he is also a member such as The Association of International Educators and Leaders of Color (AIELOC),

ISS INTERNATIONAL
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NEWS RELEASE:

ISS Appoints Inaugural Director of DEIJ

EARCOS, CIS and ISS Diversity Collaborative. He has supported a few other international schools in their initial work on DEIJ. As a member of I-DEA Board committee of the Council of International Schools (CIS), he co-developed the charter and recommendations for CIS to take actions on DEIJ.

"I am thrilled to be joining the innovative and courageous learning community of ISS. It is an organization that genuinely listens and invites BIPOCs to co-create actions," Joel says.

"It is our shared responsibility in this pivotal movement in international education to reflect, re-imagine, and further cultivate educational beliefs, experiences, systems and structures that are truly inclusive and equitable for all learners, so children and adults can participate, thrive, create, lead, succeed, and live and love in our most authentic selves without shedding any parts of our intersectional identities in order to fit in. It is our collective call to action and to be in solidarity with one another," shares Joel Llaban about his outlook regarding this new ISS Director of DEIJ role.

• "It is our shared responsibility
• on this pivotal movement
• in international education
• to reflect, re-imagine, and
• further cultivate educational
• beliefs, experiences, systems
• and structures"

He added, "We would love to see principles and practices of DEIJ as a de-siloed work, undergirding all elements of children's and adults' experiences in schools. While we collectively leverage what we know about school change, we will also co-inquire about systems of oppression, deeply reflect and understand individual and institutional harm, as well as intentionally apply identity-centered learning, anti-racism and anti-bias

practices in our communities and use them as foundations for learning, transformation, and healing."

Joel Llaban Jr. believes that "the diversity of our schools is a consequence of our beliefs, (re)imagination, and actions on inclusion, equity, and justice. When we are inclusive and equitable, when we acknowledge the systemic harm, and remove the systemic barriers for authentic and full participation; when we celebrate the abundance and harness the genius and brilliance of our intersectional identities, we will become more diverse."

Most recently, Mr. Llaban has served as a Learning Specialist and Instructional Coach and the school-wide DEIJ lead at the International School of Kuala Lumpur. Throughout his 19 years in education, he has been engaged and led in accreditation, teaching and learning, curriculum development, and professional development at the International School of Brussels, the International School of Beijing, Cebu International School, and Paref Springdale School. He holds a Master of Education in International Education Administration from Endicott College (USA) and a Certificate of International School Leadership from the Principals Training Center (PTC). Mr. Llaban is from the Philippines and is currently based in Kuala Lumpur.

Liz Duffy reports, "There was an impressive applicant pool for this critical role, which signals its importance to the international community. I'm delighted that Joel has accepted the position and look forward to learning from him and working with him to embed best DEIJ practices in all we do at ISS."

You can follow Joel at [@JoelJrLLABAN](https://www.instagram.com/JoelJrLLABAN)

Learn more about the ISS Board at ISS.edu


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Making a Global Impact Through SISU Schools®

By **Tom Hawkins**, M.A., Ed.D., ISS Vice President, School Start-Up & Management



SISU School Punta Cana

As the pandemic forced all of us to re-think approaches and educational offerings, ISS and Lumo Education initiated a collaboration to launch a new line of mid-tier international schools: **SISU Schools®**.

The Beginnings

In 2016, Aki Halko founded **Lumo Education** along with **Salla Halko**, **Kaisu Helminen**, **Esa Sinivuori** and **Sanna de Araújo**. Having previously worked at schools in Finland and

the Middle East, the five saw the value of their experiences and the market possibilities for Finnish international schools. Lumo Education was founded to offer world-class educational solutions to students and families around the world emphasizing the Finnish pedagogy and approach.

When Aki met then-Vice President of ISS Schools Startups and Management, **Dr. Dick Moore**, they knew something great could happen.

"In SISU Schools, we wanted to create a school model that makes starting and transforming world class schools simple and easy," describes Sanna de Araújo, Head of School Concepts, Lumo Education. "Our ISS-Lumo team is committed to annually develop the concept further for the benefit of our school owners, teachers and, most of all children."

The Unique SISU Schools Model

SISU Schools is a globalized education program following Finnish, American and international standards. SISU Schools incorporates an entrepreneurial approach to learning that prepares children for success and promotes overall happiness. The SISU Program is a K-12 program that can be deployed in any country and in any language. The SISU Program prepares children for any school path and most of all, for life.

The key differentiator for SISU Schools is that ISS-Lumo provide the curriculum, training, pedagogical approaches, software, branding, handbooks, policies, support and quality assurance program necessary to start a school at nearly any price point.

All the "deliverables" for the school are provided via a customized platform, and the training of teachers and staff can be done remotely, allowing school owners to keep costs low, quality high, and the focus on the children with continuous support from the ISS-Lumo team.

A Growing Global Reach

Launched in early 2021, SISU Schools connected with its first licensee to open a school in August of 2021: SISU School Punta Cana. Since April, ISS and Lumo have licensed four additional schools to individuals or groups in Mongolia, The Netherlands, Iraq, and most recently in Kazakhstan (an existing K-11 school implementing the SISU Schools program).

Learn about a few of these unique campuses on the following page.

[Continued on page 22](#)



High Tech Academy campus space

SISU School Punta Cana

- **School location:** Punta Cana, a premier resort destination in the Caribbean, located at the easternmost tip of the Dominican Republic
- **About the School:** Opened with enrollment for a SISU Kids program, with visions of a larger K-12 school
- **Opening:** September 2021
- **Founding Quotes:** "We are thrilled how popular our school has become in such a short time. The demand for expanding the school faster than we anticipated has been a great surprise. SISU Schools has truly delivered its value for children in Punta Cana. The teachers and us owners have been supported all the way by ISS-Lumo, and implementation of the SISU School model has been smooth." -**Gordana Stojanovic**, CEO of Centro Educativo Ikigai and co-founder of SISU School Punta Cana

SISU School Ulaanbaatar

- **School location:** Park Garden, a downtown region of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
- **About the School:** First providing enrollment for Early Years through Grade 9 and will gradually expand to Grade 12; offering a unique program bilingually in English and Mongolian
- **Scheduled Opening:** September 2022
- **Founding Quotes:** "We are confident that the SISU way of promoting entrepreneurial mindset and growth to students at an earlier stage of their lives and making their happiness the priority, will be essential to our future generations to create the best versions of themselves." -**Khulan Bayarsaikhan**, spokesperson for Metro Development Group (MDG), owners of SISU School Ulaanbaatar

High Tech Academy (HTA)

- **School location:** Almaty, Kazakhstan
- **About the School:** The world's first fully functioning school to join the SISU Schools network, HTA offers Preschool-Secondary School education
- **Join date:** Implemented the SISU Schools program in January 2022
- **School background:** HTA's model, rooted in the Finnish approach to whole child education and Korda Institute's methodology, makes it a natural partner for SISU Schools
- **Founding Quotes:** "I am thrilled to have SISU's expertise in equipping our teachers with the best of the Finnish-American academic curriculum and to become part of a network of like-minded schools across the world." -**Tatiana Magambetova**, current Director of High Tech Academy



In addition to the schools licensed to begin operations in the coming months, negotiations are underway for more SISU Schools® in Mexico, the U.S., and other locales around the world.

ISS and Lumo Education believe that SISU Schools can transform the learning landscape. We look forward to proving quality education at an affordable price to allow entrepreneurs, companies, foundations and committed individuals to make an impact in their communities.

Visit sisuschools.com to learn more about SISU Schools. You can follow Tom [on LinkedIn](#).

Tips for Virtual Hiring Success

By **Pauline O'Brien**, ISS Director of Global Recruitment, and **Beth Pfannl**, ISS Vice President for Global Recruitment

Ensuring you hire talent with the right experience and competencies is a high priority and takes much time investment to get right. That isn't a new idea for organizations, including international schools — but with a rise in online hiring, there are new opportunities and considerations to explore in recruitment.

What's changed?

From application to interview, hiring onboarding, recruitment in international schools has largely gone virtual. Schools and applicants should no longer rely on meeting in person, and decisions cannot be made based on face-to-face interactions. Virtual events now supplement or oftentimes replace traditional in-person hiring events. Even ISS EDUrecruit **iFairs®**, which have been running for a decade, changed in frequency and format to meet the shift.

In regards to child protection, recruiters need to be more vigilant in terms of assessing behavior now that screening and vetting are being done almost exclusively online. Both recruiters and applicants need to be alert and use listening skills more attentively

And finally, we're seeing new, innovative ways to share the information needed to ensure great matches between schools and candidates. Here are some tips recruitment success, from launch to hiring:

Sharing the Opportunity

Position announcements and ads

- As you prepare these materials, ensure your school website is updated and promotes your community well
- Verify additional websites are up-to-date, such as your school LinkedIn and social media accounts
- Do your sites share the crucial information that candidates will seek?

Multifaceted information packs

- Consider creating and sharing video tours of your school, highlighting classrooms, facilities, and more
- Share videos of community members talking about what they value about the school
- Share video teachers in action with students or at events at the school (where publishing and sharing permission has been given)

Considerations in the Process

Reviewing resumes and application documentation

- Be thorough in your screening practice
- Look for evidence of how a candidate has adapted to this online world in schools; for example, initiatives they have led, and innovative practices they have developed
- Look for affinity and skills in technology platforms
- Look for commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ)
- Review applicants' understanding and commitment to Child Protection and Safeguarding, considering online setting

Preparing for the interview

- Form your interview panel and decide on roles of each panel member
- Use an ORCE model (see figure below) or other models to support information gathering in the interview
- Be mindful of interview times; allow for breaks amid multiple interviews
- If the candidate needs to present in their interview, give them enough advance notice and time to prepare

Interview questions

Consider adapting your interview questions to reflect priorities such as online learning and a commitment to DEIJ

- How have you responded to the global pandemic? How have you adapted?
- How do you respond to the different needs and abilities of individual students in an online setting?

- Can you give an example of how you have made your learning environments safe for children and/or young persons?
- How have you promoted DEIJ through your work experience?

Have more interviews and meetings

Online hiring means more people can be involved to help address and counteract individual unconscious biases. Once you have selected top candidates of interest, gain perspective from other school stakeholders to support your decision making.

When following up with references, request the interview takes place with cameras on, as this step is very important to the safety of your community.

The Decision, and Beyond

Once you have chosen the person you wish to join your school and community, continue to be available and engaged with them, through the paperwork process to contract signing.

Introduce your new hire to colleagues ahead of their start date. Even quick virtual coffee check-ins and water cooler chats can make a huge difference in making it easier for them to start a new job, whatever the environment may look like!

Learn more about recruiting with ISS through [ISS EDUrecruit](#), or discover school leadership searches with [ISS Administrative Search](#). You can follow Pauline at [@ISSPauline](#) and Beth at [@BKPfannl](#).



The ORCE model

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INSPIRE SUCCEED DREAM

STUDENT AGE

3-19

STUDENT TEACHER RATIO

1:6

COLLEGE AND SCHOOL ACCEPTANCE

100%

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Humans of AAIE 2022 - Curators of Care

AAIE comes together to learn, collaborate, and share to support our communities both globally and locally.

By **Laura Light**, Executive Director, AAIE, and **Gerri-Ann Friedman**, Marketing and Digital Communications Manager, AAIE

As has been AAIE's custom through CONVERSATION, we work together to generate collaborative ideas, explore innovations, and discuss what keeps us up at night. **AAIE (Association for the Advancement of International Education)** invites you to join us on **February 21 - 23, 2022** for our 2022 Virtual International Leadership CONVERSATION to hear from keynote speakers, voices from within our own community, as well as student voices, all sharing their leadership stories and wisdom.

As our school communities continue to deal with the pandemic, our school leaders continue to grapple with a myriad of challenges and opportunities. We believe that as a leader, the care you show for your students, faculty, staff, and community begins with putting the oxygen mask on yourself first. The upcoming AAIE conference will be a chance for leaders to share their stories, listen and learn from others, and engage collaboratively with the community as we navigate the world around us together.

This past year, AAIE has done much to work with school leaders from all around the world through our Global Conversations and our LATAM Conversations. These Conversations will continue in February with some great plenary speakers to pique our interest in thinking about being the best we can as we drive our schools forward.

The upcoming conference theme, **Humans of AAIE 2022 - Curators of Care** is based around our core principles from The New School Project. We see the value of the broad, shared principles listed to the right. There are four, though, that will be a true focus for all of our discussions: Community, Cultural Competencies, DEIJ, and Well-Being.

New School Project: Core Principles

- Adaptive Change:** We use fearless inquiry to continually interrogate and shed embedded practice that does not amplify and inspire profound learning throughout our school communities
- Capacity:** We develop the capacity in our people to develop and implement high-quality and sustainable solutions in a time of rapid and unmitigated change.
- Community:** We co-create caring, engaged, and inclusive communities, clearly defined by a common learning language, and a commitment to shared learning values.
- Equity:** We commit to identify, confront, and dismantle structures and systems of inequity, to examine our privilege, and take actions to increase justice and ensure belonging.
- Evidence:** We reject overdependence on narrow methods of assessment. All learners and schools must have the opportunity to demonstrate progress using rich and diverse data and methods.
- Learning:** We ensure dynamic, engaging, impactful, and joyful learning experiences owned and driven by learners.
- Well-Being:** We co-create a culture that nurtures the intellectual, social, emotional, physical, spiritual, environmental, and occupational well-being of all community members.

We, along with our Keynote Speakers, will address the changes we see happening, the work that all school leaders must navigate while simultaneously leading through a world crisis and will also address well-being: the well-being of our teachers, staff, and community, plus our own personal well-being. A new awareness is emerging. We are seeing pathways toward forging a different kind of relationship between learners and learning, parents and teachers, schools and communities.

We hope for you to join us. Please take a moment to [register](#) for the AAIE 2022 Virtual International Leadership CONVERSATION. One registration per school or partner organization allows for all to participate.

AAIE 2021-22 membership is required for participation. Not yet a member? Please [use this link](#) to register for AAIE 2021-22 membership.

Learn more about AAIE [here](#). You can also connect with [Laura](#) and [Gerri-Ann](#) on LinkedIn.

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Green Initiatives from #ISSedu

We reached out to educators and students at ISS schools to learn about sustainable initiatives and hopes in their school community. The ways these three different locations have responded to their unique community and environmental needs are inspirational calls-to-action!



Located in Dostyk Village, Kazakhstan

What green initiatives in your school have inspired you or made a positive community impact?

"One green initiative our school has done is educating us about the endangered Turanga tree in Kazakhstan and how we can cause a difference. Currently, **we are planting Turanga trees** and giving the seeds back to the college to help them survive. Another green initiative is teaching about **Call to Earth Day** and why it is necessary to raise awareness of what's being done."

-G.M., Grade 8 Student



"The **"Turanga tree" planting** has made a positive community impact because it has taught many kids about how endangered the tree is and what we can do to help (we planted saplings). **DICE Days** (Design, Innovate, Create, Explore) taught us about SDG's and inspired students to improve the quality of the school. For example, some students **revived the garden that has been dead for years.**"

-D.O., Grade 8 Student

"During a middle-school-wide initiative, one of the students at our school has been **creating benches from reclaimed pallets**. He has done this by taking apart the pallets and using a sander and sanding the boards down. Then he screws them together and sands them down again to make his sustainable benches. The benches will be used to create seating and a classroom space in our school yurt."

-E.S.C., Grade 8 Student



Read more about the Turanga tree planting and Call to Earth Day actions at DAIS on the [ISS blog](#)

What environmentally-responsible changes do you hope to see in your school or community?

"**More plants in the school** would be beneficial, not only for a relaxing and calm atmosphere but it would also be better for air quality. For the community, a day where everyone goes and plants a tree might also help."

-D.O., Grade 8 Student

"An environmentally-responsible change I would wish to see happen in our school is **more plants in the classrooms of DAIS**. A second development that would be felicitous to see is more education on recycling and how it can positively enhance the environment. "

-G.M., Grade 8 Student



Learn more about the SIS beekeeping initiative in Episode 3 of Kevin O'Shea's ["Nature Talks Podcast."](#) You'll hear an engaging conversation with Chet Khatau about launching the apiary initiative at SIS, along with the powerful impact and learning beekeeping can offer in schools

"I have a group of students who have created **their own group to help fix climate change**. (Click the video on the right to hear the students explain their goals) They also had a stall at our Winter Bazaar and have **raised money to buy all the classes** in the Primary school a copy of *Earth Heroes*, which is the book that inspired them! Such a proud teacher!"

-Annie Ferguson, Grade 4 Teacher



Located in Shenzhen, China

What green initiatives in your school have inspired you or made a positive community impact?

"The **Beekeeping community**. They have built hives on our roof tops and have taught us the importance of the environment and have tried to sustain it in our environment, like reusing plastic jars into bee feeders for the winter time."

-K.S., Grade 8 Student

"We have **started an apiary with six beehives** to explore, understand and value the role of pollinators in urban settings. Also, the entirety of grade 9 is embarking upon a **vermiculture project** to highlight sustainability and biodiversity issues that we face today. In partnership with the local Starbucks, we are collecting coffee grounds and letting our worms break them down along with paper and sawdust from our facility to use in our pollinator garden."

-Chet Khatau, Economics Teacher



What environmentally-responsible changes do you hope to see in your school or community?

"I hope to see less usage of one-time-use plastic products and **more usage of sustainable products** like instead of styrofoam containers use metal or sustainable plastic food containers."

-K.S., Grade 8 Student

"A growth in **environmentally friendly approaches to food**, and a more vibrant and natural atmosphere."

-Z., Grade 9 Student

"I'd like to see our whole community get involved in the management of our apiary and have created a unit plan that I hope **inspires other educators and students** to give it a go in their own school."

-Chet Khatau, Economics Teacher





CONNECT | INSPIRE | SERVE

Located in Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands

What green initiatives in your school have inspired you or made a positive community impact?

"I have been inspired by **sea turtles**. Our class went to a sea turtle nest excavation with the Cayman Islands Department of Environment. We went to a sea turtle nest on Seven Mile Beach and counted the eggs to see how many baby turtles hatched and made it to the ocean and how many didn't. We also rescued 4 green sea turtle hatchlings that were stuck. Then after the excavation was finished my teacher released the baby turtles into the ocean.

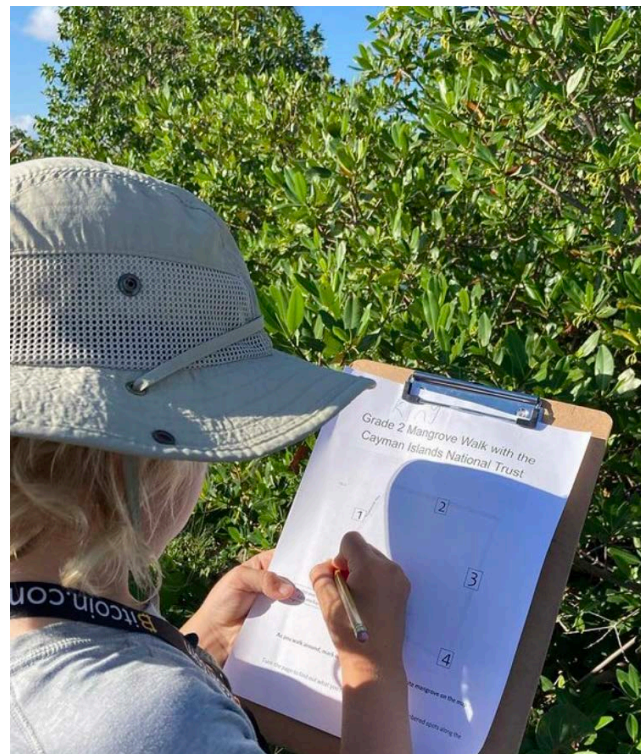
I learned that there are many threats to sea turtles that we have caused. Sea turtles are losing their beaches where they nest because we are building hotels and big houses on their beaches. The lights from our hotels and houses cause the baby turtles to go the wrong way towards land instead of the ocean and they die. Also, our plastic ends up in the ocean and causes sea turtles to get tangled up and die. **I am inspired to make a difference** for our sea turtles by teaching others and not using any plastic."

-S.S., Grade 2 Student

"**Learning about the mangroves** has inspired me because they are important for animals and they protect us from hurricanes. We did a mangrove walk and became members of the Cayman Islands National Trust. I learned that there are three types of mangroves white, red and black. My favorite kind of mangroves are black mangroves because they have salt on their leaves and snorkel roots. Mangroves are important for our school and island because they protect us from storms and erosion."

-C.F., Grade 2 Student

"Our **Ocean PBL** that the students do has greatly inspired me. Because we live on an island in Cayman, the ocean is a daily presence in our lives. It impacts us in ways that are personally, culturally and economically significant, and often dictates the ways in which our daily needs are met. We understand in concrete ways that the ocean is the lifeblood of Earth - and life itself. In Cayman, the threats to our oceans are compounded. We see the real impact of these threats, but also the potential impacts we can make, ourselves, via the choices we make every day. We understand the need to educate ourselves and others about the potential of these impacts. In this project, students take on the role of environmentalists to **research and develop a sequence of public service announcements** on ocean-based environmental issues.



Read more about hands-on environmental action with Amanda Brown on the [ISS Blog](#)! Image shared from Cayman Islands Department of Environment Grouper Moon Project and REEF.

They complete individual research projects and meet with community leaders through community partnerships with the **Department of Environment, Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation, Reef Environmental Education Foundation, and Central Caribbean Marine Institute** to research and learn more about topics ranging from coral bleaching, overfishing, shark finning, and plastic pollution. The students then work in teams to combine information, connect understandings, and grow their ideas. They plan and develop an information campaign dedicated to sharing ideas about how to mitigate the potentially negative impact of human activities on our oceans. Their driving question: How can we, as environmentalists, use what we have learned about ocean-based environmental issues to advocate for them, inspire others, and make change? It has been incredibly astounding to see how this project has evolved over my time at CIS, and to see the students and families **engage with our community, make change, and spread awareness** about the issues our ocean is facing."

-Amanda Brown, Grade 2 Teacher

What environmentally-responsible changes do you hope to see in your school or community?

"An environmentally-responsible change I want to see in Cayman is no more Mount Trashmore. **I don't want any more dump fires** because when a dump fire happens the fire sends out smoke and we have to miss school because it is not safe for us to stay at our school."

-S.S., Grade 2 Student

"I encourage our community to listen to the voices of our students; **they are our future**."

-Amanda Brown, Grade 2 Teacher

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ISS has collaborated with **leading professional organizations** to create the **first dedicated professional societies** for school leaders and staff working in international schools.

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ISS FACILITIES MANAGEMENT SOCIETY

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www.isdbd.org

Achieve Xiamen International School (AXIS)

AXIS is a new ISS school in the southern part of China in Xiamen. The school will begin its second year with grades Nursery through Grade 10. The AXIS model for learning features an international program framed by the PYP Program in Primary and an inquiry based program in Grades 6-10. The school will offer the IBDP and College Board Advanced Placement classes starting in Grades 11-12.

If you are interested in being part of a new school, contact jobs@axissschool.org.cn.

The diagram illustrates the ARIS Teacher Leadership process and the PTC Teacher Leader Institute Training. The flowchart shows six steps: 1. Communicate with staff and students about the importance of starting a mentoring program at ARIS; 2. Develop mentorship handbook; 3. Identify interested mentors and coordinator with our community and work with them on developing job description (the role and responsibilities); 4. Train mentors; 5. Identify the classes to start the mentoring pilot project; 6. Start the pilot project. The timeline for the PTC Teacher Leader Institute Training includes a Kick-off Meeting in September 2021, a Poster Campaign, a Kick-off general meeting, Teacher leader standards and preliminary job description, Selection survey and process, and a Reflective Learning Process. The graphic 'A SAFE SPACE... FOR DISCUSSING OUR DIVERSITY' features a heart and a key, with text about destroying stereotypes and responsible respect.

Resources and materials shared in the two AISA sprints

Leading from the Side

By John Burns, ISS Director of Creativity and Innovation

Leading and managing organizational change is a difficult endeavor at the best of times. It requires clarity, foresight, empathy for others and a range of micro and macro strategies. Educational change leaders generally lean towards one of two approaches.

Some take a **Top-Down** approach, and use the decisive mechanisms of a defined scope, delegation, and articulated action plans. This relies on decisions and ideas from the few, communicated to the many. It can eliminate confusion, reduce risk, and tends to keep initiatives organized across larger teams.

On the flip-side, others may lean into a **Bottom-Up** approach that includes authentic feedback from a wide cross section of stakeholders and the collective wisdom of a diverse team. This promotes inclusion but follows a more organic approach which requires a tolerance for ambiguity and a willingness to rapidly pivot.

- Sideways leadership
- leverages the strategic direction of an organization, while also empowering individuals to share and scale ideas that could support ongoing change

But what if there was a third approach that could marry the best of both styles with less of the associated downsides? Enter **Sideways Leadership**. Sideways leadership leverages the strategic direction of an organization, while also empowering individuals to share and scale ideas that could support ongoing

change. On a practical level this can be embraced through the deployment of an idea management strategy that utilizes design routines that garner the collective wisdom of the team while still respecting wider strategic aims.

Over recent months, ISS has continued to support schools and organizations in developing their sideways leadership approach. Through a series of design sprints, married with the idea management platform, ISS CHALLENGES, we have co-facilitated the crowdsourcing and scaling of strategically aligned prototypes across a number of organizations.

AISA Sprint, 1

The Association of International Schools In Africa (AISA) engaged ISS in two separate design sprints to support their strategic aims for 2021/22. The first focused on increasing transparency across their school leadership teams, sharing best practice and building connections between individuals.

Over two days, leaders shared and supported the growth of individual prototypes covering online learning, blended programs, teacher leadership and creative endeavors.

- Blueprint for igniting collaborative teaching and learning - [link](#)
- Student mentorship - [link](#)
- Teacher leadership - [link](#)
- Blended learning programs - [link](#)
- The WIS Center for Imagination - [link](#)

We were grateful to receive feedback from **Graham Watts**, Deputy Exec Director, AISA:

s, there are a lot of mainstream ideas of what is right and what is and isn't offensive. However, often people do not register words / actions can affect somebody else differently. This can lead to misunderstandings. This question recognises the importance of listening to what others mean, accepting that, discussing it, and introducing your own experiences.

"Thank you for leading our first ISS CHALLENGE and for making it such a rich and dynamic experience. You showed how online PL should be designed and facilitated to optimize engagement and collaboration."

AISA Sprint, 2

Co-hosted by [Nneka Johnson](#), Director of Innovation at the **International School of Dakar**, AISA's second sprint created a safe space for discussion and planning around DEI strategies in their respective schools. Over a single day that also included students, participants harvested resources, developed shared policy, and re-imagined curriculum.

- Guiding policies and procedures - [link](#)
- Collaborative curriculum design - [link](#)
- Community connections - [link](#)
- Safe spaces for discussion, student developed - [link](#)

IST Sprint

In a separate ISS engagement with the **International School of Tanganyika (IST)**, **Dr. Mark Hardeman**, (Director) and **Tina Fossgreen** (Director of Teaching & Learning) chose to focus on supporting and scaling strategic initiatives across PK12.

Over two days staff developed differentiation protocols, HCL strategies, carbon footprint reduction, and feedback mechanisms.

- MYP Differentiation Protocol - [link](#)
- HCL Strategy - [link](#)
- Carbon Footprint Reduction - [link](#)
- Feedback to Practice - [link](#)

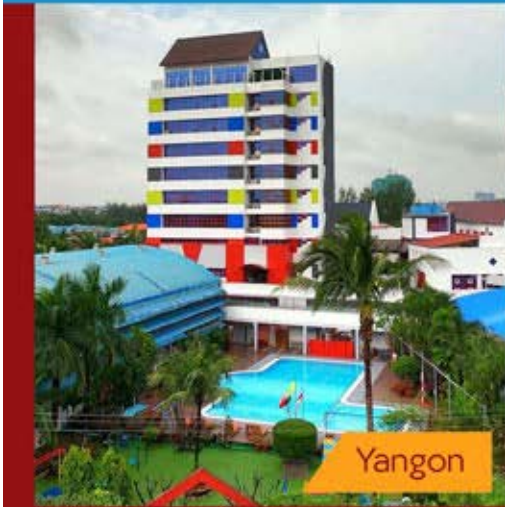
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YANGON INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



Established in 2004, Yangon International School is managed by International Schools Services (ISS). We are accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and are a member of the East Asian Regional Council of Schools and Colleges.



Yangon



Mandalay



Yangon International School

Yangon International School (Mandalay)

Our recently-opened 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 9 and is also managed by ISS. We are excited to welcome students from Mandalay and the surrounding region to come and learn with us.

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.

Yangon International School

YIS is an international school that caters to students from early childhood through to grade 12. Our educational community aims to foster the development of the whole child. We shape students into global citizens and lifelong learners who are academically prepared, socially responsible, culturally sensitive, and personally fulfilled.

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During an upcoming professional development meeting, we will spend time tapping into teachers' wealth of knowledge and create a [shared document](#) cataloging strategies teachers can easily implement into their own practices.

Group Reflections on Feedback

Strategy	Shared by (teacher name)	Description	Links
Analysis of example work	Nicole/Laura	Students work together in small groups to analyze an example piece of work against a rubric. They should justify their thinking and their ranking of the work. Groups then merge to compare their marking.	

Teacher Directed Reflections on Feedback

Strategy	Shared by (teacher name)	Description	Links
Review of command terms	Nicole/Laura	Students need to learn the subtle differences in command term definitions. In this activity, teachers use a specific example and show how the idea becomes more in depth with each different command term.	Full size example

Thank you to the following IST community members for sharing their feedback:

Dr. Mark Hardeman, Director, IST: "A nice balance between inspirational, conceptual, and practical. We are proud of our prototypes and excited to gather feedback."

Maggie Hewitt, ES Vice Principal, IST: "I am a designer! For the first time, I saw myself as a designer for meaningful change."

Tina Fossgreen, Director of Teaching and Learning, IST: "A great opportunity to dive into our strategic work and build prototypes. The ISS Design Challenge platform allows a team to gather feedback from the wider community. The team building embedded into the experience was an added bonus."

Looking forward

We're excited to be continuing out support of sideways leadership with AAIE, AISA, and others in the near future.

If you're looking to explore how idea management can harness the collective wisdom of your community while supporting your overarching strategy, please contact info@iss.edu.

You can follow John at [@j0hnburns](#)

Highly Capable Learners @ IST

"All children deserve to learn something new every day," Dr. Julian C. Stanley

Identifying HCL

Definition of HCL

At IST we believe highly capable learners are those with exceptionally advanced ability in at least one specific domain (intellectual, creative, social, perceptual or physical) at a point in time, such that a learner's needs can be best met with significant accommodations or modifications to the learning context.

[Add comment](#)

Next Steps

Share your observations with the LS teacher?

- Have a conversation with parents and seek out background information (previous reports?)
- Look at screeners and assessment tools to gather more data? (At IST we use internal assessments, Key Maths, MAP, DRA.)

[Add comment](#)

Curricular Enrichment

Creative activities for gifted readers

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Personal Inquiry Project

My time

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IST is looking into CogAT

IST is looking into CogAT

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Reading

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Global Online Academy

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Resources and materials shared from the IST sprint



Constant/Change:

DESIGNING FUTURE LEARNING SPACES

By **Austin Sakong**, Senior Associate, FXCollaborative Architects LLP

Few things occupy me as much as the question of how we occupy learning spaces. In part, it's because I'm an architect who designs schools for a living; my days are spent imagining, drawing, building, renovating, furnishing, or master planning spaces for education. Whether for cabinet details or campus plans, for elementary schools or universities, every sketch I make is an attempt to somehow explore the relationship between a student's physical environment and their ability to learn — as well as what they learn, and how they learn it.

Often, such explorations are straightforward: does a classroom have the right proportions, adequate infrastructure, enough flexibility?

The measures by which we answer these questions tend to be specific to the institution and educators we are designing for, and can differ from project to project.

But other times, stepping back from the pressing needs of specific projects, the questions that linger can also feel bigger: why do classrooms need to be rooms at all, and does a school always need to be a building? Why do we atomize education into standardized subjects, math apart from art apart from literature, and assign classrooms accordingly? Why do we cluster students by age? Why do schools ... look like schools?

I often think of what the historian **James Ackerman** wrote back in 1969 for the *Harvard*

Educational Review: "In the Middle Ages, colleges like those at Oxford looked like monasteries because the Establishment was theocratic; today, our high schools look like factories and regiment students like the labor force because the Establishment is commercial and industrial." Say what you will about our world today, but it is not the commercial and industrial world of 1969.

Today, we are in the throes of at least the third—maybe fourth—industrial revolution; our economy is post-Fordist and late capitalist; we are beset with global crises of climate and health and deep-seated inequities; the ubiquity of technology has radically changed our most intimate and routine social interactions. Our

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world is no longer divided neatly into discrete monofunctional boxes — yet our schools feel largely stuck in 1969: efficient double-loaded corridors, regimented bells and cells.

- Our world is no longer
- divided neatly into
- discrete monofunctional
- boxes –yet our schools
- feel largely stuck in 1969

Sure, we’ve managed to squeeze a maker space in here and there, installed a few smart boards, and made our furniture a little more mobile. But for the most part, our schools remain factories for the standardized production of students. I worry that it’s just not enough; that the learning environments we all (designers, educators, parents, all of us) continue to demand and produce fall short of what our students need to tackle the tumult awaiting them.

As societal structures and institutions change, schools should too. But in our pursuit of what’s evolving, it’s also important not to lose sight of what’s essential. Our cities are replete with past experiments in school design: schools as churches, schools as fortresses, open plan schools, schools with no windows, plein-air schools, schools with no doors...the list goes on.

Through it all, we can still point to certain pedagogical and spatial components of an education that we know aren’t going away anytime soon: a great teacher, a safe space, joy, abundant natural light, engagement at the individual scale. I think of Socrates teaching in the shade of a tree, and think of all that’s changed, and — especially when speaking with progressive educators about outdoor learning and movement — I think of what hasn’t changed at all.

It’s a tricky endeavor, to ask what will stay constant and what will change. But it feels urgent to try. And the conversation should not be neatly divided into pedagogical, spatial, or social issues; rather, it should probably be messy, fertile, entangled. It should reach

across currents, across multiple projects and institutions and perspectives. It should involve architects, educators, school administrators, facility managers, visionaries, business leaders, parents, students, and anyone else invested in the future of learning spaces.

Who knows where such a conversation would lead? It might just lead us out of the past.

fxcollaborative

Learn more about [FXCollaborative here](#). ISS and FXCollaborative leaders are hosting a special [three-part series](#) of round table discussions between educators and school designers. Findings to be shared in the next ISS NewsLinks edition, so stay tuned.



FXCollaborative’s design for the new Dar Essalam American School in Rabat, Morocco. The plans emphasize connections to gardens, flexible commons spaces, and open-ended landscapes for learning and collaboration.

PART 1 OF 2

Staying True to the Mission of Schools: Learning

By **Ben Calsbeek**, Middle School Principal, Cayman International School

The Why: Impacting Lives Via Learning

A noticeable and positive shift in emphasis from teaching to learning has taken place in education over the past two decades. Look no further than the ways teachers spend their time: collaborating as professional learning communities, analyzing assessments and test score data in teams; aligning curriculum to learning standards; identifying specific gaps in students’ learning and creating specific interventions.

This differs significantly from how teachers traditionally spent much of their time in the past: working in relative isolation; primarily concerned with teaching the content they thought was best; assessing student learning in a subjective manner.

Despite this positive paradigmatic shift, the cart is still often in front of the horse. A foundational understanding and true shared vision for learning are often still missing in schools—even schools with the best intentions that say the right things about learning. How many schools, for instance, begin their work from an articulated, shared understanding of what learning really is and what it looks like, and then place every other issue within this context? How many develop, practice, and evaluate a shared pedagogy explicitly aligned to this vision?

- Even schools with the best
- intentions and talented
- teachers spend countless
- hours on tasks like aligning
- curriculum to learning
- standards with only an
- assumed understanding of
- what learning actually is.

Unfortunately, from personal experience, not the majority. Rather, even schools with the best

intentions and talented teachers, spend countless hours on tasks like aligning curriculum to learning standards with only an assumed understanding of what learning actually is. How can time be spent productively analyzing learning standards to increase learning impact, without first an explicit, shared vision and definition for learning?

Persistent remnants of the “old way” are responsible. Teachers and administrators simply assume we know what learning is, what it looks like, and that it is somehow implicit in what we do. And to our defense, it usually is—in some way, at least. If everyone in a school wrote down and shared their ideas about learning, there would certainly be more similarity than difference.

Yet this isn’t good enough if schools aspire to be places that truly fulfill their purpose of impacting children via deep, intentional learning. Leaders and teachers must seriously engage in this critical foundational work before doing anything else if the commitment to learning is real.

Learning must be defined; the definition must be shared; it must be the explicit basis for all the work that gets done before the work that so many schools slog through, (in the name of learning, no less) like aligning curriculum, writing common assessments, unit planning, and the rest. The place to start for schools serious about organizing learning and creating a connected learning culture is with a clear, simple shared definition and vision for learning.

The following is an attempt to provide just that. There is nothing groundbreaking or best-selling in the ideas. Rather, they are common sense, foundational ideas made explicit in the sole effort to ensure schools stay true to their core mission: impacting lives via learning.



The 3C’s, from Common Ground Collaborative (CGC)

The What: Defining Learning

The specific definition of learning a school lands on is not what is most important. There is no research-based, wholly agreed upon definition of learning. What is most important, however, is a shared understanding of, and commitment to, the definition on which a school lands. Putting this definition at the center of the school’s work is essential.

My first insights into this came early in my career as an alternative education teacher. I became quickly and keenly aware the courses I was responsible for delivering only mattered if they were used as a means to some greater end. My students, most of whom had no high school credits and little hope for graduation, were not intrinsically motivated to care much about literature or history.

They were, however, very interested in “learning,” as I was very easily able to demonstrate that all of their passions and pursuits required the ability to learn. I turned my attention, then, to teaching the process of learning and making visible the evidence of it in action. The various content we explored was simply the vehicle for something greater. A light bulb flickered: content was a means, not an end. For the next 14 years as a classroom teacher I refined my own definition of learning that was always the first “content” taught in every class, regardless of the course title.

[Continued on page 36](#)

"Staying True to the Mission of Schools: Learning," [continued from page 35](#)

Before getting to the course description, my students and I spent days co-creating a shared definition and process of learning which framed and guided all our work moving forward. Once started, our inquiry into history, then, was equally an inquiry into learning, always making visible our definition and process along every step of the way.

In part, it was this firsthand experience and insight into seeing the learning impact of clear parameters and common language for learning that fueled my passion to become a school leader. If it worked in the classroom, why couldn't this simple idea be scaled up to an entire school?

I have been fortunate over the last five years to be a leader at **Cayman International School (CIS)**, a forward thinking school committed to transforming silos into systems, whose purpose is always crystal clear: impacting children's lives via authentic, deep learning.

- "Learning is a process
- of growing, deepening,
- and sharing conceptual
- understanding,
- competencies, and character
- in lasting, impactful ways."

At CIS, our definition of learning comes from our close partnership with the [Common Ground Collaborative \(CGC\)](#): "Learning is a process of growing, deepening, and sharing conceptual understanding, competencies,

and character in lasting, impactful ways." (This definition, both at CIS and the CGC is simply referred to as the "3Cs." See figure [on page 37](#))

To ensure that our definition was more than a flat, two-dimensional statement, easily recited and parroted, we articulated four learning principles that provide the conceptual foundation for our shared understanding of learning. From these principles, we next asked a simple question: what do they actually look like in practice—both in terms of teacher output and more importantly, student learning impact?

To help answer this question we use a co-created continua of shared teacher practices that literally translates our principles into teacher competencies, and importantly into student learning impact. This articulation ensures our programs, policies, and procedures (the "whats" of our school) are tethered to our principles (the "why") and flow with considerable freedom from them, not vice versa. Schools so often get this backwards and become places whose culture is defined by a frenzied, disconnected adoption of programs in the hope that somehow they will improve learning. They never will.

By starting with a clear definition of learning and [set of learning principles](#) (see below), accompanied by four large questions that framed our ongoing work as a school, we were able to articulate an [inspiring vision](#) for a comprehensive and connected learning system. Like all visions, ours at CIS is in part aspirational and a work in progress with many of our systems still in their infancy.

This is hard, ongoing, and complex work that takes years to realize, particularly in a growing school like ours. As a divisional leader, however, I work in confidence that while the future is unknown and change is a constant, the blueprint and framework that guides our work is clear and unchanging. Creating and developing programming and policies can happen in a sustainable, logical way; "whats" and "hows" of a school only take root and flourish when nourished in the rich soil of "the why." Creating and unpacking a definition of learning is the logical starting point for any school serious about the same idea.

The CGC offered brilliant guidance and imagery during this process for our school that included writing a new mission and strategic plan. Their articulation of healthy [schools as learning ecosystems](#) was clear and inspirational: schools framed by four key questions that can be scaled up and down the system, who are committed to answering them in systemic, connected ways, are schools that evolve over time into interconnected learning cultures. Schools that evolve into learning cultures fulfill their purpose of impacting children's lives via deep, meaningful learning.

Ben Calsbeek's Part 2 of "Staying True to the Mission of Schools: Learning" will be shared in the next edition of NewsLinks. You can connect with Ben [on LinkedIn](#) and follow the CGC at [@TheCGCProject](#)



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CIS Community Principles

"The way we do things around here..."

The Kindness Principle

We value kindness. Our kindness is illustrated in all of our interactions. How we communicate with each other is emblematic of our collective kind and caring spirit. When we have disagreements, we talk with people, not about people.

The Partnership Principle

We are strongest when we work together, when we share ideas and resources, and when we partner with the greater Cayman community. A spirit of collaboration not only makes our community stronger, it makes student learning richer by connecting stakeholders in exciting and innovative ways.

The Sustainability Principle

We take into consideration long-term impacts when making decisions. This applies to decisions about programming as well as to our personal and collective behavior. We live on an island with limited resources and our environmental stewardship is essential in keeping it viable and healthy for generations to come.

The Good Intent Principle

We assume good intent. We trust that members of our community have what is best for one another at heart. We engage diverse perspectives with empathy and open-mindedness. We aim to be our best selves in all that we do.

CIS Learning Principles

"What we understand about learning..."

The Language of Learning

We understand that to make learning happen effectively and collectively we need a shared language that describes what learning is and how we do it.

The Ownership of Learning

We understand that we are all able to learn and ultimately responsible for our own learning.

The Nature of Learning

We understand that learning is emotional as well as cognitive and is both an individual and social experience.

The Contexts of Learning

We understand that learning transfer happens best in rich, relevant contexts.

PART 3 OF A JOURNEY IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP:

Our Roadmap to Recruiting New Students

By **Sam E. Mills**, Ed.D., Head of School, Sias International School (Sias IS)

In the [last issue of ISS Newslinks](#), I wrote about teacher recruitment at our new, ambitious school. Growing our foreign faculty is tied to our ability to recruit more students. Recruiting students to a new school without a reputation (good or bad) is tricky. Each new family has to form an opinion about our school and make a major decision for their child based on a few interactions and a tour or open day event.

In May 2021, we had 24 students enrolled. In August 2021 we had 110 students enrolled in grades PreK 3 to Grade 6. We are targeting between 300-350 students for August 2022.

The Sias IS Roadmap

At Sias IS, we believe that our current, happy parents and students are the best marketers for our school. We strive to ensure that we are providing high-quality instruction and communicating frequently with families. We regularly share our plans for Sias IS to grow and how our growth will benefit our current students. Our parents continually introduce new students to us, which is excellent validation for the work we are doing.

We believe in cultivating relationships with prospective families. By doing things such as personally sharing social media content with them about our school, offering many chances to ask questions, and inviting them to on-campus events, we are helping them make an informed decision about their child's education.

After a family has paid the enrollment fee and their child has been screened, I personally meet with every family in my office. We discuss what it means to be a student and a parent at Sias IS. One of the most important topics I discuss with families is how we have similar goals for the school. My three young kids are also students at Sias IS, which means I have the same high expectations for their education as the parents trusting us to educate their children. We must work together to build a world-class school.

Other Avenues for Growth

Recently, Sias International School hosted a Tree Lighting Ceremony to celebrate the winter holidays. It was a wonderful marketing event and a fun celebration. Nearly 100 prospective families came to campus to see the lights, play some games, listen to music and take photos. Before the countdown to light the tree, I gave a short introduction exalting the international-mindedness of



Sias IS outreach and community fun at the Tree Lighting Ceremony

our school and the people who contribute to our school family. It was a sincere message of gratitude, but also aimed to help our prospective families better understand our school.

We also rely on several other tools and relationships. Our ISS-Asia Pacific office has supported our marketing efforts. We seek out partnerships with external stakeholders and social media influencers to spread the word about our school. Regularly, we have parents that learn about our school and enroll their children the next day. This tells us that we have not done enough to inform the Zhengzhou community about our special school.

Looking Ahead

There is still significant work to be done to hit our growth targets. Each day I know we are taking remarkable steps to achieve our goals. Without the leadership of our Admissions/Marketing Manager and her team, we would not be able to grow at the pace we have.

Our consistent message to families is that it is enjoyable to recruit students to our school because we are so proud of the work being done in the classrooms and on our campus.

Learn more about [Sias International School here](#), plus find out more [about recruiting with ISS here](#). You can connect with Sam on Twitter at [@samemills](#), SamEMills on WeChat, and email at HoS@siasinternationalschool.org.



"My three young kids are also students at Sias IS, which means I have the same high expectations for their education as the parents trusting us to educate their children"



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Continued from page 1:

What if ALL Really Meant ALL?

By **Alysa Perreras**, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Consultant and Researcher, Medellin, Colombia | Doctoral Student, Education for Social Justice, University of San Diego

[Continued from page 1](#)

A Limited Imagination

In the summer of 2020, the conversation around white supremacy and racial injustice picked up mainstream momentum. Yet, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) in the international school community already knew all too well how whiteness and white supremacy moved in our classroom, curriculums, and school cultures. And while increased conversation around educational equity work is a starting point, I contend that as more schools and communities decide to engage with this work, fundamental shifts in our mindset regarding liberation and abundance must occur for the work to be transformative instead of performative.

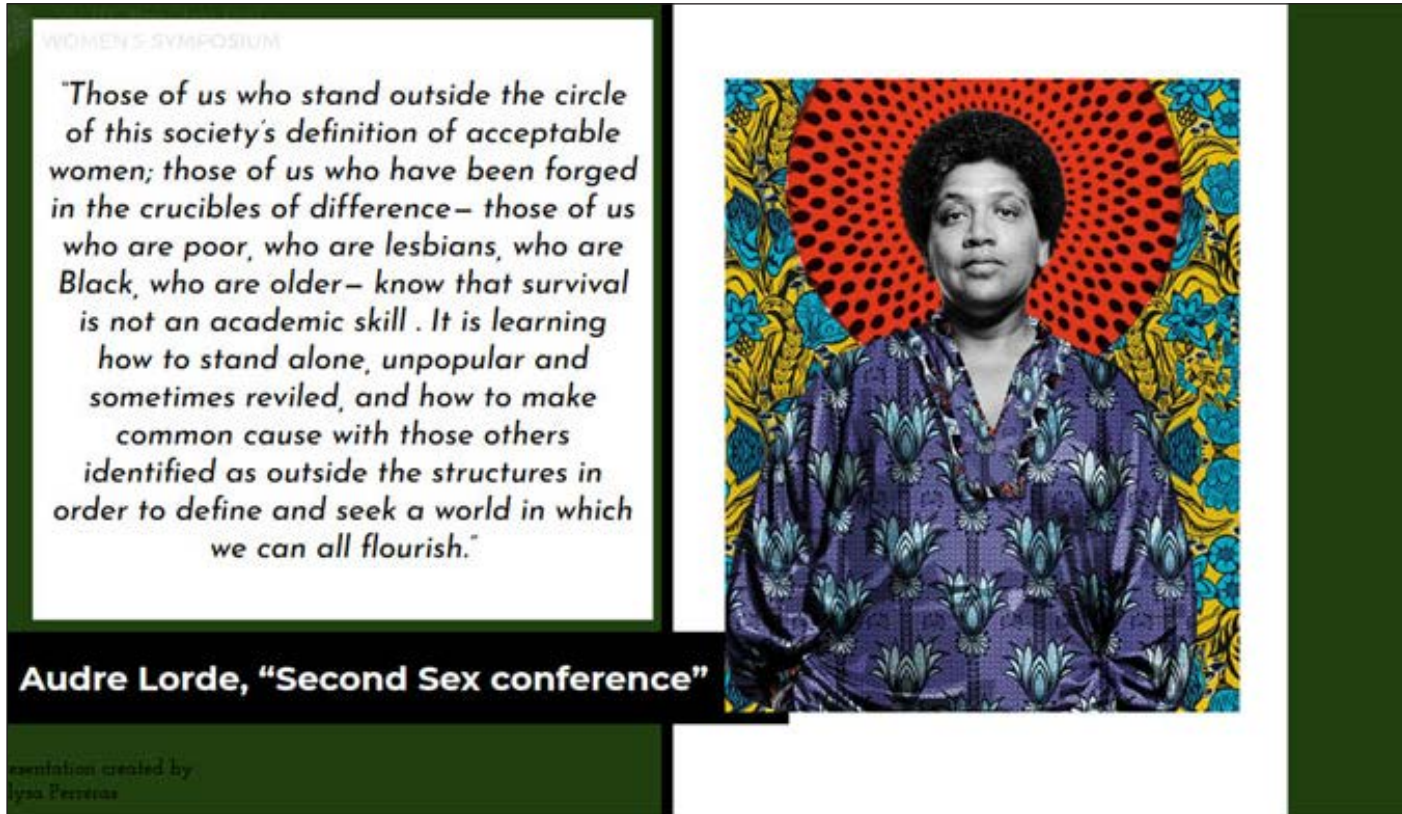
When we think about liberation and humanity as scarce or finite, we are operating from a myth brought on by limited imagination. This is a consequence of many of the systems of oppression, like white supremacy, cisheteronormativity, ableism and patriarchy, we endure every day. When this scarcity mindset infiltrates and deeply embeds itself in our school cultures, our equity work will always fall short.

- When we think about
- liberation and humanity
- as scarce or finite, we are
- operating from a myth
- brought on by limited
- imagination

Scarcity around humanity and liberation has conditioned us to believe that if one group has more opportunity and access to experience affirmation, justice and joy another group must give up affirmation, justice, and joy.

We see this in schools when push back around engagement in racial or LGBTQ+ inclusion work results in misunderstandings and over hyperbolized fears about how the work is "divisive" and seeks to harm white children or heterosexual children. As if allowing BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students to see their experiences reflected in their education takes away from the experience of other students. It does not.

Opportunities to affirm our humanity and the freedom that comes with that are abundant and infinite; however, we must choose to believe it and act accordingly.



Slide from Alysa's ISS Mary Anne Haas Women's Symposium series

"When Her Shackles Are Different from My Own..."

Recently, I was able to lead a three-part module on intersectionality with International Schools Services (ISS) that explored how the theory and practice of intersectionality is a powerful tool for inviting abundance into our educational systems.

In our time together, we explored how scarcity manifested in our own fears, and subsequently educational practices, how our internalized superiorities created notions of false meritocracy and entitlement, and how intersectionality could support us in challenging all of that.

Intersectionality was first coined by **Kimberlé Crenshaw** through her studies of law and Black Feminist thought and built on the work of other Black female writers like **Audre Lorde** and **bell hooks**. Crenshaw discusses intersectionality as "a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects.

It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times, that framing erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things...", (Columbia Law School, 2017, para. 4).

Developing Equity-Centered School Cultures

If schools are committed to becoming equity-oriented institutions, adopting an intersectional lens is a powerful tool in that pursuit. And while there are many interpretations and manifestations of intersectionality in practice, the guiding principle is captured in the words of civil rights activist **Fanny Lou Hamer**, who said, "nobody's free until everybody's free."

- ...Intersectionality demands
- we dedicate time and
- resources to cultivate
- space where a wide range
- of perspectives can be
- included in how we plan,
- execute, and evaluate
- equity work

In developing equity-centered school culture, intersectionality demands we dedicate time and resources to cultivate space where a wide range of perspectives can be included in how we plan, execute, and evaluate equity work. If your educational equity work fails to ask questions like, "Whose voices are being centered here?" "Whose are being excluded?"

[Continued on page 41](#)

"What if ALL Really Meant ALL?," [continued from page 40](#)

"How does proximity to power impact those included in our decision-making process?", the work will likely find itself more engaged in the business of reorganizing power than dismantling systems of oppression.

In the classroom, intersectionality asks us to reimagine our interventions and overall work with students. For example, our students who are neurodiverse and receive academic accommodations can also still benefit from culturally responsive pedagogies. Our students who have identity markers that have been historically marginalized will not be served by single solutions that fail to account for other aspects of their identity. Intersectionality invites us to move away from problematizing people and seeking solutions through a siloed lens, and instead provides a pathway to envision entirely different systems, structures and environments that allow everyone to thrive as their complete selves.

Intersectionality also pushes us to go beyond superficial representation that simply allows someone who was previously marginalized the opportunity to marginalize others, instead of disrupting the systems that created hierarchy and oppression in the first place.

- Intersectionality expands
- our imagination and
- doesn't ask us to choose
- sides; it doesn't offer
- humanity and liberation
- for some at the expense of
- others

Collective Pursuit of Liberation

As a non-Black woman of color, with cisprivilege, passport privilege, and light skin privilege, I must recognize that the systems that harm me are sustained by causing even greater harm to those more marginalized than I am. My interests can never eclipse the collective pursuit of liberation. As a dear friend and respected educator **Joel Llaban Jr** says, "it doesn't have to be us versus them; it is us versus the systems we've inherited."

Intersectionality expands our imagination and doesn't ask us to choose sides; it doesn't offer humanity and liberation for some at the expense of others. While I still have so

much to learn about intersectionality, both in theory and praxis, I can say confidently it is a key component of practice if we want ALL to really mean ALL.

Find Alysa's work at alysaperreras.org and follow at [@PerrerasAlysa](https://twitter.com/PerrerasAlysa).

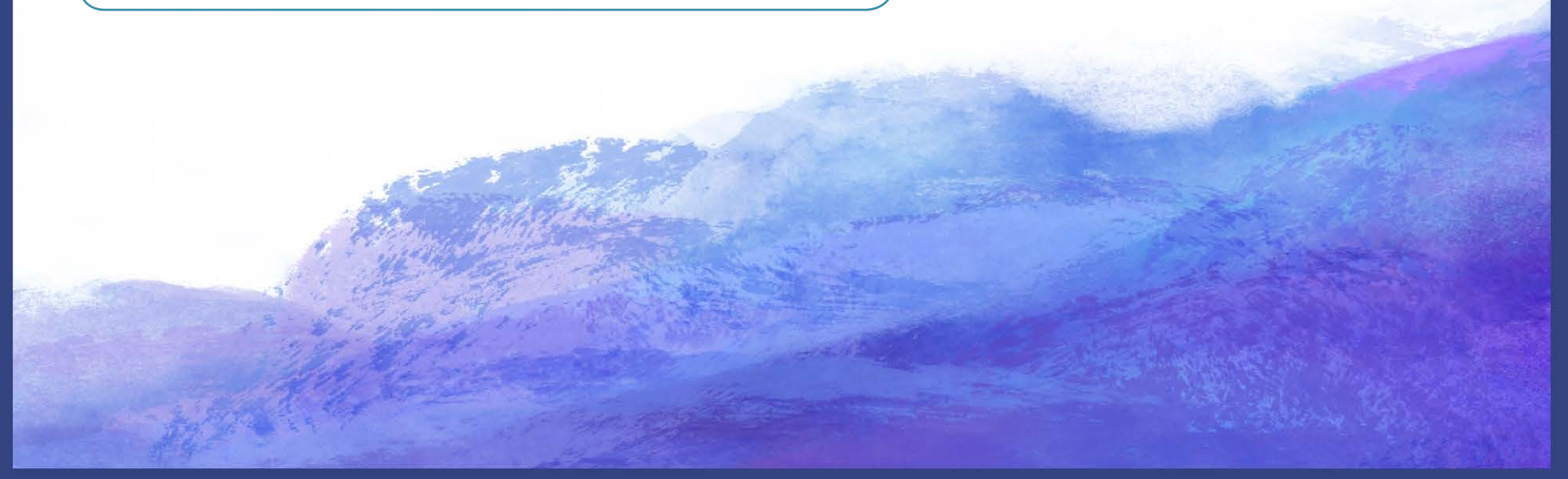
You can also view Alysa's three presentations from the October-November 2021 ISS Mary Anne Haas Women's Symposium series, "When Her Shackles are Different from My Own..." at [ISS.edu](https://iss.edu).



WOMEN'S SYMPOSIUM PADLET

Dive into resources shared at ISS Mary Anne Haas Womenars, along with other articles supporting women in leadership

[View at iss.education/WS-padlet](https://iss.education/WS-padlet)



Highlights from ISS Administrative Search

In the 2020-21 recruitment season, **ISS Administrative Search** led and supported 40+ school leadership searches spanning 27 countries. As the team has enjoyed another full season of leadership searches around the world in 2021-22, enjoy highlights from a few of their recent successful leaders! You can find your own next international school leadership opportunity and view [open ISS Administrative Searches here](#).



Ben Ploeger

New position, beginning July 2022: Director General, The American School of Asunción (ASIA), Paraguay

Previous role: Superintendent of Schools, Kaohsiung American School, 2017-21

Reflections: "I believe that an exceptional education provided by a strong community is the greatest lever by which anyone can make a positive difference anywhere in the world — and ASA's sense of community is so strong!"

When I visited ASA, I met students whose parents and grandparents were ASA alumni. The spirit of togetherness, with ASA as the uniting thread, was so evident that by the time my visit was over ASA already felt like home."

Follow: You can find [Ben on LinkedIn](#)

Katie Tomlinson

New position, beginning August 2022: Head of Primary, The British School Manila, Philippines

Current Role: Head of International Primary, Sri KDU International School Malaysia

Reflections: "As a school leader, I will always be first and foremost a teacher. My intent as an educator has always been to help students uncover their passion and realise their potential through a well-designed, relevant curriculum which provides a range of educational experiences and creates opportunities.

More than ever in today's rapidly changing world, students need to develop a global conscience. It is my intention to empower students to take action in all aspects of life; never believing that it will be someone else's responsibility to make things happen."

Follow: You can find [Katie on LinkedIn](#)



Harish Kanabar

New position, beginning August 2022: Head of School at Shekou International School (SIS), China

Current Role: Primary Principal, SIS, China

Reflections: "My leadership style is compassionate, ethical, inclusive, and my education philosophy is that all students can be successful. Our job is to inspire and nurture global citizens that will make a positive impact in our world.

I'm excited to make a wider difference across both the Primary and Secondary divisions of the school, and hoping to create additional opportunities for Secondary students in terms of courses as well as industry experience."

Follow: You can find [Harish on LinkedIn](#), on [Twitter at @hkanabar](#), and view more of SIS life on Instagram at [@sisgeckos_official](#)

Joel Cohen

New position, beginning May 2021: Director, Mahindra International School, India

Previous Role: High School Principal, French-American International School, USA

Reflections: "As early as I can remember, I have always defined success as the ability to travel and to discover new cultures. Born to an Egyptian father and an English mother, my siblings and I grew up in a small apartment in the north of Paris, but we were lucky enough to spend all our summers traveling extensively around the world.

We were taught that the most precious privilege one could ever possess is the ability to explore our world and to discover the cultural diversity of its people. When I realized that international education would allow me to combine my passion for teaching and learning with my travel aspirations and my desire to contribute to a better world, I immediately knew this is where my career would develop."

Follow: You can find [Joel on LinkedIn](#), on [Facebook](#), and [Twitter at @JoelEdCohen](#)



Continued from page 1:

Connecting Students with Nature, Big and Small

By Kevin O'Shea, Primary and Environmental Educator, Shekou International School (SIS)

Continued from page 1

We can start small and as we work through the grade levels and watch our learners get older, we can get bigger with projects and ideas.

Primary Years

One of the easiest ways to connect primary students is by teaching them about the things they see every day. Teach them about the birds, bugs and plants on campus. Get them gardening as well. I am a firm believer that students should be gardening throughout the year. Don't wait until you have a unit of inquiry about growth cycles or a science unit about food production. Start at the beginning of the year and continue throughout the seasons. Garden outside and when it's too cold for that, move things indoors.

My Kindergarten class has turned an unused space outdoors next to our classroom into a gardening area. One of the daily classroom duties is "Kindergarten Gardeners." Each day, students come outside during free-choice time and water the plants, transplant seedlings to larger pots and plant seeds. In a previous school, I used gardening as a reward, and it was far more successful than any number of stickers. Students would bend over backwards to have the chance to tend to the tomatoes, radishes and peppers. They learned where food came from and about the amount of work involved in caring for it.

- I used gardening as a
- reward, and it was far more
- successful than any number
- of stickers. Students would
- bend over backwards to
- have the chance to tend to
- the tomatoes, radishes and
- peppers.

One year we had a basil crop attacked by caterpillars. Students were upset but learned valuable agricultural lessons. They learned that although those caterpillars would develop into valuable pollinators, they could also be very harmful to farmers and food security in general.

During the caterpillar "ordeal," they also witnessed wasps attacking the caterpillars, learning that what they once thought to be "scary" insects had a valuable role as natural bio-control agents. After deep discussions, that Grade 2 class changed their opinions on many insects and looked at them from a very different perspective.

Middle and Secondary Years

As students get older and move into Middle and High School years, we need to engage them in different ways. We need to be very hands-on with nature connections; but they are a more complicated and knowledgeable audience.

At Shekou International School, one of our high school faculty has spear-headed a beekeeping program. He has created a beekeeping club for middle and high school students at our new campus. Not only has he recruited students to learn about becoming beekeepers, but he has recruited other faculty members to learn as well. As students and teachers learn to build hive boxes and frames, conduct hive inspections, examine the health of the bees and queens, and feed the bees, they are all learning valuable lessons.

As teachers, we often share the importance of pollinators in our ecosystems with students. We normally do it by sharing books and watching videos with a class, but that is nowhere near as meaningful as holding an actual frame filled with bees in your own hands. Students can learn about the importance of flower diversity for bees — but planting those flowers in planters around the hives and caring for them, researching which flowers are more attractive and pollen rich

and beneficial for the bees, really instills a passion and understanding of the needs of these valuable insects.

Always Connecting

There are many exciting things happening at SIS to connect students with the outdoors. As each year passes, teachers are understanding more about the importance of Environmental Education, the holistic umbrella that outdoor education and sustainability fall under.

- As educators, you first
- need to light a spark
- under yourself and then
- share the passion and
- excitement with your
- students.

Exciting initiatives will continue to grow, and they can at your school too. Start small and grow projects over time. As educators, you first need to light a spark under yourself and then share the passion and excitement with your students.

If we can teach students to love insects, local birds, trees on campus and the ecosystems around them, they will grow up to be stewards of nature in some capacity. Connecting kids, big and small, with nature should never be a one-off thing. It should never be confined only to Earth Day or a unit of inquiry. It should happen constantly. Bringing nature into the lives of our students is simply a win-win situation.

Follow Kevin on Twitter at [@MadForMaple](#). You can find and listen to Kevin's "[Nature Talks Podcast](#)" [here](#); you'll dive into interviews and discussions about connecting learners of all ages with the outdoors and nature.

Remembering Dr. Connie Buford

Photos and text adapted with permission from The Association of International Schools in Africa's (AISA) beautiful tribute page.
Please **visit the page here** for more memories from family and the international education community.



"I think sometimes we take ourselves too seriously and I urge you to lighten up. Sometimes a bit of irreverence is necessary; especially in our school settings, where no matter what we do, chaos and confusion often seem to be the norm. Students appreciate teachers and administrators with a good sense of humor.

And on this same train of thought, another adage that I have learned over the years, is "There are very few things actually worth losing sleep over."

-Dr. Connie Buford (AAIE Distinguished Overseas Lecture, 1997)

ISS joins the international education community in celebrating the life of **Dr. Connie Buford**, 1944-2022. As Tom Hawkins (ISS Vice President, School Startups and School Management) shared, "Connie was *such* a shining star and such a support to all of us in the regions she served. Her smile, legacy and wonderfully warm demeanor will live on in all of us she inspired."

The memorial service for Connie will be held on April 23, 2022; her family hopes to livestream the service so that many of Connie's friends and colleagues around the world can join. More details will be shared on the AISA memorial page. Please **visit the page for updates**, to share your own tribute, and to read more about Connie's vibrant life and invaluable contributions to international education.

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MAKING THE SKY BIGGER:

Sharing Our Small International Schools Professional Learning Network

By **Laura Benson**, ISS Director of Curriculum and Development

In my work and collaborations with many international schools over the last thirty years, I've constantly witnessed both the blessing and challenge it is to be an educator of a small international school. Whether in a remote location or in a big cosmopolitan city, small schools experience a variety of realities. On the one hand, as a handful of people take on the school's journey together, positive change can be swift, rapid, and agile. A strong sense of community and sustained connectedness are often hallmarks of small schools.

But, not having as many people, roles, tuition, resources, or covered slots in a school day schedules often means that small school educators wear a lot of hats. We live as if in an Escape room or episode of MacGyver much of the time, too. *No gym equipment? No instruments for music? We'll make our own! No one to generate after school activities for students? Hmm, let's see if we can one room school house yoga classes or a running club!*

- Small numbers require educators to creatively use what they have to honor and fulfill the needs of their school community

All international school educators are innovative; they are often far away from easily accessible resources and may not yet be familiar with how to source needs locally. But, in small schools, the solutions can be slimmer. Small numbers require educators to creatively use what they have to honor and fulfill the needs of their school community.

Launching the PLN

So, a few months ago, wanting to offer any and all small international schools problem-solving partnerships, I launched a professional learning network (PLN). While we have met just three times thus far this school year, we have found and generated empathetic collective wisdom and become fast, connected professional friends.

Standing on the blessings and benefits of being small school educators, we come together to share what is working and problem-solve the challenges we face. From Togo to Indonesia and China to Aruba and Madagascar to Kazakhstan, we are so fortunate to gain global participants and perspectives, sharing work and anchoring everything we are doing in student learning. In our opening meetings, we have explored topics like:

- Inclusion
- Co-teaching
- Parent partnerships and trust
- Combating isolation and building learning partnerships and buddies for the children and adults of each school
- Working as a lone school administrator (especially when so many of us have worked as a leadership team in previous schools)
- Likewise, not having teammates as classroom teachers
- Working in multi-grade frameworks to respond to small student enrollment numbers
- Social and emotional mental health care for our students and for ourselves.

To illustrate our collaborations as small international school educator colleagues, I use a puzzle as the backdrop for [our PLN Padlet](#). We are collectively building new ideas and hopes by putting the pieces together with our successes, concerns and questions.

We are a new PLN with a key intention and hope: that our meetings build professional friendship bridges, giving all of us thought partners and colleagues we can reach out to in-between our formal gatherings throughout this school year and beyond.

Expand Your Sky with Us

If you would like to join our upcoming meetings and become part of our small international school community, please email me (lbenson@iss.edu) to be included in our communications and meeting invitations. We welcome your voices at our learning table.

I once heard an elder advise that when faced with a problem, get outside and look up at the sky. "The vast expanse you take in with your eyes will lift up your heart. And your heart will see hope. Your sky will be bigger and your problems will be smaller." With a full and grateful heart, I thank the members of our Small International Schools PLN for taking this journey with me and for being there for each other so generously, compassionately, and creatively. Each of you continue to expand my thinking and grow my hope.

You can follow Laura at [@LBopenbook](#).

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