



ROTTERDAM INTERNATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL (RISS) IS A Remarkable School Indeed!

During 30 years of RISS, starting as a small department within the Wolfert Bilingual School, we have grown to become a symbol of Rotterdam's growth, international importance and multicultural awareness.

We serve the expat community that comes to Rotterdam to work and that is seeking quality education for their children. RISS provides an education that not only addresses these academic needs, but also seeks to instil key values and a wider social commitment, all designed to enhance the learning experience of students in line with the expectations of international education. Our values – courage, respect, responsibility and relationships – are embedded in all we do, and serve to support our overall vision which we have proudly declared to be 'educating for self-awareness, curiosity and integrity in a changing world'. In this way, we fit nicely alongside the wider Wolfert aims of serving a wide range of students with diverse needs, backgrounds and aspirations. With many recent changes, RISS is now a school that is fully discovering its identity

and purpose as a true international school within the Wolfert group, and we are committed to being a high-quality provider of education that is academically successful, value-driven and genuinely internationally-minded. These aspirations were fully ratified by our re-accreditation by CIS and NEASC, two prestigious international accrediting bodies who gave their thumbs up not only to what we do, but also to what we are planning to do. All with the help, support and reassurance of being part of such a prestigious group as Wolfert.

Enjoying Youth

Where many schools seem to concentrate their efforts on what their children and young people will be, perhaps one of our most powerful public declarations has been our desire for all children and young people to enjoy being what they are *now* – children

and young people. Rather than simply seeing school as one long process of working towards external exams, university and beyond, we work to make sure we are living by our stated mission that all our students 'enjoy their youth'. It is in their early teens that young people should have the opportunity to more freely explore the world around them, develop and practise the skills they need to best work with other members of the communities they are part of, develop a sense of mission and service to something bigger than they are and, most importantly, learn about themselves through a wide range of opportunities and challenges. This is done via high-quality teaching, involving students as much as possible and letting them be reflective about their learning and aspirations. This is the new promise we have made to the students who come to RISS and to the families who entrust their children to us each day and it is at the heart of the many

developments that have taken place in the last year or two. There has been a great deal of change as a result of a deep rethinking of what we do and how we do it, and we are proud of the progress we have made in all areas of school life. In particular, we have learned, as a school community, that we can and should come together to generate innovation, change and new opportunities – to create a school we are genuinely proud of. This rediscovery of our capacity to collaborate and lead has become the new hallmark for our school.

An Exceptional Example

Currently, the school has a new timetable that helps us deliver both existing and new subjects, and to do so in a way that balances student learning and well-being. We have a new pastoral care programme that ensures our students are looked after both academically and emotionally. We have new leaders of faculties and departments to

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ensure that our learning is constantly monitored. We are developing a programme of student leadership and action that gives our students more agency in their learning. Our senior campus refurbishment is almost complete, giving our senior years a strong identity that enables them to develop a sense of the new adult they are becoming. Lastly, our renewed energy, focus and drive is captured wonderfully in our new RISS 'look', something that can be seen across the school, both inside and out, and demon-

strated perfectly on our new website. In this way we feel we have genuinely captured the spirit of who we aspire to be: 'an exceptional example of an international school!'

Strong and Meaningful Policy

Perhaps one last mention is for our next major project at school, one that will involve stakeholders from every area of school life – teachers, leaders, parents and students. This is to establish a strong and meaningful Teaching and Learning Policy for RISS, one that will define in detail our definition of learning and how we recognise outstanding practice in school. This policy will lead our core educational business when it comes to providing an education for students coming from different corners of the world. Rather than some off-the-shelf document, this important and exciting work in progress serves to underline the special and unique nature of RISS.

RISS is reinventing itself via the opportunities it is creating for all, via a renewed belief in the capacity of its staff to deliver world-class teaching, via its commitment to childhood and youth as an important period of time, in and of itself, and via its constant seeking out of new scenarios with which to enrich the lives of all of those who wish to engage with us and be part of our community. It is a process that entails bravery, vision, creativity, a willingness to change and a commitment to collaboration. This is something that RISS has embraced fully, and where better for this collaboration to take place than in the wonderful city of Rotterdam? ✎

Ms Gilbert-Sáez, Principal
Rotterdam International Secondary School

