

American Section Strategic Plan 2021
February 7th, 2018

“Ad Excellantiam”
(“Towards Excellence”)

Preface: The American Section’s Strategic Plan 2021 is the result of meetings, discussions and conversations amongst its key stakeholders, all united by the desire to map the course to the continued excellence of the American Section in the coming years.

The process has had its fair share of challenges, not the least of which resulted in the necessary creation of a Bridge Plan in 2016-2018. However, with the committed leadership that fell into place at the *rentrée* of 2016, most of the goals and objectives outlined in this document have been completed or are ongoing.

It is in the same spirit of continuous self-improvement that the current Strategic Plan 2021 is shared with the American Section community of parents, students, Faculty and Staff.

Introduction: A successful strategic plan is a realistic one and is as much a state of mind as it is a plan of action. It not only provides concrete observations and steps to an objective or goal, it also actively builds on institutional strengths. Of course, strategic plans also provide a vital opportunity for reflection on areas for improvement within the institution.

The American Section (Faculty, Staff, parents and students) have never shied away from working together toward a common goal. Nor have we ever shied away from intensive self-analysis. In fact, outside visitors to our school are invariably struck by the sense of community and reflective professionalism that permeates our very core. It should come as no surprise, then, to understand that the proposals in the following pages are the result of such healthy self-reflection.

Identity: The American Section has offered an excellent education based on American pedagogy and best practices since 1952. Within the unique international context offered by the celebrated Lycée International, the American Section has welcomed children of over 50 different nationalities, all united by the ability to speak, read and write American English. Additionally, children in the American Section also come to us ready to embrace the all-American spirit of our instruction, extracurricular activities and teacher-student relationships. Within this context, our students learn to navigate a unique type of world--one in which the value of being bilingual *and* bicultural is paramount.

The American Section Mission Statement makes clear our sense of purpose and service in providing an education that will create lifelong learners, who possess a desire to effect positive change in the world:

“We provide outstanding American educational and cultural experiences within the context of the Lycée International. Fostering intellectual curiosity and self-confidence, we help students reach their full personal and academic potential. We actively prepare students to play dynamic roles in the world by developing their leadership abilities and nurturing a sense of responsibility towards others.”

An American Section education aims to provide:

*academic excellence
top-rated teachers
best practice American-style pedagogy
academic rigor
teaching students to think critically
personal connection between student and teacher
instruction that takes into account the whole child
a desire for each child to thrive amidst a highly challenging academic workload
a culture of tolerance and respect
demonstrating and modeling ethical behavior
essential tools at all levels to guarantee success after graduation
an interest in lifelong learning
an ability to navigate an increasingly complex world*

Conclusion: To summarize, the education and well-being of our students rests at the heart of everything we do. Every decision, pedagogical or otherwise, is student-driven and must meet this one simple criterion: “How does this (initiative) directly benefit our students?”

Reflection: We live in challenging times. For teachers who began their careers 20 or 30 years ago, the rate of innovation and change they’ve experienced is practically incomprehensible to an outsider. We have moved from the age of the blackboard to the SmartBoard—the world, and all the information it holds, is now but a computer keyboard away. At its core, the American Section is committed to continue to evolve with these rapid, continuing changes, all the while adhering to what makes it great. Year after year, the Section has offered its students an excellent American education, enabling them to go out into a world which increasingly values native-level fluency in English, critical thinking skills, can-doism, empathy, open-mindedness, and creativity. The Strategic Plan 2021, therefore, is not only a roadmap to maintaining best practices, it should also serve as a guide to meeting the unforeseen challenges that undoubtedly lie ahead.

With this all in mind, the Co-Directors have recognized five core beliefs or *ethoi* that form the foundation of who we are:

- 1. We hold high expectations for our students and faculty*
- 2. We maintain that key decisions must be student-focused*
- 3. We believe in the need for transparency (pedagogical, budgetary...)*
- 4. We acknowledge that fiscal stability strengthens both school and community*
- 5. We embrace the fact that diversity enhances our community*

In turn, assessment and analysis of these five factors have led us to realize that the outcomes of Strategic Plan 2021 can be approached through four “Goals of Excellence”, which touch on all key areas of an American Section education:

- *Goal of Excellence #1: Academics*
- *Goal of Excellence #2: Teachers and the Administrative Team*
- *Goal of Excellence #3: The Whole Child*
- *Goal of Excellence #4: Resource Management*



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Strategic Plan 2021

Ad Excellentiam

Four “Goals of Excellence”

I. Academics

II. The
Whole Child

III. Teacher &
Administrative
Team

IV. Resource
Management

The student is at the **heart**
of everything we do.

I. Academics

Classroom Remodels: Making Space for the Future

Upgrade In-Class Tech Access

Update and Progress Curriculum Mapping

Expand Extracurricular Offerings to
Include Math and Coding

Explore Student Travel Program with a US Partner
School

The Active Learning Classroom

“Current educational research has demonstrated the importance of active learning methods in improving student engagement and learning. This assessment provided evidence that one approach - redesigning classrooms into ALCs...promotes student engagement.”

Study published in the Journal of Learning Spaces in 2017

by Melissa L. Rands, Minneapolis College of Art and Design and Ann M. Gansemer-Topf, Iowa State University

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1152568.pdf>

- The classroom design creates a community of learners.
- The classroom design helps students work at their optimal level of challenge.
- The classroom design helps students to learn holistically.



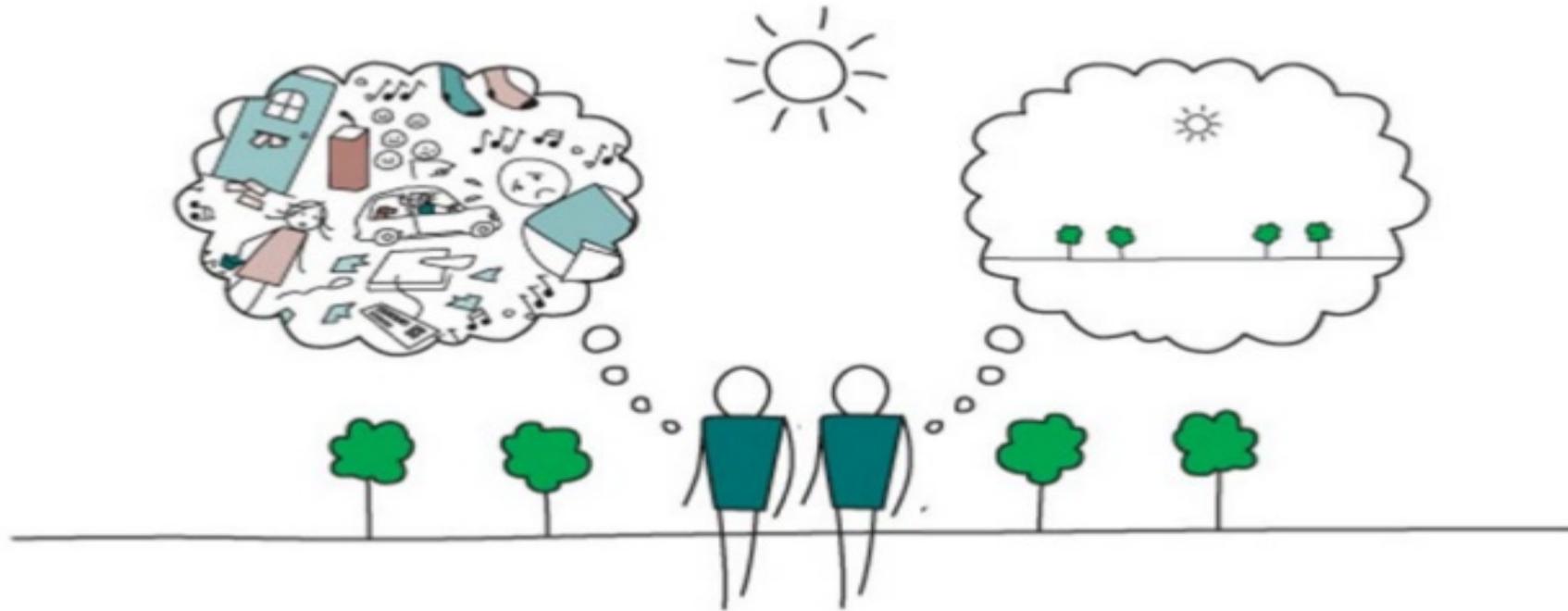
II. The Whole Child

Further Develop a Well-Being Program:
Focus on Mindfulness

Diversify Health and Wellness Education

Expand Division-wide Community Service Program

Establish Meaningful Traditions/Trips at Every Level



Mind Full, or Mindful?

“Mindfulness practices help focus attention and have the potential to enhance both teacher and student well-being. Practice focuses on the development of the whole person – awareness of the mind, body and emotions.”

Albrecht, N. J., Albrecht, P., & Cohen, M. (2012). Mindfully teaching in the classroom: A literature review. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(12), 1-14. <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol37/iss12/1>

Mindfulness in the Classroom

Research investigating how the practice impacts teacher and student well-being also commenced approximately a decade ago. Studies have found that mindfulness lowers stress levels and positively impacts a child's:

- executive functioning;
- focus and attention;
- meta-cognition;
- academic achievement;
- social skills;
- temperament;
- range of knowledge in regards to emotions;
- emotion regulation skills;
- sleep quality and connection with the environment
- self-efficacy, which lead to the ability to stand up to bullies;
- ability to relax;
- level of empathy and compassion;

Ager K., Bucu A., Albrecht N. J., and Cohen M. (2014). Mindfulness in Schools Research Project: Exploring Teachers' and Students' Perspectives. RMIT University, Melbourne.

III. Teacher & Administrative Team

Revise Professional Development Program and Opportunities

Refine New Employee Orientation

Provide More Onsite Tech Training

Incorporate Mindfulness Program for Teachers with Onsite Seminar

IV. Resource Management

Managing and Maintaining an Integrated Database

Expand Marketing and Community Outreach

Create Financial Aid Opportunities for
Economic and Social Diversity

Develop a Volunteer Ambassador Program
for Admission and PR

Economic and Social Diversity

“Diverse classrooms, in which students learn cooperatively alongside those whose perspectives and backgrounds are different from their own, are **beneficial to all students**, including middle-class white students, because they **promote creativity, motivation, deeper learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills**. These skills that students gain from diverse learning environments are in line with what policy-makers say should be among the primary focuses of K–12 education. They are also skills that are highly desired by employers.”

Wells, Fox and Cordova-Cobo. (February 9, 2016). How Racially Diverse Schools and Classrooms Can Benefit All Students. The Century Foundation.

<https://tcf.org/content/report/how-racially-diverse-schools-and-classrooms-can-benefit-all-students/>



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To all who contributed...

thank you!