



International
School of Panama

Director Position Statement

International School of Panama

Panama City, Panama

July 2020



"We Provide the Surprise of Pioneering and Discovery"

--An ISP Teacher

MISSION AND STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

The International School of Panama provides an experience in the unexpected: so many innovative surprises can be found in this progressive, international school.

Walk down one hallway of this sprawling and opportunity-rich campus of 1,215 students and you'll find young people building robots to an industry standard. Next door students are working in a studio atmosphere to earn their Innovation and Entrepreneurship Certificate. Here students link Engineering, Technology and Business where co-creation of learning brings personalized instruction, with student as an equal, designing and prototyping solutions. It's also not far to the elementary school to know that constructivist learning principles guide pedagogy. Another walk along the covered pathways takes you to the performing arts center, only to find students hunched over, wearing metal hoods, welding together apparatus and building sets for the upcoming show. Student voice and choice are alive and meaningful at ISP.

ISP is a place that does much more than talk of being student-centered. The strongest voices to share this view are those of students and teachers. A middle school student was quick to offer, "Everyday feels fresh. I do wake up early, and then realize I am coming to a place where I learn in a different way. Here I have to think, and I like that we use technology for real reasons." The School has just transitioned to standards-based grading and the ambassadors for the initiative are again students, "It's new but we know much more about what is expected of us."



Change at ISP is about helping everyone use a common language, and there is a refreshing balance of core learning playing in concert with innovative practices. One teacher reflected on her work and pride in the School, "We hear from our parents and others across greater Panama City who know of our work that ISP students stand out: people listen to them speak and how they share ideas as independent thinkers and immediately know they are graduates of our school."

Mission

ISP is a non-profit, student-centered, independent school, inspiring life-long learners for a future without borders. We are recognized as a leader in international education, offering world-class opportunities for students Pre-K3 to 12th grade.

Our Purpose

We will educate and inspire our students to reach their full potential and contribute to the world by providing an exemplary English-language education enriched by our multicultural community.



Faithful to its beginning in 1982, ISP's reason for being was to bring a true international school experience to Panama City. The commitment and dedication of parents who joined the School when it was just starting out served as the foundation for the inspired expansion ISP now enjoys where an involved and supportive parent community has been steadfast in taking on the inevitable challenges of life overseas. Also, a source of pride, IS Panama is the only non-for-profit school in the region, an important element of the identity of the School.

ISP has followed a disciplined blueprint for change from within. Strategic thinking has guided ISP over the years to establish focused improvement and new educational directions. The School is now completing its 2015-2020 strategic plan.

With purpose and a strategic roadmap, ISP now has a more constructivist approach to teaching and student investment in learning, integration of new future-ready skills, and strong teacher development. Next steps will be to renew the School's strategic intent, to ensure a viable master plan for facilities, and to tell the stories of ISP's unique identity within a more competitive school choice environment.

Leveraging technology and communication tools will be key for ensuring ease of access to the news of day-to-day school life and ensuring ownership on school improvement

initiatives. Just as the School is committed to ensuring a strong sense of belonging--viewed as a solid strength--there is more needed to engage the community in the purpose and rationale for program change and sharing positive results. The board and school community will begin a new long-term planning cycle when the new school director is named.

Both strategy and climate for learning are important at ISP. One teacher observes, "After over 37 years, ISP has held true to the dream of our founding parents: creating an international community that feels like a family." This sentiment enjoys unquestioned agreement, with another student adding emphasis in saying, "We all look different, are different, and we are respected for who we are at ISP."



THE PLACE

A pleasant surprise exists beyond the borders of ISP. For reasons affiliated with the Panama Canal and local geography, the School resides in the most cosmopolitan capital city in Central America. Panama mirrors the international nature of the School, where—yet another surprise—East meets West with trade, immigration, diplomacy, corporate business, banking and international trade. With a modern office and corporate skyline, the city provides plenty of places and spaces for culture and travel within Panama and across the Americas. Modern and the traditional meet where marble gives way to cobblestone streets of Casco Viejo’s renovated historic district. Housing is modern. With predictable traffic of a large capital city, there are housing areas where it is indeed possible to find a home, outdoor and indoor sports and a favorite coffee shop, all within walking distance. One student at ISP talked about riding bikes along the Amador Causeway with his parent, counting pelicans. In the midst of all that is modern, the jungle is nearby.



THE PEOPLE

The current enrollment at ISP is 1,223 students, and 64% of the population speaks Spanish as a first language. The language of instruction is English. There are 44 different nationalities represented in the student body, in order of magnitude: Panamanian and United States, followed by Venezuelan, Brazilian, and Spanish families. Many European families are enrolled in the School as well.





The most often-heard descriptors for the community at IS Panama are “warm and welcoming,” and evidence abounds of these words. Students appreciate the inclusive, embracing ethos of the School as do teachers, staff, and parents. There is significant pride voiced for the values of the School and appreciation for the position the School has carved out for itself as an international community in Panama City with high aspirations and stand-out results.



The faculty at IS Panama spoke with professionalism and clarity about their commitment to young people and their aspirations. Similarly, parents appreciate the aspirational nature of the school and the diversity of the School. They laud the fact that the School has an outstanding reputation in Panama City, and they are eager to support the School’s commitment to continuous improvement as well. The support staff as well articulated the inclusive and positive intent of the School: “A stage for everyone to shine!”



The governance at IS Panama has undergone a transformation in the past two years and has now reset itself on solid footing. With a wholesale change in the membership of the Board of Trustees, the Board has taken on the important work of re-doing its structures and policies to align with the mission of the School and best practice in governance. Working closely with an internationally-known consultant, the Board is clarifying its roles and responsibilities and is working diligently to put in place best practices during this leadership transition period.

THE PROGRAM

Well-articulated values undergird the program at ISP. Original and written specifically to reflect the ethos of the School, the five values inspire and guide the program to serve the whole child:

- It's not about me. It's about us.
- Every person at our school leaves a footprint.
- Learning is a lifelong adventure.
- Find ways to stand out that is how we become outstanding.
- We look after the planet as well as we look after each other.

From these values, it's clear that the program at ISP seeks to teach students about the value of collaboration, curiosity, and kindness and aims to honor the individual path that each student pursues. The program encourages each student to pursue aspirational goals and directs ISP students to be environmental stewards of our world. Finally, meeting the needs of all learners remains at the heart of the work of the School, and the students of ISP thrive.

The School is divided into four divisions: Early Childhood Center, Elementary, Middle, and High School. The robust department of Teaching and



Learning in partnership with subject area teachers and specialists provide guidance as departments select the standards that best reflect disciplinary goals. Subject areas are reviewed on a five-year cycle, and an ethos of continuous improvement in the hands of a well-qualified and experienced teaching cadre characterizes the culture of teaching and learning at ISP.

The Early Childhood Center is play-based and inquiry-driven. Social emotional learning in multi-age grouping constitutes an important component of the work of the ECC. Reggio-inspired, the ECC students benefit as well from the indoor and outdoor learning spaces as well as gardening opportunities.



Units of study in the Elementary School are beautifully articulated in units of inquiry. And the curriculum is posted on the ISP website. Spanish is considered the second language of the School, and the Spanish as an Additional Language program, emphasizing productive and receptive language, is well-established through ES. Physical education is based on the Shape America Standards, and students participate in music instruction and performances each year.



In Middle School, Grades 6-8, students receive instruction in language arts, math, science, social studies, Spanish, physical education, arts, and electives. Beyond the classroom, students have athletics and visual and performing arts programs in the after-school program as well as service learning, Model United Nations, STEM, and experiential learning in Panama. 70% of ISP students participate in some sort of after-school program. Middle School students were enthusiastic in their appreciation for their teachers: "Our teachers want the best for each student." And they lauded the curriculum: "Creative and always forward moving." Students were cognizant that they were being asked to think critically rather than to memorize bits and pieces of extraneous information. They also love the diversity of the School's population in terms of culture, religions, and nationalities.

Similarly, High School students were exceedingly complimentary about their teachers and the program. Mature, articulate, and appreciative, the High School students are aware that they have multiple leadership opportunities, and they were complimentary about the values of the School, noting the respectful environment, the quality of their teachers, and the breadth of academic offerings. Students in Grades 11-12 have the IB Diploma Program available to them, and a preponderance of students

complete the entire program. Additionally, students may complete the ISP Diploma Program as well as the MEDUCA, the Panamanian diploma. Service programs are deeply impressive: supporting multiple sister schools and programs in local impoverished areas. The Vex robotics program, the exciting arts opportunities, MUN, and student government—all were enthusiastically praised by the oldest students. (They are also lobbying the administration for an "all-nighter" on campus!)



FINANCE AND FACILITIES FOR LEARNING

Financial Strength

The School's income inflows, expenses, cost efficiencies, and reserves tell a story of financial stability. As a non-profit school, all income at ISP is re-invested toward improving school infrastructure, enhancing student experiences, and supporting programs that enrich the learning experience.

During the academic year 2018-2019, total revenue was US\$20.95M, with 67% from tuition and the remaining 33% of from institutional fees, registration, academic program fees (EAL, Learning Support, IB, etc.) and after school activities. Approximately US\$ 4.7M comes a one-time capital fee/donation.

Tuition increases year-over-year generally by 3%. The School currently holds US\$2.3M in time deposits as part of the contingency reserve of US\$3.8M for emergencies.

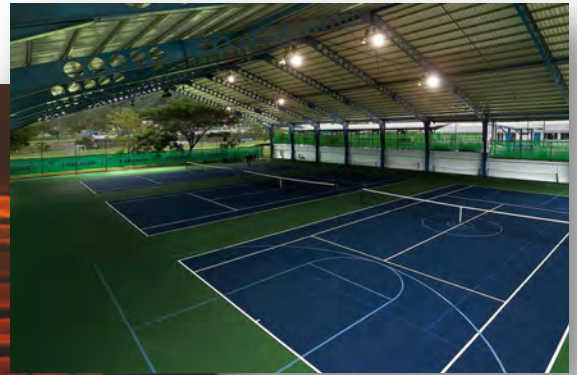
It is evident that ISP is committed to continual improvement of educational opportunity and facilities. The School re-invested this past year in infrastructure, security, and technology with 2019 investments of US\$1.4M.

The Places and Spaces for Learning:

The amount of facility development and expansion across the School's 37-year history is remarkable. ISP has expanded from three small residential buildings in La Cresta to the current campus facilities set on a beautiful 9.6 acres area in the open rolling hills of Cerro Viento.

In 2006 the campus was further expanded to make room for student enrollment growth. ISP has added a Cafetorium, middle school science labs, and later a dedicated Early Childhood Centre, as well as an elementary cafeteria. Other facilities include covered tennis courts and a semi-Olympic swimming pool.





The athletics program continues to flourish as does a well-supported arts program, both providing iconic programming and best-in-class facilities for ISP. The School regularly hosts the wider Panama City community in 4-5 night runs of musicals, music festivals, and outside artists. The School hosts large student-focused conferences and multiple athletic competitions across the seasons.

The most recent major facilities initiative is the completion of the multi-sport field and track project. ISP now boasts one of two *FIFA One Star Certified* Artificial Turf Fields in all of Panama.

The Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Program is now the only AdvancEd certified program in Central America. To

further cultivate this commitment, learning spaces in all divisions have been transformed into STEM labs. At ISP the spaces and places for learning continue to be updated to reflect a balanced program of core learning and student co-created learning as they find the studios and workshops to build out their interests and passions and to apply their learning toward developing and inspiring new pathways for students.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF PANAMA

Year ISP Established:	1982
Accreditation Agency:	MEDUCA, AdvancED, IBO
Total Enrollment:	1,223
Elementary School Enrollment:	585
Middle School Enrollment:	260
Upper School Enrollment:	370
Percentage of Annual Student Turnover:	22%
Percentage of Students with Financial Awards:	0.16% (2 students)
Student/Teacher Ratio:	9:1
Tuition (2019-20):	PK3: US\$ 9,424 Grades PK4 - 5th: US\$ 14,111 Grades 6-8: US\$ 15,479 Grades 9-12: US\$ 17,502 There is a one-time capital donation of US\$ 16,000 and additional fees for registration and special programs like International Baccalaureate.
Operating Budget:	Revenue \$20.9M OPEX \$417K loss before interest
Reserve:	\$3.8M
Endowment Account (2Y CD):	\$1M
Number of Faculty:	207
Number of Operational Staff:	87
Number of Board Trustees:	9
Number of Student Nationalities:	45

KEY LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES:

The next leader of the International School of Panama will have the opportunity to provide leadership for a widely recognized and, as observed, a remarkably progressive international school. In order to serve the School fully and well, the next Head of School for ISP will bring a set of key leadership skills and attributes to the work, as described here:

Key Leadership Skills and Attributes

Effective leader: The ability to articulate and act upon mission-driven decisions. Lead with purpose to ensure a strong School identity. The capacity to translate strategic direction into effective implementation steps and work plans. The ability to inspire and galvanize the ISP community with compassion and humanity.

Academic visionary: The understanding of research and best practices in educating the youth of ISP, ensuring a robust, rigorous and impactful educational program for all students. Attract, develop, and retain an outstanding cadre of teaching faculty, both local and international.

An Inclusive School: Lead the School community to ensure a commonly held and supported definition of “inclusion” to address the learning needs of all students and to provide support and challenge for each student.

Community builder: The talent to bring all constituencies together through building an ethos characterized by trust and confidence in the direction the School is taking. Communicate well and build strong relationships to enhance the school-home partnership.





Community builder II: Provide inspiring communication, marketing and outreach leadership to tell the story of the ISP character profile, values and program and how the School differentiates itself. Embrace and tackle the challenge of the competitive market for schools in Panama.

Change leader: The skill, experience and wisdom to manage change with appropriate pace, thoughtful delegation, and careful planning. Ensure that programs, innovations, and measurements for success are clear and shared across the ISP community.



Governance partner: Ensure clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both the governing body and the senior leadership of the School. Cultivate a partnership with the Board that supports the fiduciary, strategic, and generative work of the Board.

Collaboration as a Hallmark: Use collaborative teams to define and solve important school issues. Build and align connections among students, teachers, staff, trustees, and senior leadership to ensure everyone contributes expertise and creative thinking for continuous improvement and innovation. The ability to establish and nurture a talented long-serving senior leadership team.



Builder of systems and infrastructure: Bring a track record of success in the executive and managerial functions of the role of Director at ISP. Bring effective insight and strategies to improve operational and financial efficiencies at ISP.

Culturally competent: Appreciate and adapt to the diversity of the city and country. Represent the School thoughtfully in organizations and cultural activities in Panama. Take advantage of the wonderful opportunities to live and work in a dynamic, prosperous Latin culture. Understand the varied cultural influences in the international population at ISP.

Places and Spaces for Learning: Unify and lead the ISP community to promote pride, care and appreciation for ISP facilities for learning. Bring vision and expertise for ongoing facility planning and development to maximize the competitive edge and the wholeness of student learning.

KEY PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL QUALITIES

The successful candidate will demonstrate the background, experiences, and disposition characterized by the following personal and professional qualities:

- Experience in a high-performing school
- Creative problem-solver
- Handles complexity skillfully
- Strong communication skills
- High emotional intelligence
- Sense of whimsy and good fun
- Warmth and empathy
- Creativity and innovative
- Commitment to collaboration
- Energetic and ambitious
- Business Acumen

APPLICATION PROCESS

Interested candidates should upload all documents on the RG175 website at: <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>

A complete application includes:

- A cover letter expressing interest in the director position at the International School of Panama
- A fully updated resume
- A writing sample that may be a personal statement, an article for a school publication, a recent speech, or submitted scholarly article—whatever can help inform the search committee of expertise, interests, academic focus and experience
- Five current references

Consultants to the search:

- Coreen R. Hester, <mailto:chester@rg175.com>
- Mark E. Ulfers, <mailto:mark.ulfers@rg175.com>

Timeline: The School seeks to make an appointment for the next Head of School at ISP for July 2020. All applications should be submitted expeditiously and no later than November 15. The School has begun interviewing for the position and reserves the right to move forward with this appointment when the appropriate candidate has been identified.