



INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOL  
OF BROOKLYN

# INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF BROOKLYN REPORT ON THE STRATEGIC PLAN JUNE 30, 2015

## INTRODUCTION

In Fall 2012, the Board of Trustees of International School of Brooklyn (ISB) embarked on a yearlong strategic planning process, which culminated in a plan adopted by the Board on June 2013. Since its adoption, the ISB 2013-2017 Strategic Plan has served as the school's overarching framework for planning – the way to align actions and initiatives toward common objectives and to evaluate successes.

Now, halfway through the four-year time period of this plan, some of the objectives have been achieved, some are the subject of ongoing work, and others have been reevaluated based on research conducted under the strategic plan. This report will highlight examples of the progress made in reaching several goals of the strategic plan during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, insight into how the strategic plan has guided the school's decision-making process, and the methodologies being used to evaluate current strategies and to plan for the future.

## THE 2013-2017 STRATEGIC PLAN

The [2013-2017 Strategic Plan](#) is a roadmap that sets and prioritizes ISB's long-term goals. In the 2012-2013 school year, when the plan was being created, ISB had been in its Carroll Gardens location for two years, was launching the Middle School program, and had an enrollment of 230 students in Nursery-6<sup>th</sup> Grade. Key questions and concerns at that time related to ISB's further growth (enrollment size and grade levels), external validation of ISB's educational model, and the transition from a start-up school mentality to an established school mentality.

The ISB 2013-2017 Strategic Plan outlines four broad, long-term objectives:

- Strengthen ISB's teaching and learning culture by providing the staff with challenging and rewarding work.
- Complete and strengthen ISB's Nursery-8<sup>th</sup> Grade educational programming for all students.
- Seek investment in ISB to support its future and that of its students.
- Build a sustainable, financially responsible, and efficient school for the future.

For each, ISB's administration and Board of Trustees worked together to identify multiple strategies for achieving these long-term objectives. Under each strategy, various actions were assigned to individuals, departments and groups across the school in order to make progress toward specified short and long-term objectives.

## METHODOLOGY

As part of the mid-point Strategic Plan assessment, the ISB administration and Board of Trustees has formalized a process for reviewing and analyzing both its success in implementing the strategies and its progress toward the objectives set forth in 2013. After creating a framework to analyze the progress across all areas of the strategic plan, senior administrators and other staff members participated in multiple reflection sessions. In these sessions, they reviewed the strategies attributed to their department or division and identified the actions they took to implement those strategies. They were also asked to provide quantitative and qualitative metrics that could be used to measure the success of their departments' or divisions' actions in achieving their strategic objectives.

This work generated a comprehensive overview of what actions have been or are being taken across ISB to realize the goals of the strategic plan, as well as compiled measures that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies and tactics. Under each long-term objective of the strategic plan, the strategies currently being employed to attain that goal were listed. Under each strategy, concrete actions that support that strategy were identified, as were the intermediate/short-term goals of those actions, additional actions that will be implemented in the coming months, and ideas for other actions that are worthy of future consideration. Finally, the quantitative and qualitative measures that can be used to evaluate the success of each action were listed. This process of identifying appropriate metrics highlighted areas in which more data collection is warranted and generated plans for collecting such data in the future.

In the next phase of this analysis, the costs and benefits of ISB's current actions will be evaluated more closely, as will be their impact on different aspects of the institution. The goal of this analysis will be to see how the finite resources of time and money are being spent, as well as to identify opportunities to use these resources more efficiently.

For this report, six case studies have been chosen to highlight both the work and analytical process detailed above. These examples include strategies focused on our academic program, our facilities, our school brand, and our future growth.

## CASE STUDY #1: REBRANDING PROJECT (2014 - 2015)

*Long-term Objective: Seek investment in ISB to support its future and that of its students  
Strategy: Further expand outreach efforts to highlight ISB's unique program and establish its brand identity*

With the momentum of celebrating its tenth year and the completion of its Nursery-Eighth Grade program, ISB found itself presented with a perfect opportunity to review and update the school's mission statement and logo. The aim of this work was to reflect on the core values of the school and to establish an identity that better expressed the school that ISB had become. This work will allow ISB to message more clearly to its internal and external communities, with the aim of attracting more students and strengthening financial support for ISB.

During the 2013-2014 school year, initial research was conducted within the ISB community to understand how internal and external community members viewed the school. Members of the Advancement Office also interviewed multiple design firms, all of which had extensive experience with brand development for schools and/or non-profits. In Fall 2014, ISB engaged Aardvark Brigade to lead the branding project for the school and in June 2015, the first elements of the rebrand – the new mission statement and logo – were unveiled to the community. In addition to the visible aspects of the branding efforts such as the new logo, new admissions materials, and new website (launching Fall 2015), this project has also included market research, analysis of ISB's competitive advantage, and marketing messages designed to more effectively communicate ISB's approach to education. By reflecting on and better defining its core values, ISB is in a better position to communicate its program more clearly to outside audiences and to make sure its actions are consistent with its core values.

In particular, this process helped to articulate six core values of ISB: language immersion, inquiry-based education, global curriculum, diversity, community, and international mindedness. By identifying these values, our community now has a common language with which to communicate about the school and to share our story. As ISB moves forward with the rollout of its new brand identity, the new mission statement and these six core values will serve as common reference points. They will unify ISB's internal and external communications, serving as a framework for messaging to different audiences. Through repeated use, and through direct engagement via professional development and volunteer training, they will also enable all members of the ISB community to quickly check that their actions and words are consistent with the values of the institution. In much the same way that repeated reference to the IB learner profiles allows ISB's students to internalize those

qualities, purposeful reference to ISB's core values will enable the community to speak consistently about ISB.

The next steps of this project will include implementing a marketing strategy that promotes ISB's new brand identity and capitalizes on the insights generated by Aardvark Brigade's competitive market analysis. ISB will launch its new website in Fall of 2015, have new admissions materials and talking points for the upcoming season, and provide training to its staff in the use of its new identity. As administrators and teachers travel to conferences, they will be equipped with talking points about ISB and will be encouraged to share its unique approach to education with their peers around the country and around the world.

## CASE STUDY #2: SPECIALISTS AND PROGRAM SUPPORT (2014-2015)

*Long-term Objective: Complete and strengthen ISB's Nursery-8<sup>th</sup> Grade educational program for all students*

*Strategies: Provide increased specialist support for programs; develop a high school placement program, including appropriate staffing and programming for students and parents; support a diverse student body, including students with learning differences and English Language Learners*

As ISB completed its full Nursery-8<sup>th</sup> Grade program, the next step has been to invest in expanding resources and support across all divisions. From a staffing point of view, this included several new roles that were launched during the 2014-2015 school year:

- A full-time learning specialist was hired to provide extra support to our students, whether offering in-class differentiation to students who are ready to delve deeper into an area of study, or helping students who would benefit from additional support related to literacy or language acquisition. During the school year, over thirty-nine students received academic support or accommodations.
- A full-time Lower School science specialist joined ISB in March 2015 to strengthen the science program and to work with classroom teachers to further integrate science into the Lower School curriculum. The specialist worked closely with students during the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Exhibition, creating experiments related to space, Earth, and living things under the central idea of "Our surroundings teach us how to shape our future".
- Building upon the High School Placement Coordinator role that was launched in 2014-2015, this position will evolve into a Middle School Counselor/High School Placement Coordinator role for the 2015-2016 academic year. This staff member will support Middle School students' social-emotional needs, oversee the Middle School Advisory and Health Education programs, and work with students and parents on the transition to high school. The first group of ISB graduates (nineteen students) had tremendous high school placement results, receiving offers from over

thirty different high schools (public, independent, charter, parochial and boarding) and accepting offers to attend fourteen different schools.

### CASE STUDY #3: HIGH SCHOOL PLANNING (2013-2015)

*Long-term Objective: Build a sustainable, financially responsible, and efficient school for the future*

*Strategy: Conduct a program planning analysis and funding plan for a high school of 200-300 students*

At the time of adopting the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan, the Board of Trustees made the decision that ISB would not proceed directly to high school with the first cohort of students. A committee of Board members, staff members, parents and community supporters was formed, and they spent the 2013-2014 school year conducting an analysis of a high school launch. The committee focused on five areas – program; budget; marketing, branding, and admissions; fundraising; and site – and concluded its work in June 2014 with a [report to the ISB community](#). The report concluded that given the time and financial resources needed to launch a high school, ISB was not in a financial position at that time to take the next step. The committee identified various financial milestones that, once met, would allow ISB to further explore the launch of a high school. At that time, the Board estimated that ISB needed another three to five years of growth in order to meet those financial milestones. Subsequently, in January 2015, ISB’s Board of Trustees voted officially not to allocate further funds on high school planning work until the financial milestones were met.

As a result of this decision by the Board of Trustees, ISB’s branding project focuses on promoting the strengths of a Nursery-8<sup>th</sup> Grade language immersion, inquiry-based educational model and on the successful transitions that our students are making to top New York City high schools.

When ISB does reach these financial milestones, which include a balanced budget and healthy reserves, the Board of Trustees will revisit the conversation of an ISB high school and identify the best next steps based on market conditions at that time. In the meantime, ISB’s Board and staff continue to stay abreast of trends in high school programming.

### CASE STUDY #4: MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM (2013-2015)

*Long-term Objective: Complete and strengthen ISB’s Nursery-8<sup>th</sup> Grade educational programming for all students*

*Strategy: Prepare Middle School graduates for high school studies*

Following the decision by the Board of Trustees to postpone the development of an ISB high school program, ISB's Middle School leadership team conducted a review of the existing program to see if any adjustments were necessary to ensure a smooth transition for ISB graduates into a range high schools. They determined that some adjustments were warranted in the math and English curricula, namely a move towards teaching procedural methods more suited to the "multiple choice" nature of high school entrance exams, and these were put into place during the 2014-2015 school year. During implementation, faculty members and the division leadership team found that in order to incorporate these changes, teachers were forced to compromise on the depth of the inquiry-based approach, which is a hallmark of ISB and the Middle Years Programme.

After much reflection and conversation, the administration decided to extend the school day for Middle School students by two hours per week. With these additional instructional hours, more time can be allotted to the math and English program, thereby ensuring that the inquiry-based approach is maintained and that teachers are able to cover any curricular areas that are specifically needed in order to prepare students for the high school transition.

As the first group of ISB graduates enters high school this fall, the administrative and teaching teams will be eager to hear feedback from the students about their transition to their new schools. This will present another important opportunity to reflect on ISB's program and the experiences of its students as they move to new schools.

## CASE STUDY #5: HIGH SCHOOL ACCEPTANCES AND PLACEMENT PROGRAM (2013-2015)

*Long-term Objective: Complete and strengthen ISB's Nursery-8<sup>th</sup> Grade educational programming for all students*

*Strategy: Guide and support students and families as they research and transition to high school*

Over the past two years, ISB has developed a comprehensive three-year process to help Middle School students navigate the high school search and transition process. The highlights of the program include the following:

- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade: Students get to know the MS Counselor/High School Placement Coordinator (*new for 2015-2016*).
- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade: Students and parents begin formal process with the MS Counselor/High School Placement Coordinator; group workshops, individual family meetings; individual student meetings, etc. Families identify high schools of interest and begin to visit.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade: Students and parents work closely with the MS Counselor/High School Placement Coordinator on the application process. Students visit schools, take test preps (as indicated by their high school lists), prepare portfolios, work on

interviewing skills, etc. The coordinator works with families on both public and independent school admission processes, prepares transcripts, and manages school's relationship with admissions teams at the Department of Education and numerous independent and parochial schools.

While this process has and will continue to evolve, the success of ISB's first graduates is emblematic of the excellent preparation and education that they received at ISB. Some of the highlights from this first year of high school placement include:

- Nineteen students received offers to over thirty high schools, including top public, independent, charter, parochial and boarding schools.
- Students accepted offers at fourteen different schools.
- Six students tested high enough on the SHSAT to qualify for entrance into the following specialized public high schools: Stuyvesant High School, The Bronx High School of Science, Staten Island Technical High School, Brooklyn Technical High School, and The Brooklyn Latin School.
- Nineteen offers were made from high schools with the IB Diploma Programmes.
- An IB high school offered to add French/Spanish language and literature courses to their curriculum in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade for any ISB student who chose to accept an offer from that school.
- Feedback from families and admissions staff at the high schools highlighted the strength of ISB students' presentation and critical thinking skills.

## CASE STUDY #6: SECURING ADDITIONAL FACILITIES (2013-2015)

*Long-term Objective: Seek investment in ISB to support its future and that of its students*

*Strategy: Obtain additional facilities for expansion of the school to meet projected N-8 enrollment at full capacity, which provide gym space, additional classrooms, science labs, student performance space, art and music studios*

As the student body and program have grown, ISB has needed to acquire new facilities to accommodate its expanding program and population. Over the past two years, this has required some short-term and long-term measures:

*Short-term:*

- For the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, the Advancement, Business, and Admissions Offices were temporarily located at an off-site location. This temporary measure allowed the school to grow the staffing for these departments without reducing the classroom space available in the main building.
- For the 2014-2015 school year, the art studio and library were relocated to the ISB Annex building at 513-515 Court Street.

*Long-term:*

- Beginning in September 2015, the ISB Annex will house Middle School classrooms.
- Beginning in September 2015, the new building (192 Luquer Street) will give the school much needed new facilities – a gym, new cafeteria, and new music and art studios, as well as a welcoming reception area and admissions suite.
- With the addition of the 192 Luquer Street building, all administrative offices will be brought back to the main campus.
- Plans are also in the works to move the library back to the main building into a space that is three to four times larger than the current library and to renovate the lower level in the main building to provide attractive library and work spaces.
- During summer 2016, the school plans to renovate the outdoor space to enhance the campus feel between the two main buildings.

As ISB continues to expand programmatically and in enrollment, it will continue looking for spaces to realize the incredible new opportunities that come with growth.

## CONCLUSION

ISB made significant progress on all of its 2013-2017 Strategic Plan objectives. In these past two year, the primary focus was on completing and strengthening the Nursery-8<sup>th</sup> Grade program, ensuring that ISB's Eighth Grade graduates were well-prepared for high school admissions and academics, and securing the facilities necessary for its program. ISB's work continues in refining its communications and branding efforts, making sure its tight-knit community remains strong as the school grows, and supporting its teachers and administrators as they grow professionally.

As ISB moves into the second half of the four-year strategic plan, it will continue to build on its educational program while also focusing more closely on the long-term financial health of the school. Some of this work is currently underway – refining estimates of long-term enrollment and revenue growth, targeting tuition levels for several years into the future, looking for new revenue streams, and using resources as efficiently as possible.

Over the next two years, both the Head of School and Board of Trustees will continue to send updates to the ISB community on the work of the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan.