

Membership Evaluation Conclusions and Summary

This membership evaluation was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many schools had enacted on-line learning and teaching, to maintain contact with their students and continue their education. As conditions improved in individual countries, some schools were able to return to on-site lessons, though under considerably changed circumstances of health screening and campus access, while other schools were forced to continue with remote teaching for an extended period of time. Even when conditions improved within the country of a CIS school, travel to and from the country was often severely restricted or forbidden, making in-person accreditation visits untenable.

CIS agreed that the International School of Koje (ISK) was appropriately placed for a virtual evaluation process and offered the school the opportunity to conduct a virtual membership visit to maintain its journey towards membership. The visit took place successfully in May 2021. The CIS School Support and Evaluation Officer, based in Los Angeles, conducted meetings and lesson visits virtually. Discussions were held with all stakeholders. Fortunately, the school had been able to return to in-person classes in recent weeks. The school arranged for the evaluator to observe live classes (via streaming) which, coupled with pre-recorded remote instructional lessons, as well as recorded videos of the school campus, allowed the evaluator to gain a reasonably broad perspective of the school. Although disappointing not to see the school in person, the virtual membership visit was completely sufficient to determine that the school is certainly suitable for CIS membership.

ISK makes a very positive impression, and has a great deal to be proud of. The school has clear, highly visible, and broadly endorsed statements of purpose and direction, and these are linked to its chosen curricula, the IEYC, IPC, IMYC, IGCSE, and A/S Levels. Structured lesson plans and regular faculty and staff conversations ensure that the school's mission and vision are genuinely embedded in daily classroom instruction, campus operations, and long-term planning.

The school is blessed to have the financial backing of corporate sponsors and a foundation that is willing to support the school through the dramatic downturn of enrolment experienced in the past two to three years, so the school can retain staffing levels to continue implementing its commendable understanding of high-quality teaching and learning to its students. The school's atmosphere is positive, warm, friendly, inclusive, and mutually supportive, all of which are deeply appreciated by staff, students, and parents. Global citizenship is a key facet of the school's instructional program, in tandem with appropriate emphasis on the host country language and culture. All of this takes place in a modern and extremely well-resourced facility which is especially spacious during the current enrolment decline. When the facility had to temporarily close due to COVID restrictions, the school shifted to online learning in an exceptionally smooth manner (described as "amazing" by one parent).

Although the school is doing many things very well, ISK is seeking CIS membership and accreditation to become even better, and the report highlights a few important areas for attention. The school's somewhat complex governing and leadership structure appears to be working well enough but could be considerably more clearly captured in written and graphic documentation for the school community. The role of the principal, as educational leader, could perhaps be even better integrated with the role of

the board and head of school, including formal appraisal. While the school's child protection policies and practices are very good, as with most schools, there are several areas for improvement, which are detailed in the report. And, not surprisingly given the volatile and still uncertain patterns of enrolment, the school must continue and even further enhance open communication with all community stakeholders to try and reassure staff and parents that the school is doing its utmost to make the best of a very difficult situation with respect to staff turnover and retention, and that the school will be continuing to operate for years to come.

In conclusion, the International School of Koje is a very good small school with commendable and achievable ambitions to grow back to its earlier student levels. The encouraging reality is that, despite being battered the last few years by enrolment declines and the necessary reduction in staffing, teaching and learning continue at very high levels. As one member of the community noted, the school's challenge is to rebuild itself after a stressful period of enrolment uncertainty. ISK is a small school which, to its great credit, continues to teach students and support staff like a much larger school, all while making the most of its current small size to personalise attention and individualise instruction. Encouragingly, it has the backing to continue for many, many years to come.

Most important, students, at all levels, could not have been more positive about their love of ISK: "We all think ISK is great!" One student proudly proclaimed, "We help each other." Yet another student who had been in many schools in her life, now nearing high school, succinctly noted that "I want to go to school."

ISK met all membership standards and exceeded several (in itself a testament to the school's professionalism). The school clearly has the commitment and capacity to achieve CIS accreditation after it is granted membership, and the school will be an excellent addition to the CIS family of schools. The school effectively developed its membership evaluation report, incorporating its planned actions into the school's long-range planning documents. The slides of evidence uploaded were particularly valuable. For the preparatory evaluation report, the school should make use of hyperlinks in the school's narrative to enable direct connection to important uploaded evidence. And when appropriate, uploading the same evidence in different standards and domains is, though extra work, helpful for the evaluators reading the report.

CIS would like to thank Youngsoon Lee, Head of School; Kerry Harris, Principal; and several key staff members for ensuring the visit went smoothly and efficiently under highly unusual circumstances of COVID-19. CIS offers further thanks to the students, staff and parents who were generous in their time and honest in their answers to the many questions posed. CIS also wishes the school well as it prepares to undertake the CIS accreditation process.

Commendations

'The school leadership and staff for their shared understanding of high-quality teaching and learning, which is incorporated into daily planning and instructional delivery by teachers, and is understood by students as well' (pg6)

'The school community as a whole - students, staff, and parents – for embracing international mindedness as part of the school's core beliefs and incorporating this focus into daily life for students' (pg7)

'The school's foundation board and corporate sponsors for their visionary understanding of the importance of ISK's existence, and their commitment to continue financial support of the school in the future' (pg15)

'The school for its effective implementation of the IEYC, IPC, and IMYC in alignment with the school's purpose and direction, and its demonstration of the alignment of its curriculum with the CIS accreditation standards for each of its academic divisions' (pg19)

'The school leadership and staff for developing effective planning frameworks to ensure the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and understanding in all areas and levels, in alignment with the school's guiding statements' (pg20)

'The school leadership and staff for developing a well-crafted policy on teaching and learning at ISK, which is linked to the school's over-arching definition of learning' (pg25)

'The entire school community - students, staff, and parents -for collaborating to establish a school atmosphere of positive attitude, mutual support, trust, and clear behaviour expectations for all groups' (pg 30)

'The school leadership and staff for developing comprehensive child safeguarding practices and procedures, including safe recruiting and safe online learning' (pg 32)

'The school governance and leadership for maintaining support to keep staff levels and student-teacher ratios as favorable as possible, even in the face of COVID-19 financial impact' (Pg 35)

'The school administration, and especially its human resources department, for thoroughly following a comprehensive policy on screening of all employees, both current and future, regardless of candidate origin, thus demonstrating the school's commitment to child safeguarding' (pg 37)

'The school governance and leadership for providing an extremely well-resourced and spacious campus for its students, effectively supporting instruction and well-being' (pg 43)

'The school community as a whole for effective and comprehensive two-way communication between home and school, resulting in happy and informed parents, students, and staff' (pg50)

Recommendations

'The school leadership and staff consider further incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in age-appropriate and child-friendly language, in its visual displays of purpose and direction around the school, to stimulate deeper discussion of these important concepts' (pg9)

'The school governance and leadership capture the somewhat complex nature of the school's governing and leadership structure in clearly documented descriptions and procedures, so that the entire school community can understand their workings' (pg 12)

'The school board and leadership complete and implement a regular and formal appraisal of the principal' (pg14)

'The school leadership and staff facilitate development of an ISK definition of digital citizenship in preparation for the next phase of the accreditation process to anchor the school's efforts in this important area.'(pg22)

'The school leadership, in consultation with staff, add wording related to appeals in the appraisal policy and procedures, so that staff know how to formally question their performance evaluation's conclusions' (pg 39)

'The school leadership ensure all staff members review and annually sign the code of conduct, to further reinforce child protection expectations' (pg41)

'The school leadership find appropriate solutions to ensure that visibility into all instructional spaces and offices is unrestricted, for child protection and safety' (pg46)

'The school leadership remind staff to leave the upper half of classroom windows to hallways fully unobstructed so that visibility into classrooms is not compromised' (pg46)

'The school leadership continue the difficult (and impossible to satisfy all) task of regular, open communication about the school's plans and actions with respect to programs and staffing for the future, to at least reduce (not eliminate) the level of anxiety for many in the community' (pg50)