

REPORT ON THE FIVE YEAR VISIT TO

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF ULAANBAATAR
MONGOLIA

April 22nd - 25th 2007

On behalf of

Council of International Schools

And

New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Five Year Visitors:

Margaret Alvarez
CIS Accreditation Officer

Kenneth Imperato
NEASC Evaluator
Connecticut Dept. of Education

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1992 and situated close to the city center, the International School of Ulaanbaatar (ISU) is a non-profit, independent and co-educational establishment serving an international community in grades PK – 12.

ISU currently enrolls 201 students, 101 boys and 110 girls, housed in two adjacent buildings in an inner city neighborhood. There are 109 students in the Elementary School Pre- Grade 5, and 92 students in the Secondary School. The school's newest grades, Grades 11 and 12 currently enrol 16 students. Amongst the student body 24 nationalities are represented. The largest national groups are the Mongolian (39.3%), the Korean (17.5%) the American (10%), the Indian (4.2%) and the Austrian (4.2%) groups.

The school employs 28 teachers, 11 nationalities are represented in the teaching faculty. Thirteen teachers come from the United States, three from Canada, two from France, two from the United Kingdom, two from India and one from each of the following countries- Germany, Australia, Korea, China, South Africa and Mongolia.

ISU is legally recognized by the Mongolian government as well as the United States Embassy. This status gives the school a tax free status. The school is governed by an elected ten member Board.

The curriculum is authorized by the International Baccalaureate and offers the International Baccalaureate Primary (PYP), Middle Years (MYP) and Diploma (DP) Programs. Emphasis is placed on high academic standards and scholastic achievement, stemming from intellectual inquiry and critical thinking. Due to the international diversity of the students, the qualities of compassion, tolerance and respect for the rights and cultures of all people are also promoted at the school.

The school is due to move into a purpose-built facility on the outskirts of town in August 2007. This new site will offer facilities far superior to those offered by the current site. They will include a gymnasium, black box theatre, fitted science laboratories, purpose built Early Childhood facilities and regular as well as specialist teaching spaces.

The school is also emerging from a period of high leadership turnover. In the last three years the school has had three Directors. This inevitably has led to a slowing down in school development projects. The new leadership has inherited a school where certain important structures have yet to be developed. The Visitors found that the school has a good understanding of where its priorities need to lie and that staff members have the will and drive to tackle areas of urgent need. It is in the spirit of supporting the school develop those areas of need that the Visitors approached the visit and the subsequent task of creating recommendations for development.

ISU's initial accreditation was first delayed by both NEASC and CIS 2002 pending the positive outcome of substantive recommendations including but not limited to building issues. A move to an interim site since the 2002 Visiting Team report only mildly improved the facility with respect to CIS/NEASC standards and continues to be a concern to the current delivery of educational services. The opening of a purpose-built facility in August 2007 will largely address the gravest concerns shared by the visitors and the school community.

The accreditation process requires that the school produce a report five years after the completion of the team visit to the school. A report on the visit follows.

The Five Year Visit has a number of broad purposes, these being:

- To monitor the school's responses to the initial or latest Visiting Team Report in respect of recommendations that were not completed at the time of the school's One-Year Report.
- To report on major changes in any aspect of the school's operation.
- To assess the school's position relative to the Standards of Accreditation at the actual time of the Five Year Visit and to make recommendations as to suggested Areas for Attention upon which the school would do well to concentrate in the period leading up to the school's next full Self-Study and Team Visit.

The Five Year Visit to the International School of Ulaanbaatar took place on April 22 – 26, 2007, in conjunction with an additional grades review. The Visitors met at length with the Director and meetings were conducted with staff, students, parents and Board members.

This Five-Year Report highlights significant improvements in the both facility and curricular areas. The Board, administration, faculty, parents and students should be commended for their continued efforts to improve ISU. It was felt by the Visitors that the Five-Year Report was produced in a spirit of transparency and self-reflection that contained valuable information to help the visitors focus on the most important challenges facing the school.

This report contains the following:

- Comments relating to original recommendations of the Visiting Team and the School's response to them.
- Observations including perceptions and comments on any significant developments in the school.
- Suggested Areas for Attention, these being areas of the school's operation that warrant particular attention prior to the next self study and Team Visit

The report closes with a set of conclusions, summarizing our impressions of the school at this point in its development. We trust that the report is useful to the school and the accreditation agencies we represent. We would like to thank the administration, the faculty, the staff, students, parents and Board members for a most warm welcome and for all the courtesies extended to us during our four-day visit. The cooperation and openness of the administration and staff were of enormous assistance. We wish the school every success.

SECTION A: PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

The May 2002 Visiting Team report offered four recommendations. Recommendations one and four have been addressed, while recommendation two has had no action. While recommendation three has been addressed in terms of the label “philosophy and objectives”, there is inconsistency in the way in which other terms embedded in philosophy and objectives are understood.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

The report revealed a misunderstanding at ISU between a strategic plan and clearly articulated and espoused philosophy and objectives. By November 2002, the board, faculty and administration jointly examined the distinction and developed the school’s philosophy and objectives more closely in line with CIS/NEASC standards. However, no review has taken place since 2002. The school prominently displays its mission statement in appropriate documents and in all learning areas around the school.

A number of factors have arisen since the last revision of the Philosophy and Objectives. The school has added additional grades in grades 11 and 12. With a few exceptions of institutional knowledge mostly among Mongolian professionals at the school, virtually all of the board, administration and staff are new to the school since the last review of philosophy and objectives. Further, the implementation of IBO programmes throughout the academic continuum has been a unifying force in terms of various school stakeholders’ demonstrated ability to articulate the school’s core values and beliefs that underlie the philosophy and objectives. The school’s philosophy is consistent with the aims and values of the IBO. A new purpose-built facility is expected to open in August 2007 allowing for expansion of the school population and the ability to offer a wider range and higher quality of curricular and extracurricular services. Each of these factors increases the urgency to review the school’s philosophy and objectives.

There is some confusion among school stakeholders and within some written documents as to whether there is a distinction between a school vision and mission.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- The school should establish and publish a cycle for the regular review of the school’s Philosophy and Objectives. This review process should be ongoing and include a wider range of participants including parents (beyond those that comprise the voting board members), students and support services staff.
- The school should take steps to define terms such as philosophy, core values, mission, vision, goals and objectives when it undertakes its next review to help ensure that all school stakeholders understand the

contribution of each to a highly functioning school, and that they are consistently articulated verbally and in school handbooks, manuals, and other appropriate documents.

SECTION B: ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

Three recommendations were left by the Visiting Team. One recommendation (recommendation 2) has been completed, recommendation 1 is in progress and recommendation 3 was rejected due to changes in the school's circumstances. The issue of Board continuity remains. Currently many of the Board members have served in this capacity for a short period. The current Board Chair has been in the position for a few months. The reasons for the constant changeover are complex. For example, Mongolia is a country where families tend to spend 2- 3 years and there has been limited understanding of the role and nature of school governance both amongst host country national families and expatriates. Many Board members spend large amounts of time outside of Mongolia as a result of professional obligations. For all of these reasons it is sometimes difficult to sustain the level of consistency needed. The school has recently made every effort to rectify this and invited interested parents to attend a recent Board training workshop. The insights gained from the workshop encouraged parents to stand for service on the Board.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

The school has had three Directors in the last three years. This has inevitably had an impact on the school's development and has led to more Board involvement in the school's operations than would generally be the case. In terms of organizational structure there are some significant areas which need addressing in the school's infrastructure. The new Director, who is experienced in international school leadership, is fully aware of areas of need. These include the need for further development of school policies to include areas such as instructional policies as well as the updating of policies in place. A formal procedure for the appraisal of the Director is needed; the current Director has requested and is currently undergoing an appraisal. Job descriptions are needed for the Director and teachers as well as a process for the Board to evaluate its effectiveness in carrying out its duties. A procedures manual is needed for the support staff which records the manner in which the school operates in this area. The Faculty manual, which serves as the academic procedures manual, should be updated as soon as the policy review is complete.

Currently certain staff members are undertaking several areas of responsibility. For example the Director is the Director, the Head of Secondary and the MYP Coordinator. The Head of Elementary is the Head of Elementary, the PYP Coordinator, the Accreditation Coordinator and the de facto Librarian. The IB Coordinator assumes the coordinator role as well as

the CAS Coordinator and the College Counselor roles. Next academic year the hiring of a Head of Secondary/MYP Coordinator, Librarian and College Counselor will allow these staff members more time to concentrate on other duties.

Importantly, the school currently has no strategic/school development plan which maps out the school's educational as well as financial priorities for the short, medium and long term. It will be important for the Board to set in motion such a planning process, perhaps with the support of an outside facilitator. This will assist the school address its development needs in a systematic fashion and support the school in planning financial support for its initiatives. A business development plan, linked to the school's bank loan does exist.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- The School should continue to address issues of Board continuity.
- It is important that the school address areas of need in its infrastructure. These include policy revision or development, job description development, a formalised appraisal system for the Director, a self evaluation process for the Board and the development of procedures manuals.
- As a matter of urgency the school should develop an educational development plan supported by a financial plan which outlines the school's development priorities for the short, medium and long term.

SECTION C: SCHOOL STAFF

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

The two recommendations of the 2002 Visiting Team continue to be a priority for the school. Recommendation one is in progress, while recommendation two has been addressed and is an ongoing activity.

Heavy turnover in staff and administration and full implementation of the IB has convinced the school that a new performance appraisal system of instructional and other staff is needed. Professional development is a priority of the school and great strides have been made in availing funds and time to attend professional development activities.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

The current board, the first-year director and the staff all indicated that a new staff appraisal system is currently being developed and will be implemented for 2007-08, pending board approval. It is being designed to promote accountability and to be more professionally helpful and rewarding than past

appraisal systems. No formal appraisal system exists for 2006-07 for instructional or non-instructional staff.

Professional development has improved in recent years and continues to be a school priority, particularly IB subject-specific training. Budgets have been altered to support in-service for faculty at least once every two years. Independent initiatives are also supported within cost constraints. Curriculum trainers regularly provide in-house workshops, while expertise from other schools and educational service organizations is brought to Ulaanbaatar to hold on-site workshops.

Working conditions for staff remain a challenge in terms of the limitation of the inadequate facilities (see section J). The school buildings are not up to standards. Recent improvements in computer technology have improved service delivery and communications among staff. The new school building to open in August 2007 will remedy virtually all issues pertaining to staff working conditions, but may pose new challenges to maintenance, security and cleaning staff not accustomed to serving in new, large, purpose-built facilities.

Staff turnover has stabilized in the past year. Attention is being given to attract teachers and retain teachers, given that the remoteness and long and harsh winters of Mongolia may be perceived as undesirable within the potential supply of teachers. Morale is high compared to one year ago, while local and ex-patriate staff communicate well and contribute to a sense of teamwork and dedication. Teaching staff felt that the compensation is low compared to what is offered in other developing countries.

Parents, students and Board members were enthusiastic in their support of the school and its staff. They view the qualities of competence and caring for the individual student as hallmarks of the school environment.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- The school should implement an appraisal program for instructional and support staff.
- The Board should examine and review teacher compensation on a regular basis, including housing and insurance concerns.
- The school should continue its efforts to support the professional development of teachers and administrators. Ongoing training will help teachers new to an IB school transition from the initial difficulties of understanding the IB conceptually to the specificity of instruction in their academic specialty.
- As some non-instructional staff face greater dimensions to their work in the new building to open in August 2007, capacity building in areas of maintenance, safety and security of a new and larger school will help

ensure that the new school meets facilities-related accreditation standards into the distant future.

SECTION D: EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMME

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

Among the five recommendations of the visiting team, recommendations four and five pertaining to professional development and program scheduling, respectively, have been satisfactorily addressed.

Recommendation one has been in progress in terms of both utilization of space in the existing facility and also in terms of the new facility to open in August 2007. Recommendations two and three have had no action as a plan for replacing and enhancing learning materials and computer technology is not in place.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

The current school facilities continue to be below standards for accreditation in terms of outdoor play space for the entire programme. Further, bathroom facilities are not size appropriate. A section of the new school building to open in August 2007 is dedicated to the early childhood program with appropriate dimensions for small children and ample outdoor play areas. The degree to which these areas will be fully equipped with items such as wheeled toys and climbing apparatus is unknown to the early childhood teachers, but is part of the budget prioritisation process currently being studied by the administration.

The PYP coordinator meets weekly with the Kindergarten, Preschool and first grade teacher to discuss academic service delivery and to ensure vertical articulation. Other planning meetings are held between the teachers on an informal basis.

The combination of PS1 (age 3) and PS2 (age 4) has been deemed financially necessary to form a unified class of 20 students. Differentiated instruction and assessment by the teacher and the close attention paid by two instructional assistants ensures that students of varying abilities are served appropriately.

The preschool classroom (consisting of PS1 and PS2) is spacious, well supplied and equipped with manipulatives and dedicated areas for individual and group work. The Kindergarten classroom is more limiting and not well resourced. Age-appropriate Kindergarten resources remain sparse and outdated, including computer technology and related supplies, manipulatives and equipment. The kindergarten teacher provides her own computer, printer cartridges and other supplies at her own expense. One native language speaking instructional aide serves the Kindergarten.

A formal curriculum program has been written which identifies curricular expectations, learning objectives and evaluation procedures. The inclusion of the Kindergarten to the Early Childhood Programme in 2004 has enhanced the transition to the PYP.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- With the support of the PYP Coordinator, the Early Childhood team should continue to reinforce the efforts to collaborate with the Elementary Program in support of the upward development of the children.
- Ensure that the new facility is appropriately equipped for inside and outside learning and playtime activities, including provisions for enhanced computer technology.
- Ensure that supplies and other necessary materials are budgeted to better support the Kindergarten.

SECTION E: ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM PROGRAMME

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

Three recommendations were left by the Visiting Team. Two recommendations (recommendations 1 and 3) have been completed. The school currently does not have a trained librarian. The Elementary Principal is currently supervising the library and a library assistant is undergoing training which will lead to certification. Next academic year one of the new Elementary teachers has library qualifications. This teacher will also lend support to the library.

Twenty nine recommendations were left in the subject areas. Of these twenty three are completed, 4 are in progress and no action has been taken on two. Recommendations in these areas reflect recommendations in the general section. Drama has now been added to the program and various opportunities are available to showcase student talent.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

The school has significantly developed in this area since the original team visit. It successfully gained authorisation for the Primary Years program and successfully underwent an evaluation visit. Substantial curricular documentation is in place and the curricular fine tuning which is now needed to ensure vertical (both within the PYP and Pre -12) and horizontal articulation, as well as uniformity of curricular documentation, will be supported by the school's decision to map its curriculum using Atlas Rubicon.

At the time of the visit the school was undergoing training in the use of the program.

As is recognised by the school, the development of ICT, both from a hard and software perspective as well as from a curriculum integration perspective, is an area of ongoing need. It should be noted, however, that much progress seems to have been made in the recent past.

Teachers also expressed a need for additional resources for classroom activities as well as for the library. They also expressed a desire for more synchronisation of resources. For example, incomplete reading schemes make a progressive approach to teaching reading skills a challenge. The new administration has made resource building a particular focus for next academic year and additional money has been made available in the budget. Staff expressed their appreciation for this as well as the more transparent approach to procurement. A comprehensive resource inventory and resource development plan which is linked to the school's curriculum development plans would support the administration's efforts in this area.

Teachers were also appreciative of efforts made to bring in outside consultants who provide professional development training. Current training needs seem to lie in the areas of differentiation, ESL, and ICT. Staff report that most of the school's professional development focus has been connected to the IBPYP. It is recommended that the school develop a school-wide professional development plan which supports school-wide curricular initiatives. Opportunities for teachers to share best practice and ideas gained from workshops do exist. This helps reduce the isolation some teachers feel given that the school tends to have one class at each grade level. As a result of this opportunities to plan collaboratively with a fellow grade level teachers are limited.

Instructional policies in areas such as assessment, language, reporting and grading need to be developed and included in the school-wide policy manual. Work continues in the area of assessment, essential agreements for assessment are to be developed as well as systems for utilising student achievement results to improve curriculum and instruction. Currently the school does not use standardised tests and has no formalised system in place to assess for learning.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- The school is encouraged to continue efforts to strengthen Pre- 12 vertical and horizontal curriculum and the uniformity of curriculum documentation.
- The further development of ICT resources and technological literacy is a priority for the school.
- A comprehensive resource inventory and resource development plan which is linked to the school's curriculum development plans would

support the administration's efforts to address the school's resource needs.

- A school-wide professional development plan which supports school-wide curricular initiatives would help prioritise training priorities. Currently areas of need include: differentiated instruction, ESL for non ESL teachers, and ICT.
- Instructional policies need to be developed and included in the school-wide policy manual. These include assessment policies and language policies.
- As recognised by the school, the school needs to strengthen assessment systems including systems which use student achievement results to enhance teaching and learning.

SECTION F MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM PROGRAMME

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

The two recommendations that were left by the Visiting Team are in progress. They are essentially collapsed into one recommendation because the IBO's December 2005 report established professional development needs as part of its latest set of conditions for continued authorization. Thus, the school has an updated list of concerns to be addressed since the IBO report referenced in the visiting team report of 2002.

Thirty one recommendations were left in the subject areas. One was rejected, eight are completed and twenty-four are either in progress or have not had action taken. Recommendations in these areas reflect recommendations in the general section. Drama has now been added to the programme.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

The Middle Years Programme, grades 6 through 10, has matured more slowly than the Primary Years and Diploma Programmes since the 2002 visiting team visit and its authorization by the IBO. This was due to a number of factors. Both the positions of secondary school principal and MYP programme coordinator have experienced turnover multiple times. Further there was a break in focus on MYP instruction to prepare for the ICGSE in grades 9 and 10. A decision by the board to discontinue the ICGSE is designed to renew focus on the MYP and bring it in line with the level of instruction in the other programmes.

Curriculum documents are in place and are the subject of ongoing scrutiny for improved vertical and horizontal articulation. Curriculum development meetings occur weekly. Vertical articulation with the grade 11 and 12 Diploma Programme (DP) is enhanced by the fact that, as a small school,

most teachers at the upper MYP range are also teaching the DP courses. Further, the rigor of curriculum documents will be more consistent with the other IB programmes and they will be uniformly presented across programmes. Specific professional development is being delivered for curriculum mapping using Atlas Rubicon.

Computer technology has improved since the 2002 report. Upgraded hardware and software have helped students execute units of inquiry and high-speed internet access was made available nearly two years ago. However, the technology needs to be enhanced further to better facilitate the integration of computer technology within the curriculum. A comprehensive resource inventory and resource development plan which is linked to the school's curriculum development plans would support the administration's efforts in this area.

Teachers in the middle grades are catching up to their peers in other grades in terms of their readiness for higher-level professional development. They feel the need for better technology integration and differentiated instruction, as well as ESL support for subject area specialists. Teachers collaborate to share best practices and to debrief what was gained after PD activities.

Instructional policies in areas such as assessment, language, reporting and grading need to be developed and included in the school-wide policy manual. Work continues in the area of assessment despite that no formal system exists for assessing student learning and for utilising the results to inform instructional or curriculum changes.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- The board and administration must ensure that focused leadership is given to the MYP to accelerate its full implementation.
- The MYP should continue to strengthen vertical and horizontal curriculum and the uniformity of curriculum documentation.
- The further development of computer technology and teacher computer literacy is a priority for the school.
- An examination of necessary resources is warranted that supports the curriculum development plan, including priorities for professional development.
- Instructional and assessment policies need to be developed and included in the school-wide policy manual.
- A system needs to be developed to ensure that assessment results inform instruction and curriculum.

SECTION G SECONDARY CURRICULUM PROGRAMME

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

Since the DP programme is being implemented and construction of a new school is nearly completed, the recommendations from the 2002 visiting team report no longer apply. Current concerns from grades 9 and 10 are being addressed in the framework of the MYP in section F. For grades 11 and 12, please see the Additional Grades Report created concurrently to this report.

SECTION H: SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

One recommendation was left by the Visiting Team. It is still in progress. The school currently has one teacher with a 25% allowance to support students with learning needs in the Elementary School. This teacher has no specific training in Special Needs. Currently around 5 students are considered to have learning differences in the Elementary School. One of them has been diagnosed by a specialist and the school implements the suggestions given by the student's external support provider. Support is given on a withdrawal as well as an in class basis. IEPs are created where appropriate.

There is no support available in the Secondary School. Around 2 students are considered to have learning differences; one of them is formally diagnosed as a Special Needs student.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

This academic year the school's admissions policy and procedure has been strengthened to include a 30 day probationary period for students during which the school can observe a prospective student and decide whether or not the school can provide a program for his/her needs. Initial teacher impressions suggest that this has improved the school's ability to screen for students for whom there is no suitable program. No testing is done at admissions. The school relies on previous school records, the admissions interview as well as parents declaring whether or not their child has special educational needs. This new system now needs to be monitored and its effectiveness evaluated.

In order to better support students already enrolled in the school, teachers have pointed to the need for training in differentiated instruction as well as

basic training in supporting students with needs. Resources are also needed such as books on social skills at various levels and speech. Professional reading resources for teachers may also be helpful. Currently teachers are providing their own resources.

The school feels that there are limited resources available locally for students. However, a parent member of this committee with professional connections in the field made some suggestions which the school may like to follow up.

Currently there are no formal policies or procedures in place for students deemed to be gifted or talented.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- It will be important to review the effectiveness of recent changes to the school's admissions policy to determine to what extent the policy and procedures can screen for students who cannot benefit from the school's programs.
- Teachers may be better able to support students if: additional training in differentiated instruction and basic support for special needs students as well as professional resources and children's resources were more readily available.
- It may be useful to constantly research the local environment for resources available within Mongolia.
- Policies and procedures need to be formalised which outline the manner in which the school would support the needs of students who are gifted and talented.

SECTION I: GUIDANCE SERVICES

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

Five recommendations were left by the Visiting Team. One recommendation has been completed (Recommendation 3) and the others are in progress.

The school has hired a college counsellor who will start with the school next academic year. Currently the IB Diploma Co-ordinator is serving in this role. The school is currently developing a pastoral system to address student social and emotional needs. Although teachers are supportive of this they feel that the developing system could be strengthened if the role of the homeroom teacher were further clarified and some training were provided with respect to pastoral care provision. In the Elementary School teachers feel that the current system works well. It would also be helpful to formalise the system of career guidance support given to students.

The new school administration is currently constructing student records from data that was left. Starting from this academic year a system for the compilation of records has been created. The data is backed up on site. It is recommended that an additional copy be kept off-site. Hard copies kept on site need to be stored in fireproof and fire resistant cabinets.

No action has been taken on recommendation 5 although a 30 day probationary period has been introduced. The admissions procedures are being reviewed at present.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

None other than the above.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

It is important that the remaining recommendations are fully addressed namely:

- The review of the admissions procedures needs to assess the effectiveness of current student screening procedures to ensure that students admitted to the school can benefit from its programs.
- The school should continue the development of an effective pastoral system in particular in the Secondary School.
- It would also be helpful to formalise the system of career guidance support given to students.
- The school is encouraged to finalise the construction of student records from inherited data and to ensure that these records are adequately protected from fire, theft or other eventualities.

SECTION J: HEALTH SERVICES AND SAFETY

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

Four recommendations were offered in 2002. As the current building is an interim site in anticipation of the August 2007 opening of the new school, recommendations three and four pertained to a previous location for existing conditions and the current location as the “new” school referenced.

Recommendation one has been addressed. Recommendation two has had no action. Recommendation three is somewhat obsolete as the school plans to enter a new purpose-built facility. However, it must be noted that the school did not invest resources into the temporary school to bring it into compliance with all findings in reports. Recommendation four was not completed, as the

current temporary school does not meet many health and safety standards prevalent in international schools.

There has been a conscious economic decision to not make the investment to provide many of the health and safety services that are evident in the plans for the new facility. After having toured the entire infrastructure of the unfinished future campus, the visitors are encouraged that that the new building and school site will eliminate concerns expressed below for health care space, security and traffic safety.

The school receives an annual visit and report from US embassy staff who inspect the school for health and safety. Many of the report findings remain unaddressed, including the need for an intercom system, preparedness for extreme danger such as the presence of weapons and terrorist threats, proper lighting and bathroom sanitary supplies.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

Major deficiencies in health and safety standards one, two, three and five remain from the 2002 accreditation visit. First aid kits and physicals for sports participants are the only formal processes that have been addressed. The school receptionist has been appropriately trained in first aid and is the person students are to report to when ill. No school nurse is employed nor is a doctor associated with the school. Physical examinations are not required of students upon admission to the school. The school is able to call an SOS clinic that will send ambulance service and treat minor injuries. Major injuries require medical evacuation to a nearby country as Mongolia has weak hospital services to treat major illness, orthopaedic injuries and virtually any serious medical matter.

The visitors were aware of the ease with which unwanted visitors may enter the school grounds, either from climbing over the inadequate fencing, or walking unchallenged through the front gate, which is unlocked and periodically unsupervised by an adult. While the traffic pattern of the driveway loop inside the front gate is orderly, the traffic pattern outside the gate is unsafe during arrival and departure times as cars jump the curb and across the sidewalk in front of the front gate to park in the only available parking space that is informal and unmarked. Pedestrian traffic and vehicular traffic are dangerously close. The Director, principals, and a maintenance staff person keep a physical presence inside and outside the front gate to help minimize the chances for incidents during arrival and departure time.

Chipped paint, splintered wood surfaces, uneven/unmarked mini-steps near entries and in stairwell, and other aspects of a facility in disrepair, present additional risks such as lead poisoning, cuts/splinters, tripping and falling.

Improper storage of materials in the science laboratory exposed glass contained chemicals to inadvertent contact and breakage in addition to unauthorized access. Further, emergency utilities shut-off capabilities or eyewash are not present in the science laboratory.

Fire extinguishers in the food service area are too far from the food preparation area on the opposite side of the cafeteria. The basement assembly room has no emergency exit. The basement boiler room was unlocked.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- The school should ensure that the science laboratory is safe by installing emergency shut offs, eyewash, and by securely storing any potentially dangerous material.
- Restrict the ability of cars to randomly drive up the curb across the sidewalk in front of the school.
- Ensure that strangers cannot enter school grounds unchallenged, and that all authorized visitors are identifiable with a visitor tag.
- Install a fire extinguisher within, or immediately adjacent to, the food preparation area.
- Appropriately mark/label uneven stair surfaces and door entries to call attention to the risk of tripping and falling.
- A complete assessment of the need for medical services must be made with an action plan which addresses: access to health professionals to react to illness/injury, proactive processes such as iterative medical examinations, insurance considerations, dedicated space in the school for treatment and recovery, and multilingual communications related to health and safety.

SECTION K: STUDENT SERVICES

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

All four recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

A change in food service providers to a well- reputed local restaurant has resulted in significantly improved meals to the point where staff and students regularly opt for the warm meal of the day. While one level of food preparation occurs at the restaurant before the morning delivery to the school, the heating and distribution are done in a kitchen area that is safe and sanitary. The staff have their own dedicated dining area. Students eat in either a small cafeteria, a traditional Mongolia ger situated just outside the cafeteria, or outside during the warmer months. Students reported that the

heating is not appropriate in both the ger and the cafeteria in the winter given the frequent opening and closing of doors.

The contracted transportation service functions well. Clean and well-maintained minivans and minibuses take students and staff to and from school and follow an orderly routine in the driveway loop. Seatbelts are always used by students, while an adult ensures that all students on each route are accounted for before allowing bus/van departure.

In-house cleaning staff are present during school for both iterative and ad-hoc cleaning, while the primary cleaning happens after school. Staff and students reported satisfaction with the cleaning services. However, the visitors feel that cleaning procedures could improve to help remove more of the windblown sand and dust that enters through school's windows. Bathroom supplies such as soap and towels are not always available.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- Revisit cleaning, upkeep, and bathroom supply procedures, perhaps with the advice of a professional consultant, in light of the fact that the current procedures used in the outdated building may not be sufficient to keep the substantially larger new and larger building in new condition for as long as possible.
- Prepare for the pedestrian and traffic flow and parking pattern at the new school in order to minimize the chances for the unforeseen to occur.

SECTION L: STUDENT LIFE

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

Two recommendations were left by the Visiting Team. Both have been completed.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

ISU is blessed with a warm family environment where, in general, students of all ages interact, know each other and are mutually supportive. It will be important to continually nurture this unique feature of the school and seek to emulate the atmosphere in the new school and as enrolment increases.

One of the challenges currently facing the school as it grows is a tendency for some national groups to collect together during social periods and as a result missing opportunities to interact with other students. Students suggest that

this may be due to difficulties with speaking English but it would seem that at least in one grade this tendency can be divisive.

Within ISU the Student Council, which includes representatives from all areas of the school, plays an important role in organising social activities, outreach programs and fundraising for outreach programs. The Council also meets regularly with the Director to discuss concerns and seek permissions. The Council would like to streamline its activities to designate specific outreach projects which will be supported on an ongoing basis.

The school offers a fairly extensive and free of charge extra curricular program. The program includes a range of activities which include senior students running tutoring classes for younger children.

Students new to the school are given much support in adapting to their new environment. Given the size of the school the support tends to be informal in nature however students and their families report ease of entry into the ISU family. Orientation sessions for families new to the school take place twice a year.

New students from non Western families report a large cultural difference from the educational systems they are familiar with and report that it takes a while to adjust to the new expectations and culture of the school. The school community may wish to explore how the transition for such students can be further facilitated and how parents can be given additional help to support their students in the new environment.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- It will be important to continually nurture the school's warm family atmosphere and seek to emulate this unique feature in the new school and as enrolment increases.
- The school community may wish to explore how students transitioning to ISU from very different educational systems and approaches can be further facilitated and how parents can be given additional help to support their students in the new environment.

SECTION M: LIBRARY/MEDIA CENTRE

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

Recommendation one pertaining to a trained librarian has only been partially addressed. A librarian was employed at ISU in 2005-06, however that person left the school and a replacement was not available.

Recommendation four was from an era when the school still had MS-dos based equipment in parts of the school. Windows based software is used and a state-of-the-art Follet system is being installed in the new library.

Recommendations two, three, five, six and eight have been addressed. Recommendation nine was made during an era when volunteer parents staffed the library in lieu of trained professionals. This recommendation no longer applies. Recommendation seven has not been addressed.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

The school currently does not have a trained librarian. The Elementary Principal is currently supervising the library, with the assistance of two library aides, one of which is studying to become a certified librarian. To assist in the transition, a new elementary teacher entering next year is also qualified as a school librarian, and will contribute to the school's capacity to provide library services. Since the librarian supply is short in international schools, the practice of "training-up" a Mongolian library aide is sound and will surely increase the likelihood of keeping the fully credentialed librarian position filled for years to come.

There has been a significant effort to improve and update library facilities and stocks since 2002. It contains over 2000 volumes, of which nearly 1200 are in English while the others are from several languages. Students and parents expressed satisfaction with the library in terms of its improvement from only a few years ago, but acknowledge that more needs to be done. There are 16 networked computers that are equipped with high-speed internet access. PAL software assists with tracking of library materials.

The library is in a state of transition, much like the rest of the school. The current library is in the basement of the smaller of two buildings on the current site and is inadequately situated. However, the school has done a remarkable job of making what was previously basement space into a reasonably welcoming learning environment. The visitors viewed the space for the new library as part of a tour of the new school site. The new library is significantly larger, sufficient for the size of the school and fully wired for technology. There are plans to order on-line journal capabilities (EBSCO) to coincide with the opening of the new library. Currently, the research options are limited and access to refereed journals, particularly to support the IB/DP, is highly sought by faculty and students. There is no written library curriculum.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- The school should ensure that a fully trained librarian is employed at the school, while continuing the professional development of library assistants in the area of library sciences.
- The school should take steps to ensure that a library curriculum is written with collaborative input from teaching staff at all levels and all subjects.

- The school should follow through on its commitment to use the Follet Destiny software in managing library activities once the new school opens.
- Additional access to on-line and other research material is needed to fully support the IB programmes at the school.
- Teachers should be encouraged to develop and nurture close links with the library staff to enhance their own teaching programs and to support their students in developing appropriate and effective research skills.

SECTION N: SCHOOL FACILITIES

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

The two recommendations from the 2002 team visit were addressed when moving from the 2002 school site to the current temporary site. All renovations cited by inspectors were not done, nor does the current school site meet health and safety standard or facilities standards in international schools. However, the same two recommendations essentially carry over to the opening of the new school. The visitors toured the new school site set to open in August. There is every reason to believe that the new school will be built to modern standards of health and safety and educational standards for international schools.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

The current facility is inadequate to support the academic programmes of ISU and is to be occupied only until the new school opens in August. It is too small for the enrolment and is in need of major repair to continue housing an educational program. The property contains two buildings and one ger, a miniature dirt soccer field and a small, makeshift outdoor basketball court in the rear in what was a former parking area. The property is fenced in, but the fencing is easily climbed. The main building houses the administration and the vast majority of academic offerings, maintenance rooms, a computer lab, a staff lounge, music rooms, and a basement assembly room that also is used for gym classes.

The second building is smaller, containing the school cafeteria and food preparation area, the preschool program, and other academic offerings. The ger sits outside of the second building and is used as a cafeteria and for special meetings or classes. The preschool sanitary facilities are not age appropriate. This building contains the living quarters of the landlord of the school, however all doors between the school portion of the building and the landlord are locked.

With the exception of the food preparation fire extinguisher reference in Section J, fire extinguishers appear to be placed appropriately, while the alarm system is fully functional. Evacuation drills are conducted twice yearly.

Since a new, purpose-built campus is near completion and is certain to open in August 2007, and recommendations for the existing facility would be too numerous, recommendations are not provided herein on the current facility. Please refer to the visitor's safety-related suggestions that are presented in Section J.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- The administration should seek out an inspection by proper authorities prior to occupancy of the new school.
- The board and administration should engage in long-term strategic facilities planning to ensure that the new building is maintained and secured in accordance with standards of international schools.
- The Board should attend to policies relating to maximum student numbers.

SECTION O: FINANCES AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

Three recommendations were left by the Visiting Team. Two are fully completed and the other (Recommendation 2) is for the most part complete. Most of the school's funds have gone into the financing of a new facility consequently the school does not have a substantial contingency fund to fall back upon.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

This academic year the school made the decision to use the services of an international auditing company. The resultant audit generated a list of perceived shortcomings in the school's accounting practices. The school has since addressed the recommendations left by the auditors and continues to upgrade its accountancy practices.

ISU created a business/financial development plan which was linked to its request for a bank loan for the new building project. This plan includes cash forecasts for the next five years.

The new Director has begun to create greater transparency in the school's financial management systems. The current school budget was presented to the staff so that they could better understand where the school's financial

priorities had to lie. Currently the school operates with a one year actual budget. It is planned to create a two year rolling budget.

The school has secured a three year loan for its current building project. The loan repayments will be funded from the building fund the school has accumulated as well as from the operating budget. Given the short time span of the loan it is inevitable that there will be implications for the students who will be in the school in the coming three years. The school is already cognizant of projects which will be on hold until the loan is repaid.

School fees have been raised in the recent past for both private school clients as well as corporate clients. Substantial increases have taken place. Seventy percent of the school's families pay the tuition fees by themselves hence the ISU community may be more price conscious than other schools around the globe.

c) Suggested Areas for Attention

- As soon as feasible the school needs to build financial reserves which can sustain operations in the case of a change in circumstances or in an emergency situation.
- The school needs to continue to upgrade and monitor financial practices to ensure that at all times it meets international as well as local standards.
- The school is encouraged to continue to develop the staff's understanding of budgeting practices and to develop a two-three year budgeting process.
- The school is strongly encouraged to reassess the impact of its short term building loan on the learning environment over the period of the loan repayment.

SECTION P: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE

a) Comments relating to the Recommendations of the Visiting Team

Two recommendations were left by the Visiting Team. No action has been taken on Recommendation 1 and Recommendation 2 is in progress.

b) Observations, including responses to significant developments

As the school highlighted to the Visitors, this is an important area for development. ISU is bringing a well known international school consultant with expertise in this area to the school early next year. The

consultant will enhance teachers' understanding of the role of assessment within the curriculum and will assist the school develop needed areas such as essential agreements for assessment, assessment policies and methods for utilising data to enhance curriculum and instruction.

As the Visitors met with the teachers it was apparent that, in keeping with the requirements of the school's curricula, teachers do use a range of assessment strategies. Teachers would like to extend this range further and understand how to make the shift from "assessment of learning" to "assessment for learning"

c) Suggested Areas for attention.

- The school needs to further develop the system used to transfer student information from one grade to the next.
- A formal system is needed in which the student achievement data from external as well as internal assessments is used to enhance teaching and learning.
- The school needs to continue to develop teachers' understanding of the role of assessment and support these understandings with assessment policies, and assessment agreements.
- Teachers are encouraged to further develop the range of strategies used to assess students.

CONCLUSIONS

The International School Ulaanbataar is emerging from a difficult period marked by frequent leadership change and the resultant effect this has on school development. As a result the school leadership is only now turning attention to putting in place the systems, documentation and policies which would be expected at this stage of the school's development. In spite of this the future does seem bright for the school provided leadership stability can be achieved and the momentum for change sustained. Key to this will be the creation of a development plan which maps out and prioritises change initiatives for the coming years, and which enjoys the support of and input from the school community.

The Visitors were impressed by the depth of understanding of the school's development needs displayed by teachers and school leadership and the commitment to addressing those needs. There is a renewed focus on instructional leadership which aims to create a learning community focused on high quality learning.

Additional challenges currently facing the school include:

- The urgent need to establish systems, policies, procedures and documentation. This need permeates most sections of the school. For example a comprehensive set of instructional policies are needed, areas of curriculum documentation need to be developed and appraisal systems need to be refined or developed.
- The urgent need to develop resources for many teaching areas. These include development of the library to ensure that it effectively supports the needs of learners at all levels in the school, the development of ICT resources and the integration of ICT into the curriculum, classroom resources, such as classroom equipment and teaching materials. Teachers are most concerned that essential equipment may not be available due to the school's need to focus on loan repayments in the coming years.
- The continuing need to address Board continuity.
- Professional development needs in the areas of ESL, differentiated instruction and ICT as well as basic training in supporting students with learning differences in order that teachers can better support the wide range of student needs and abilities in the school.
- The need to refine governance operations and policies
- The need to address health and safety issues such as: the safe storage of chemicals, ensuring that there are sufficient functioning exits from the building, addressing campus security concerns. Much of this should be addressed immediately as they are current safety hazards. (cf. Section J)
- The need to revisit the repayment schedule for the loan to ensure that the learning environment is not unduly compromised for students currently enrolled in the school.

- The need to ensure that the school has liquid funds available in case of emergencies.

Current strengths include the school's warm friendly atmosphere, the teacher and school leadership's commitment to student learning and well being and the investment which has been made in a purpose built facility.

Given the above, and in particular many of the urgent needs outlined in the report, the Visitors recommend that the school be allowed to continue in accredited status subject to a special report in 18 months on the following Special Issues:

- The urgent need to complete policy writing, curricular documentation, and document procedures and systems (appraisal system, assessment systems)
- The need to ensure that the school meets local as well as international health and safety standards.
- The need to ensure that the school's resources (ICT, library, classroom material etc) are adequate for support of the curriculum and the students currently in the school.
- The need to formalise governance operations and address Board continuity as well as to ensure that the Board utilises the tools of good governance (formalised Director's appraisal, Board self appraisal, effective educational as well as financial planning etc)

After the Special Report has been received the agencies should decided whether or not a follow up visit is required.

Signature *Margaret Alvarez* *Ken Imperato*

Date May 20, 2007