

Board of Trustees Strategic Plan Summer 2015

OUR MISSION

The mission of the International Charter School is to educate, nurture, and prepare students to be globally conscious citizens of the twenty-first century. ICS builds on the linguistic and cultural richness of the communities it serves by teaching all students in two languages. Everyone is part of a community of learners, engaging in inquiry about the world, themselves, and others.

OUR VISION

An expanded International Charter School (ICS). We seek to provide an International Baccalaureate program with an emphasis on dual-language learning that serves more students K-5, and we seek to expand our offerings to include a middle school, grades 6-8. We also envision increased outreach and broader sharing of our success: specifically, becoming an active center for training, support, and professional development opportunities for educators with an interest in our mission.

OUR BACKGROUND

ICS was founded in 2001 as a bold experiment in dual-language education. The experiment asked: what if a school could bring together students from three distinct linguistic and cultural backgrounds and create an environment in which the students could excel academically, develop multi-lingual competencies, and share their understanding of their varied heritages? What if students could learn about the broader world from each other, the communities they come from, and their school?

Drawn in equal proportions from households where the primary languages are English, Spanish, and Portuguese, ICS students form a community in which each student's cultural background and identity is shared and celebrated.

Students learn all subjects in two languages, either English and Spanish or English and Portuguese. They bring their home languages and cultures to the classroom as assets for learning, and they emerge literate and fluent in two languages.

By every measure, ICS has proven that the vision and guiding principles of the school's charter are sound.

- ***ICS students learn and communicate in two languages.*** ICS emphasizes the development of global citizenship. By promoting the varied heritages and cultural backgrounds of its students, the school enhances their sense of belonging to multiple communities, including developing high levels of proficiency in two languages. Students flexibly transition between cultures

and languages and are prepared to be successful in a global, culturally diverse society.

- ***The school is in high demand.*** In 2015, ICS received 845 applications for 34 seats in its annual admission lottery. The school consistently draws three times more applicants *from all three language groups* than it can accommodate. ICS draws heavily from the urban districts of Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls, but serves families state-wide. Regardless of their cultural background or socioeconomic status, many more parents would like to send their children to ICS than there are spaces available.
- ***Parents and community are actively engaged in the school.*** According to a 2014 statewide survey by the Rhode Island Department of education, significant numbers of ICS families participate in school activities and all aspects of their children's educational experiences. ICS has an active parent-teacher organization, and there is strong participation from families on the school's committees and on its board of trustees.
- ***ICS seeks and attracts collaboration.*** The school currently provides teacher-training opportunities for master's students from Brown University and collaborates with Dorcas International Institute (with whom we have a special relationship as ICS was founded by its forerunner, the International Institute of RI), the Rhode Island School of Design, Rhode Island College, and the Providence College School of Social Work. In 2015, ICS partnered with the South Kingstown and Pawtucket public school systems to provide professional development opportunities for their teachers. The school also collaborates regularly with other local community groups and national ELL-focused organizations.
- ***ICS develops high levels of academic, social, and life skills and knowledge.*** ICS educates the whole student by promoting the development of academic literacy and numeracy skills through a transdisciplinary approach and an emphasis on social-emotional learning. Modeled on the International Baccalaureate curriculum that the school is currently implementing, ICS's educational program helps students acquire skills and knowledge through multi-disciplinary units of inquiry that enable them to develop a sense of how different areas of knowledge fit together. While developing this deeper, more ambitious learning agenda, ICS students regularly score at or above their peers on state standardized tests.
- ***ICS builds its academic foundation through continuous innovation.*** Since its founding, ICS's teachers have created lessons and learning activities by drawing from a wide array of materials, expert advice, and internal expertise. It is continuing this tradition by initiating the process of becoming a fully accredited International Baccalaureate partner school. When this process is complete, ICS will be the only public school in Rhode Island to offer an IB program. ICS is also investigating and developing assessment tools specific to language acquisition and cultural acuity, an area of great interest among education researchers and professionals.

ICS is now a mature independent public charter school. It realizes the intent of the Charter Public School Act of Rhode Island by providing choices for families and encouraging innovation within the public school system, all the while meeting rigorous standards for accountability.

MOVING FORWARD

As the next step in the fulfillment of its mission, ICS must expand. The school has an obligation not only to maintain its current success and high performance, but to improve its unique educational offerings—and to share its expertise with the public education systems in the state and beyond.

ICS has maximized the potential of its current facility, faculty, and financial structure. It cannot expand its educational programming or share its knowledge within its current framework and facility. Consequently, ICS must increase the size of its facility and faculty, and establish a sustainable financial model for their support. These amplifications will allow the school to further fulfill the promise of its charter.

Rhode Island education is now at a crossroads. Independent charter schools like ICS face renewed resistance from non-chartered public school districts as well as increasing competition from other, non-independent but publicly funded, charter schools. These challenges have the potential to undermine all that ICS has achieved if not for a proactive plan of action, expansion, and collaboration.

The primary vehicle for meeting these challenges is the set of strategies that are described in the remainder of this document. These strategies are intended to achieve progress towards the three major priorities that ICS will pursue for the next three to five years.

OUR PRIORITIES

PRIORITY 1—SERVE MORE STUDENTS

Expand ICS facilities and programs to serve more students in grades K-5 and new students in grades 6-8.

ICS fulfills a singular educational mission, and the school's lottery is consistently oversubscribed. ICS believes it is important to expand its K-5 program to meet more of the existing demand for the school. At the same time, parents of ICS students have since the school's inception expressed a desire to keep their children on the path of multi-lingual, internationally focused learning into middle school. As there is no

public middle school in the state that provides this option, ICS is determined to create a middle school that fosters multi-lingual competencies and global awareness, uses the IB curriculum, and meets the IB requirements for language-rich instruction.

Within the next five years, ICS will add another Portuguese-English strand in grades K-5; expand its class size to 22; and extend the grades it serves into middle school (grades 6-8), adding approximately 120 students at that level.

Strategies to Achieve this Priority

The Board will:

- Expand its membership to strategically add expertise in legal matters, finance, fundraising, advocacy, communications, and other areas that will facilitate the expansion of the school
- Conduct a capital campaign to raise the financial resources required to expand
- Oversee and participate in the expansion planning and implementation process
- Develop a business plan that ensures the fiscal viability of the expanded school

The Administration will:

- Work with the Board in the expansion planning and implementation process
- Develop plans to transition to a new school building/facility
- Seek out opportunities for greater efficiency and economies of scale related to an expanded program
- Engage families and the ICS community in the expansion process
- Hire and orient new faculty and staff

The Faculty will:

- Provide input on expansion plans, particularly related to education space planning
- Serve as mentors and supports for new faculty and staff

PRIORITY 2—BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE SCHOOL

Implement the International Baccalaureate curriculum and integrate it with dual language instruction and instructional use of information and communication technologies.

ICS's central academic initiative is to complete its accreditation process as an International Baccalaureate (IB) school. The IB curriculum promotes the development of academic skills through a transdisciplinary approach. Skills and

knowledge are built through multi-disciplinary units of inquiry that help students develop a sense of how various areas of knowledge fit together.

This curriculum develops international mindedness, while ensuring that students are not taught academic skills in a vacuum. This requires professional development in the IB program for instructional staff, the development and creation of new curricular units, and field testing of those units. Additionally, these units need to be implemented within the school's dual-language immersion instructional program—meaning each must exist in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. The curriculum also needs to take full advantage of new technologies so students can use the full range of tools to learn and communicate.

An educational program that integrates IB, dual-language instruction, and modern information technology is a logical extension of the school's identity, fully expressing the intention for charter schools to be beacons of innovation and excellence. It also strengthens the claim of the school as a high-quality, distinctive public school of choice for the communities it serves.

ICS will spend the next two years developing and implementing IB curriculum within its dual-language instructional program. It will spend the following three years expanding that curriculum, especially into grades 6-8. Integration of technology as an instructional tool will be done incrementally over this five-year period.

Strategies to Achieve this Priority

The Board will:

- Create and enact policies that support the development and implementation of the IB curriculum and its integration with dual-language instruction and technology
- Develop a business plan that ensures there is fiscal support for this transition

The Administration will:

- Plan and oversee faculty development for IB certification
- Ensure that information technology and dual-language instruction is integrated into the IB curriculum
- Develop assessment tools for language development
- Design and oversee professional development that builds expertise in delivering IB curriculum

The Faculty will:

- Draft, revise, and implement IB aligned units of study in English, Spanish, and Portuguese

PRIORITY 3—SHARE OUR SUCCESS

Establish a resource center for dual-language teaching and learning, IB curriculum, and technology-supported instruction.

ICS plans to formalize and institutionalize the role it currently serves as an informal model to other schools and districts on multi-lingual and multicultural education. By establishing a new resource center that provides programming and professional development related to dual-language instruction, IB, and integrating technology as an instructional tool, ICS will maximize its impact as a center of innovation. In addition to promoting the skills and knowledge of other faculty, the center will enhance the leadership skills of ICS faculty.

ICS will establish the center, including its physical location, operational procedures, and initial programs and participants over the next two years. Full operations will begin in the third year, with working relationships established in at least three schools.

Strategies to Achieve this Priority

The Board will:

- Create a business plan for the resource center
- Advocate for its creation and work to secure its funding
- Facilitate connections with other schools and districts for its use
- Develop staffing and compensation policies that support the development of “hybrid” faculty and resource center roles

The Administration will:

- Establish policies and procedures for the resource center
- Enter into contractual agreements with schools and districts for services
- Find a suitable location
- Communicate with schools and districts about the services it can provide
- Prepare faculty to take on dual, hybrid roles and create schedules that make these roles possible while maintaining high-quality instruction in the school

The Faculty will:

- Take on new hybrid roles to help staff the Resource Center
- Share their expertise with external partners