

**INTERNATIONAL SPANISH  
LANGUAGE ACADEMY'S  
5-YEAR  
STRATEGIC PLAN**

**7/1/2008- 6/30/2014**

**Mission:**

***ISLA, a K-6 Spanish immersion community, empowers the whole child by nurturing the development of personal growth, strong character, academic excellence, and global vision.***

# Preamble

Significant planning and preparation occurred as the founders of International Spanish Language Academy (“ISLA”) created and developed their vision of a new Spanish-immersion public elementary school that would include the International Baccalaureate Organization Primary Years Programme. That hard work and planning allowed ISLA to become a reality and open its doors for operation for the 2007-2008 school year.

The Board of Directors (“the Board”) recognized during the course of ISLA’s first year of operation that development of a strategic plan was necessary to provide guidance to the Board and the Administration going forward and to ensure the sustained success of ISLA. The Board therefore created a Strategic Planning Committee (“SPC”) on September 25, 2007 and tasked the SPC with developing a 5-year strategic plan that encompassed the following areas:

1. Academic Achievement & Bilingual Fluency
2. Development of Students’ Character & Global Perspective
3. Extra-Curricular Activities
4. Learning Environment
5. School Care Program
6. Marketing and Promotion of ISLA
7. Growth and Expansion
8. Relationships with Sponsor and other charter schools
9. Finance & Funding

The SPC was also charged with the duty to annually review and assess ISLA’s progress toward and achievement of the strategic plan’s stated goals.

In an effort to garner a diversity of perspectives and opinions, the Board proposed composition of the SPC to include: a committee Chair, the Board’s Chair or designee, the ISLA Executive Director, at least one ISLA teacher, parents of ISLA students, at least one of the ISLA founders, and at least one additional School Board member. Ultimately, the 2007-2008 SPC included the following individuals:

1. Sonia Miller-Van Oort (Chair and ISLA parent)
2. Melody Brombacher (Board Chair)
3. Samantha Baksic (ISLA teacher)
4. Sarah Petersohn (ISLA teacher)
5. Karen Utt (PTO Chair and ISLA parent)
6. Theresa Aleckson (PTO member and ISLA parent)
7. Juliet Nail (PTO member and ISLA parent)
8. Carol Strand-Siebers (PTO member and ISLA parent)

Executive Director Karen Terhaar also participated in review and discussion of plans as they were developing in the process.

The SPC met seven times between December 2007 and April 2008. During this planning process, the SPC developed goals related to the first six topics (out of nine) identified above. Those goals are identified and discussed below. The SPC recommends that strategic planning regarding the three remaining topics (i.e., ISLA Growth and Expansion, finance and funding, and relationships with sponsor and other charter schools) be completed in school year 2008-2009.

As mentioned above, this strategic plan was designed with the intention and purpose of providing guidance to the Board, its Committees, and the Administration as it makes decisions and carries out the business of the school. It is hoped that this document is reviewed and consulted regularly. Although the plans contained herein are not set in stone and can and should be modified with evolving circumstances, absent affirmative action by the Board directing modifications to the strategic plan, operations and decision-making should reflect the values and goals set forth in this plan.

This strategic plan was adopted by the Board on September 9, 2008 at its regular Board meeting. This strategic plan resides with the Board's Secretary as one of the governing documents of ISLA. A copy of the strategic plan can also be found on ISLA's website at: <http://www.isla.k12.mn.us>.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I.	Historical Background of ISLA.....	5
II.	Academic Achievement & Bilingual Fluency Goals.....	6
III.	Development of Students' Character & Global Perspective Goals.....	8
IV.	Extra-Curricular Activities Goals.....	9
V.	Learning Environment Goals.....	10
VI.	School Care Program Goals.....	13
VII.	Marketing and Promotion of ISLA Goals.....	15
VIII.	Continued Strategic Planning Goals.....	17
IX.	Summary of Annual Goals 2008-2014.....	18

# **I. Historical Background of ISLA**

The ISLA concept originated from founders Karen Terhaar, Angie Cabrera, Molly Quinn, and Kerry Krawczyk-LeMieux. Based on these individuals' collective experience teaching in Spanish-immersion settings, they desired to create a unique learning opportunity for elementary-aged children. As stated in ISLA's mission, these women found value in creating a nurturing environment that allowed for personal growth, strong character, academic excellence and global vision. With these bases, the founders agreed that integrating the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme into a Spanish-immersion educational experience would produce the most optimal results.

The founders were also encouraged to develop a new Spanish-immersion school, because of the large demand for this type of education. Reviewing statistics and anecdotal information, the founders perceived that hundreds of families in the west metro were being denied entrance into immersion schools annually. These observations were further supported after making presentations to community groups and soliciting interest-level from families both inside and outside the school district of Hopkins.

In developing a new school, the founders were also interested in creating a close-knit school community that allowed teachers, students, and staff to know each other well. It was hoped that ISLA's size would be limited to no more than three sections per grade level so that a more intimate and personal educational experience could be achieved.

ISLA opened its doors for operation on September 4, 2007, at 12007 Excelsior Boulevard, Minnetonka, MN 55344. ISLA had 71 students enrolled its first year, including students in kindergarten through fourth grade. ISLA successfully completed its first year of operation with the significant contributions of four full-time teachers, one part-time music/P.E. teacher, two full-time before/after school care providers, an Executive Director, an Administrative Assistant, an active 11-member Board of Directors ("the Board"), and a determined and vibrant Parent Teacher Organization ("PTO").

ISLA approaches its second year of operation anticipating student growth to approximately 120 students. ISLA will continue to be located at the same address for its second year of operation. Teaching staff will increase by 1.5 FTE's.

## **II. Academic Achievement & Bilingual Fluency**

1. ISLA will have clearly-defined year-end objectives for each grade level in reading, writing, math, Spanish proficiency, music, art, science, social studies, and physical education.

**Responsibility:** ISLA Staff/Administration  
**Timeline:** To be completed by October 2008 so that it is in place by 2<sup>nd</sup> year of ISLA operation.  
**Intended Results:** Parents, teachers, and students know at the beginning of each year what material will be covered and what each student will be expected to master by the end of that grade year. Certainly students may and are encouraged to exceed these minimum bench markers, but students will at least be at that level of comprehension, learning, and exposure before moving on to the next grade level.

2. Each ISLA student will advance at least one grade-level from the beginning-of-the-year assessment to the end-of-the-year assessment in math, reading, writing, and Spanish proficiency. By the end of each grade-level, however, each student will, at a minimum, have met the defined year-end objectives. This goal, however, is not intended to be applied toward students with Individual Education Plans (IEP's).

**Responsibility:** ISLA Staff/Administration, Parents, Students  
**Timeline:** To be implemented by August 2008, at beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> year of ISLA operation, and executed throughout the five-year Strategic Plan

**Intended Results:** Each student will be challenged to grow a full grade-level, regardless of their starting point or will be challenged to meet IEP goals. Every student will develop, but will not be pushed beyond their reasonable limits or be limited by others' progress.

**Additional Comments:** Accomplishment of this goal will require: (i) staff/administration implementation/adoption of a measurement tool (i.e., rubric) that can be uniformly used at ISLA, (ii) staff/administration implementation/adoption of a process by which to use the measurement tool (i.e., how many times

throughout the year, assessment done by more than one teacher, etc.), and (iii) integration of parents into learning process (i.e., parent-teacher-student goal-setting conferences, parent sign-off on homework, etc.) Committee also discussed creation of a parent and student “Compact”—written commitment at the beginning of the year—that all efforts would be used to meet the ISLA goal of one-year development. Any child (other than IEP students) not reaching this goal will participate in a group meeting with ISLA staff and parents to address how the goal can be met and/or modified.

3. Upon completion of seven years at ISLA, ISLA graduates will be fluent in the Spanish & English languages (as appropriate for 6<sup>th</sup> grade-level student).

**Responsibility:** ISLA Staff/Administration, Parents, Students

### **III. Development of Students' Character and Global Perspective**

1. ISLA will obtain full accreditation as an IB school by the beginning of its fifth year of operation.

**Responsibility:**

ISLA Staff/Administration

**Intended Results:**

ISLA will have successfully integrated IB methodology into the school and demonstrated commitment to this end by having done so as quickly as possible and as represented in school literature.

## **IV. Extracurricular Activities**

1. ISLA will work with the PTO to annually survey ISLA families to identify and prioritize areas of interest in extra-curricular activities, with the first survey being completed prior to October 1, 2008.
2. The PTO will annually collect information from ISLA parents/guardians as to their areas of extracurricular expertise and levels of interest in volunteering to instruct/coach/organize ISLA extracurricular activities, with the first survey being completed prior to October 1, 2008.
3. Based on the 2008 survey results obtained by the PTO regarding (i) prioritization of extracurricular offerings, and (ii) parent/guardian/teacher expertise and availability to assist, the Strategic Planning Committee will identify two areas of high interest and recommend development of such extracurricular activities to the School Board for implementation in the 2008-2009 school year.
4. ISLA School Board will approve at least two organized extra-curricular programs run by parents/teachers/volunteers for implementation in the 2008-2009 school year.
5. ISLA will develop either (i) internal extra-curricular programs run by ISLA, OR (ii) provide opportunities for exposure to activities through outside groups/individuals, in six categories of activities each year: Music, Art, Sports, Academic, Global Awareness, or Charity. These varied offerings will begin in the 2008-2009 school year and continue throughout the period of this strategic plan.

**Responsibility:**

**Intended Results:**

ISLA Staff/Administration, Parents, School Board  
Regardless of which two extra-curricular programs the school commits to running each year, at a minimum, students will have the opportunity to be exposed to other different types of non-school activities. Some of these programs may be as simple as having a martial arts instructor come to ISLA for a 1-2 session introduction to the martial arts. This might not require the expertise of parents or teachers, but would constitute an offering in the Sports category for the year. Another example might be the development of a Lego League team that competes for 3-4 months. This activity would satisfy the goal of an offering in the Academic category.

6. ISLA Board will re-evaluate the number of extracurricular activities provided to students each year.

## V. Learning Environment

1. ISLA will have no more than two sections per grade level for the first five years of operation.

**Responsibility:** School Board

**Intended Results:** The founders' vision of ISLA was to develop a school environment that was a close-knit community where families, teachers, and students knew each other well. This vision continues to be one that is attractive to parents and can set ISLA apart from other schools. This goal is set to make sure that the school size is limited, with only 50 students at each grade level. The vision is for ISLA not to exceed a school size of 350 students.

**Additional Comments:** In thinking about this goal, the Strategic Planning Committee vacillated on whether two or three sections per grade level was an appropriate limit. Ultimately, the group considered that adding one additional section to a particular grade level would only increase a total class size to 75, which would still constitute a small class. However, having 75 students per grade level spread over all the class years would impact the maximum school size from 350 to 525, which the group felt was significant and less conducive to the intentions and vision of the school in the long-term.

2. By ISLA's fifth year of operation, the majority of ISLA upperclassmen (4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade) will participate in school programs that involve mentoring younger students, serving as conflict peacemakers within the school, or tutoring students.

**Responsibility:** ISLA Staff/Administration

**Intended Results:** ISLA will have developed a community of students who help each other academically and socially and who value a collaborative and supporting learning environment.

**Additional Comments:** Samantha has experience from another school with a program whereby older students serve as "peacemakers" for conflict. The Committee was very excited about pursuing some similar type of program at ISLA.

3. Each year all ISLA teachers will implement responsive classroom techniques and approaches in their classrooms.

4. ISLA teachers and administration will continue implementing the Primary Years Program during the term of the strategic plan.
5. By the end of ISLA's first year, the School Board will assess/survey teachers interests/needs regarding employment benefits to better understand what is desired and needed to maintain teachers at ISLA.
6. The School Board will research and evaluate the Q-Comp system of teacher Compensation to determine whether ISLA should apply for participation in such a system by June 1, 2009.

**Intended Results:** ISLA will have benefit/compensation program that rewards and encourages teachers with initiatives in a creative and meaningful way.

7. The School Board will develop and implement an evaluation/compensation system for ISLA staff that rewards performance, professional development, extracurricular involvement (including Board Service), and for teaching efforts above-and-beyond the regular curriculum by 9/1/11 by ISLA's fourth year of operation.

**Comments:** This goal relates to goal #2, but ensures implementation of a system, that may or may not comprise the Q-Comp system.

**Intended Results:** ISLA will have motivated teachers who are eager to invest themselves in ISLA beyond the classroom teaching experience. ISLA teachers will also be encouraged to continually develop their skills as teachers.

8. The School Board will annually review cost-of-living changes, salaries and ranges in wage increases for other teachers and executive directors in other school districts, and other relevant factors to assess and document competitive salaries for ISLA teachers and staff, beginning in ISLA's second year of operation.

**Responsibility:** Personnel Committee of the Board

9. Administration and staff will develop tools and implement a system that continually recognizes ISLA staff and their contributions/accomplishments throughout the year, beginning in ISLA's second year of operation.

**Intended Results:** ISLA will have teachers who feel valued and want  
To stay at ISLA, even if the financial compensation is not the highest they can achieve elsewhere.

**Responsibility:** Executive Director and Administration will need to understand

how the individual ISLA teachers are most comfortable being recognized and tailor recognition throughout the year so that all teachers feel appreciated.

10. The School Board will utilize individual and organizational assessment tools to annually monitor job satisfaction by ISLA teachers/administration, as well as organizational effectiveness and cohesiveness (e.g., see attached docs) by second year of operation.

**Comments:**

It is important that ISLA monitor and ensure that teachers are satisfied with their careers at ISLA. It is also important that there be a way to constructively measure and monitor how well the human resources at the school are working together and effectively. The Committee discussed that there are a variety of assessment tools that could be used, and identified just a few that could likely be done for little expense. Even if this goal costs some money, however, the Committee thought this was a smart investment in ISLA and its staff.

11. By the end of its third year of operation, the School Board will have a teacher-majority.

**Responsibility:**

School Board, Teachers, and Administration

12. During the second year of operation, ISLA teachers and administrative staff will utilize professional development assessment tools to help identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as ways to best work together, and then develop individual 2-year development plans for each teacher.

13. During the term of the strategic plan, in the event that there is a need for new curriculum or a change in current curriculum, ISLA teachers will be given the opportunity to review, assess and give their recommendations to the administration, beginning as soon as possible, but at least as soon as 9/1/08.

14. During the 2008-2009 school year, all members of the School Board will educate themselves about ISO-9000 standards and materials relating to quality education by reading the attached article. The School Board will include this article with its "On-Boarding Packet" for new School Board members.

**Intended Results:**

Educate Board regarding education standards

15. At least one ISLA teacher will be involved in the interview process of any new teacher and give his/her recommendation to the Executive Director and School Board regarding that candidate, as soon as possible, but no later than the second year of ISLA's operation.
16. The Executive Director will visit each classroom at least on a weekly basis for a minimum of 5 minutes/week. The Executive Director will keep a weekly log related to this goal.

**Intended Objectives:** Students recognize Executive Director, increased interaction with students, opportunity to observe classroom interactions

## **VI. School Care Program**

1. During the next five years, ISLA will continue providing an in-school care option for before school and after school; ISLA will also provide an in-school care option for ½ day kindergarten students when not in kindergarten as long as there are at least 3 students wishing to utilize such a program.

**Responsibility:** ISLA Administration and the School Board is responsible for determining how this service could be staffed- either by ISLA employees or through some other third-party contract with someone else.

**Additional Comments:** The Committee recognized that management of a school program was additional work for ISLA, but felt strongly that ISLA needs to figure out a way to provide this service for parents to be competitive in the marketplace. Other schools (albeit with bigger districts) provide these full services, including all-day summer care programs. Given parents' work schedules, it was felt that ISLA would limit its success if it did not meet what is now considered a basic need of working parents.

2. For the next five years, ISLA's school care program will continue to consist of Spanish immersion.
3. Beginning in ISLA's second year of operation and going forward, ISLA's teachers and administration will provide school care program staff with curriculum maps, information, and ongoing newsletters to allow the school care program to develop

complimentary lesson plans and activities for students.

4. The afternoon school care program and the ½ day kindergarten care program will integrate concepts of cultural awareness, imaginative play, physical exercise/movement, and tutoring opportunities into its regular, written lesson plans, which will be submitted to ISLA's Executive Director.
5. Each year, ISLA's School Board and Executive Director will ensure that the school care program will meet the requisite state code requirements of such care.
6. Beginning in the second year of operation, the ISLA School Board will determine parent demand for summer care by February of each school year and will determine the viability of such a summer program for the end of that school year no later than it's March School Board meeting.

**Additional Comments:** The Committee and the Board recognized that Provision of a summer care option for students and their families is an important objective and one that figures into any family's decision to send its students to ISLA. While the school cannot operate a summer program at a financial loss, it is anticipated that opportunities will be explored to provide this service to ISLA families. The Committee also believes that ISLA's interest in facilitating a summer care program is especially important to parents who want their children to continue their Spanish-speaking abilities over the summer months.

## **VII. Marketing and Promotion of ISLA**

1. Each starting ISLA Kindergarten will be comprised of a full complement of 25 students each year.

**Responsibility:** ISLA Administration, Board, and Communications Committee

**Intended Results:** To have class sizes that were not too large from an educational standpoint, but have enough (notwithstanding some attrition) to sustain the class size throughout the K-6 experience from a financial perspective.

2. At the time of each year's lottery date, ISLA will have a kindergarten waiting list of at least 25 students.

**Responsibility:** ISLA Administration, Board, and Communications

**Additional Comments:** If this goal is met, ISLA will have succeeded in branding the school as a top-tier immersion school in the Twin Cities for which there is significant demand by parents and students.

3. ISLA will recruit at least two native speaking, bilingual, or Spanish-immersion program students to matriculate into grades 1-6 over the term of this Strategic Plan.

**Responsibility:** ISLA Administration, Board, and Communications Committee

**Intended Results:** (1) To supplement the current upper classes that have too small of class sizes to financially support their expenses, (2) create greater diversity within the ISLA classrooms, and (3) supplement the current upper classes with students who can succeed in the Spanish-immersion experience while coming into the program late.

**Additional Comments:** To the extent that this goal is fulfilled by attracting native Spanish-speaking students, ISLA recognizes that it will have additional responsibility to make sure that such students are provided necessary ELL services so that those students can graduate from ISLA competent in both English and Spanish (as is intended for all ISLA students).

4. In the second year of operation, the Board will develop a marketing plan to (i) focus on recruitment of students to meet and reflect the demographic makeup of the district, including recruitment in the Hispanic community and Spanish-immersion pre-school populations, and (ii) develop an ongoing community presence and branding of school.

**Responsibility:** ISLA Administration, Board, and Communications Committee

**Intended Results:** To create greater diversity within the ISLA Classrooms, which enhances all students' learning

5. By ISLA's third year of operation, ISLA staff will coordinate and manage the marketing/communication plan for ISLA and will utilize the Communications Committee and ISLA PTO volunteers to execute the plan.

**Responsibility:** ISLA Administration & Board

**Additional Comments:** Currently, this function is being played by parent/teacher volunteers and the Executive Director (as time allows). It is important that the school itself handle this weighty and important function to make sure that messages and school branding are consistent.

6. By March 1, 2009, to assist in recruitment efforts, the Communications Committee will develop a "welcome committee" plan to interact and communicate with families of students who have applied to ISLA.

**Intended Results:** By establishing a welcoming committee who can develop relationships with families early on, before their students attend ISLA, it is anticipated that the actual matriculation rate on the first day of school will be enhanced. In addition, from a PR and development standpoint, this will be a way to build the "ISLA" community as soon as possible from the very beginning, to instill "active parent" concepts, and to allow current ISLA families to be further committed to the school.

## **VIII. Continued Strategic Planning**

The SPC and the Board should accomplish the following:

1. By 12/1/08: The Board should identify additional areas about which time should be spent developing strategic goals.
2. By 1/1/09: The SPC should develop a strategic plan for the time period of 7/1/09-6/30/14 regarding: (i) finance and funding, (ii) growth and expansion of ISLA, (iii) ISLA's relationship with its sponsor and other charter schools, and (iv) any additional areas identified by the Board pursuant to (1) above.
3. By 4/1/09: The SPC should review progress of goals set for school year 2008-2009 and report such progress to the Board.
4. In the same fashion as (3) above, each year by April 1<sup>st</sup>: The SPC should review progress of goals set for that current school year and report such progress to the Board.
5. By 9/1/13: The SPC and Board should commence 5-year strategic planning for 2014- 2019 time frame.

## **IX. Summary of Annual Goals**

See following page.