

CIS PARADIGMS  
2020-2021



CAYMAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL  
CONNECT | INSPIRE | SERVE



Numerous beliefs and values are articulated in an effort to create common understandings and illustrate the culture of teaching and learning that is occurring in our school. The philosophies and approaches herein did not appear overnight; this document is a reflection of conversations that have been occurring at CIS for many years, evolving as we grow, and it is a catalyst for encouraging further dialogue and deliberate action to continuously improve teaching and learning on our campus. Ultimately, it is our aim to foster a rich culture of learning, develop a common language for learning, and reach a high level of clarity and connectivity in all of our efforts toward learning.

As with all things, balance is essential. There are differing perspectives regarding approaches to teaching and education, and this diversity is valuable within certain limits. In regards to a continuum from dictation to autonomy, on one end there are educators who highly value detailed systematic blueprints, and would like to be directed as to the exact programs, lessons, assessments, timings, scripts and daily actions. They want to be told exactly what to do and how to do it. This is not CIS. On the other end, there are educators who highly value autonomy, believing that standards, established curricula, texts, school philosophies and programs are restrictive and constraining; they want to teach unilaterally without the big picture in mind. This is not CIS. As we engage in the process of developing and enhancing our craft at CIS, it is important to know that a balance will be maintained. We are a school that focuses on our mission, vision, guiding principles, philosophies, systems, standards and frameworks to provide continuity in approaches to learning, while also allowing for a great deal of freedom and independence in actions, personal style and individualized approaches to teaching.

Another purpose of CIS Paradigms is to provide direction and transparency. There are several frameworks that CIS utilizes, and we are explicit about our approaches. What are these frameworks? What is being expected of me? How will these practices improve teaching and learning? This document will provide some insights into these questions and will help to establish continuity in ways that are meaningful and have impact on learning. The frameworks provide direction and parameters, but there are always big questions that need to be explored by faculty through professional dialogue. We will engage in collaborative planning, coaching, and other developmental processes throughout the year as we learn and work together to enhance school experiences, grow as professionals and impact student learning.

## Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of 'CIS Paradigms' is to provide educators at CIS with an understanding of the systems and frameworks that guide the continuing development of teaching and learning practices at Cayman International School.

Jim Urquhart  
School Director



CAYMAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL  
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**01**  
**MISSION**

with a  
corresponding vision

**02**  
**SETS OF PRINCIPLES**

- Community
- Learning

**03**  
**TYPES OF LEARNING**

- Conceptual
- Competency
- Character

**04**  
**ECOSYSTEM FRAMES**

- Define
- Design
- Deliver
- Demonstrate

Our mission is to

**CONNECT  
INSPIRE  
SERVE**

# Positive Community Passionate Learners

## Vision

We are a positive school community strengthened by our international diversity. We find common ground in a shared commitment to learning that connects ideas and people, challenges us to grow, and inspires us to better ourselves and our world. We use principles to guide our journey and recognize that preparing for and shaping the future starts with embracing the opportunities that surround us each day.

## Community Principles

• Kindness • Partnership • Sustainability • Good Intent

## Learning Principles

• Language • Ownership • Nature • Context

# Community Principles

## **The Kindness Principle**

We value kindness. Our kindness is illustrated in all of our interactions: with our own children, with others' children, with families, with staff, and with administrators.

How we communicate with each other is emblematic of our collective kind and caring spirit.

## **The Partnership Principle**

We are strongest when we work together, when we share ideas and resources, and when we partner with the greater Cayman community. A spirit of collaboration not only makes our community stronger, it makes student learning richer by connecting stakeholders in exciting and innovative ways.

## **The Sustainability Principle**

We take into consideration long-term impacts when making decisions. This applies to decisions about programming as well as to our personal and collective behavior. We live on an island with limited resources and our environmental stewardship is essential in keeping it viable and healthy for generations to come.

## **The Good Intent Principle**

We trust that members of our community have what is best for students at heart.

When we have disagreements about what is best for children we talk with people, not about people.

# Learning Ecosystem

## What is learning, how does it happen, and what does it look like?

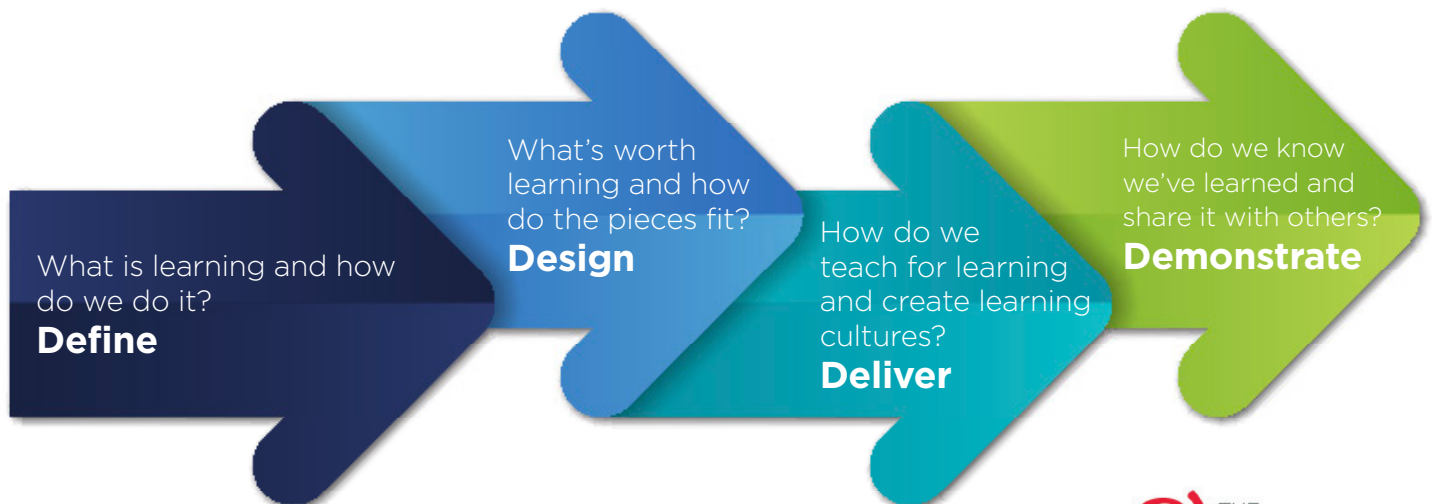
No set of questions is more complex and relevant in driving the work of our school. And while simple answers don't exist, simple frameworks that can guide our inquiry do. To this end, CIS is embracing a concise framework developed by the Common Ground Collaborative to guide our ongoing inquiry into student learning and how we can best foster and grow it.

The framework begins and ends with a clear definition of learning:

**Learning is a process of growing, deepening, and sharing conceptual understanding, competencies, and character in lasting, impactful ways.**

If we are serious about making learning the core of our school, it is essential that we work from a shared definition. **Conceptual understanding** has to do with “big picture” takeaways that stick with students. **Competencies** are both content specific, as well as timeless, transdisciplinary skills. **Character** refers to both values and dispositions towards learning. These are not causes of learning. Nor are they checklists that indicate learning. Rather, these three strands are conceptualized as intrinsic, interwoven, and interdependent features of learning.

**The CIS Learning Ecosystem is one complete, coherent system that organizes all aspects of learning**







# Definition of Learning

## Cayman International School's Definition of Learning

Learning is a process of growing, deepening,  
and sharing conceptual understanding, competencies, and  
character in lasting, impactful ways.



# Learning in Early Childhood through Grade Two



**HEAD**



**HANDS**

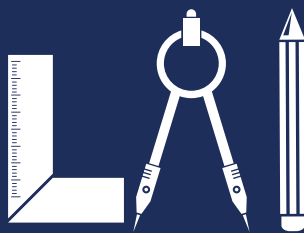


**HEART**

# Learning in GRADE THREE THROUGH FIVE



**KNOW**



**DO**



**BE**

# Learning in GRADE SIX THROUGH TWELVE



**CONCEPTUAL**



**COMPETENCY**



**CHARACTER**

# Conceptual Understanding

Conceptual understandings are grounded in big ideas that matter. Conceptual understanding is durable and sticks. It is not a type of thinking, rather largely a result of specific types of thinking. To ensure we are engaged in conceptual understanding, using the sentence stem “Students understand that...” is our practice. Conceptual Understanding is happening when learners are:

- Connecting new knowledge to prior understanding and to important concepts.
- Constructing theories of how things work and why things are the way they are.
- Testing their evolving theories in different contexts to refine them so they have increased explanatory power and to see when, where and how they apply.

# Competency

Competencies are “bundles” of skills that can be deployed together in complex and meaningful ways. In the context of school, competencies are developed and applied in ways that demonstrate understanding. All disciplines have specific competencies that we focus on in our classes. However, there are core competencies that are applicable in all contexts. At CIS these core competencies are divided into three categories: Thinking, Communication, and Collaboration. Competency learning is happening when students are:

- Deconstructing expert performance and comparing it with their own.
- Identifying the adjustments they need to make.
- Practicing a skill in order to refine it and make it increasingly automatic

# Character

At CIS character learning refers to both values and dispositions. Good character is not a cause of learning. It is not a result of learning. Nor is it something that is supplementary to learning. Rather, it is an integral feature of it. Character learning is happening when students are:

- Considering what particular dispositions and values would ‘look like’ when applied in specific authentic contexts.
- Acting as a result of these considerations.
- Reflecting on the effects of these actions.



# Learning Principles

To ensure our definition of learning is more than words on a page, we have to deeply understand the key concepts implicit in it. The CIS Learning Principles are articulations of the foundational concepts. Their purpose is to guide all of our work and provide clarity in important decision making.

## The Role Of CIS Learning Professionals

As CIS Learning Professionals we support and sustain our CIS Learning Culture through our own work and learning. Learning Principles bring to life our definition of learning and allow it to grow and evolve through our own growth and evolution as teachers.

### Shared Learning Principles

At CIS we share foundational conceptual understandings about learning

<b>Language of Learning</b>	We understand that to make learning happen effectively and collectively we need a shared language that describes what learning is and how we do it.
<b>Ownership of Learning</b>	We understand that we are all able to learn and ultimately responsible for our own learning.
<b>Nature of Learning</b>	We understand that learning is emotional as well as cognitive and is both an individual and social experience.
<b>Contexts of Learning</b>	We understand that learning transfer happens best in rich, relevant contexts.

# Shared Practices

We demonstrate understanding of our principles in the way we work together. Learning professionals at CIS are expected to share certain competencies that align with our principles. Each of these shared practices is broken down in a continua that guides teacher goal setting and coaching.

<h2>Learning Principles</h2>	<h3>Shared Practices</h3> <p>As a result of our shared understandings, we (teachers and students) are able to</p>
<p><b>Language of Learning</b></p> <p>We understand that to make learning happen effectively and collectively we need a shared language that describes what learning is and how we do it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop fluency in the Language of Learning (the three C's)</li> <li>• Use agreed upon strategies to grow, deepen and share the three Cs</li> <li>• Articulate and reflect on learning goals making specific use of the three Cs, and talk about future learning in the language of the 3Cs. Model the same in our own professional learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ownership of Learning</b></p> <p>We understand that we are all able to learn and ultimately responsible for our own learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set learning goals and pursue plans at the optimal level of challenge based on the 3cs and prior learning</li> <li>• Prioritize student/teacher voice and choice in multiple contexts</li> <li>• Use metacognition as a common learning strategy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nature of Learning</b></p> <p>We understand that learning is emotional as well as cognitive and is both an individual and social experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish meaningful relationships making the best use of diverse interests, skills, and passions</li> <li>• Create safe, caring and appreciative learning environments, attending to emotional and cognitive needs</li> <li>• Use collaborative practices and engage multiple perspectives to deepen understanding</li> <li>• Effectively use differentiated practices to enhance learning</li> </ul>
<p><b>Contexts of Learning</b></p> <p>We understand that learning transfer happens best in rich, relevant contexts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design learning that has a clear purpose, explores important questions, is connected to larger ideas, and/or develops an understanding of how concepts fit together</li> <li>• Deliver authentic learning opportunities that extend outside the traditional classroom and traditional subjects, including transdisciplinary learning, service learning, and place-based learning</li> <li>• Ensure students demonstrate learning as defined by the 3Cs</li> </ul>

A blue-tinted photograph of a seascape. The top half shows a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. A thin, dark horizon line separates the sky from the water. The water is a deep, clear blue. In the bottom third of the image, there is a rocky, textured foreground, possibly a reef or a rocky shore, with various shades of blue and green. The overall mood is serene and expansive.

## Toolkit

We use the following pedagogies, programs and practices at CIS to help bring our Learning Principles and Shared Practices to life in a cohesive, aligned way. These tools inform unit Design, teacher Delivery, and student Demonstration of learning. While this toolkit continuously evolves, it constantly relates to our practices as measured against student learning impact.

## Project Based Learning (PBL)

PBL experiences are designed to be rich, relevant, and lifeworthy. They are driven by inquiry and challenge students to answer important questions that are often interdisciplinary in nature. Teachers at CIS engage in professional learning to enhance the PBL process, and teams collaborate to design and develop PBL experiences for their students. CIS students demonstrate their learning and focus on answering the driving question for the project.

- Project Based Learning (PBL) - Buck Institute for Education
- CIS PBL Guidance
- PBL@CIS PBL Project Library

## Guided Inquiry

Guided Inquiry is a teacher-guided inquiry cycle that is purposefully structured to help students develop and test their own theories about disciplinary big ideas. Guided Inquiry is designed to lead to conceptual understanding via a thoughtful sequence of practical classroom strategies that support both the development of understanding and a culture of inquiry. The cycle leads to assessments that allow students to demonstrate their understanding, in context when possible.

Guided Inquiry includes the following broad stages:

- Tapping into current understanding
- Exploring the evidence
- Constructing theories
- Testing theories
- Demonstrating understanding
- Reflecting and acting
- CGC Guided Inquiry Strategy Toolkit
- Intro to Guided Inquiry Workbook (Manchester, October 2017)
- Guided Inquiry Continuum

## Visible Thinking Routines

Visible Thinking Routines are simple structures, such as a set of questions or a short sequence of steps, that can be used across grade levels and disciplines to make student thinking visible. They become routines, rather than strategies, when they are used over and over again so that they become part of the fabric of classroom culture. The routines become the ways in which students go about learning. They work to promote the development of thinking within the culture of a classroom because each one:

- Is goal oriented in that it targets specific types of thinking
- Gets used over and over again in the classroom
- Consists of only a few steps
- Is easy to learn and teach
- Is easy to support when students are engaged in the routine
- Can be used across a variety of context
- Can be used by the group or by the individual.
- Project Zero Thinking Routines

## High Scope

HighScope's educational approach emphasizes "active participatory learning." Active learning means students have direct, hands-on experiences with people, objects, events, and ideas. Children's interests and choices are at the heart of HighScope programs. They construct their own knowledge through interactions with the world and the people around them. Children take the first step in the learning process by making choices and following through on their plans and decisions. Teachers, caregivers, and parents offer physical, emotional, and intellectual support. In active learning settings, adults expand children's thinking with diverse materials and nurturing interactions. Through scaffolding, adults help children gain knowledge and develop creative problem-solving skills. The HighScope Preschool Curriculum is a play-based approach, and learning is guided by 58 Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs) that meet all US state standards. Each KDI is linked to one of the eight areas of learning. Furthermore, each developmental indicator has a statement that

identifies an observable child behavior reflecting knowledge and skills in one of the eight areas of learning (Approaches to learning; Social and emotional development; Physical development and health; Language, literacy, and communication; Mathematics; Creative arts; Science and technology; and Social studies)

- High Scope (Early Childhood)

## Goal-setting & Student Learning Portfolios

A key challenge of classroom practice is how we maintain children's belief in the promise of their own efforts. We manage this challenge by thoughtfully applying the principles of assessment for learning, keeping in mind that the very purpose of assessment is to help children grow. Our CGC Framework for Learning prompts all learners in our school (adults as well as children) to focus holistically on where we are in our learning, where we are headed, and how we can work to close the gap.

Portfolios of Learning are essential tools for formative assessment, allowing us to:

- Collect balanced samples of student learning
- Capture growth toward goals in one physical and/or online space
- Help children build knowledge about themselves as learners
- Develop students' ability to reflect critically on their own learning
- Facilitate conversations about next steps and the setting of goals.

When students document their growth, they have important opportunities to revisit their learning, assessing what worked and what they could do differently in future. This kind of thoughtful review reinforces what has been learned, and also scaffolds the capacity to continue learning. For this reason, portfolios are not just collections of learning products; importantly, they document and enrich the process of learning, helping our students to see, understand, and feel in control of their capabilities as they evolve.

Links to resources for student reflections and examples of portfolios

- Jen Beagle example
- Gr 2 example
- Leanne reflection examples

## Standards Based Reporting (SBR)

A standards-based reporting system is designed to inform children and their parents about progress towards specific learning standards. Our learning standards establish high and challenging expectations for all students. They describe what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each year, and serve as the basis for Cayman International School's curriculum, instruction and assessment model. The mastery report card and reporting system have been changed to provide more information to parents about student progress towards grade-level standards.

- [Link to updated ES Parent Guide](#)

## Positive Discipline

Positive Discipline is a program designed to teach young people to become responsible, respectful and resourceful members of their communities. The tools and concepts of Positive Discipline include:

- Mutual respect. Adults model firmness by respecting themselves and the needs of the situation, and kindness by respecting the needs of the child.
- Identifying the belief behind the behavior. Effective discipline recognizes the reasons kids do what they do and works to change those beliefs, rather than merely attempting to change behavior.
- Effective communication and problem solving skills.
- Discipline that teaches (and is neither permissive nor punitive).
- Focusing on solutions instead of punishment.



- Encouragement (instead of praise). Encouragement notices effort and improvement, not just success, and builds long-term self-esteem and empowerment.
- Positive Discipline - What is Positive Discipline?

## Writers Workshop

CIS utilizes this approach, popularized by Lucy Calkins and others involved in the Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University in New York, as a method of writing instruction to coach students to write for a variety of audiences and purposes. This method of teaching focuses on the goal of fostering lifelong writers, and it is based upon four principles: students will write about their own lives, they will use a consistent writing process, they will work in authentic ways, and they will develop independence as writers.

- Writers Workshop - Teachers College, Columbia University, Reading and Writing Project

## Full Option Science System (FOSS)

FOSS is a curricular tool used in kindergarten through grade five that guides and develops active learning for students in science. It is used in at least one science unit per grade level and provides the tools and strategies to engage students with experiences that lead to a deeper understanding of the world.

- Full Option Science System (FOSS) - What is FOSS

## Everyday Math (EDM)

EDM is a rigorous curriculum tool used successfully by over three million students. CIS has been utilizing EDM in the Elementary School for the last 10 years, and we are currently using the Common Core edition. This mathematics curricular approach has two unique qualities: the math lessons 'spiral' and it uses games to help teach concepts.

- Everyday Math - EDM Resource and Information Center, The University of Chicago School Math Project

## Guided Reading & Book Clubs

Cayman International School uses a balanced literacy framework for the English Language Arts program in the Elementary School. Teachers use the Common Core Standards, associated tools, and the CIS Vision for Teaching & Learning to inform planning. An important component of a balanced literacy program is guided reading. "Guided reading is small-group reading instruction designed to provide differentiated teaching that supports students in developing reading proficiency. The teacher uses a tightly structured framework that allows for the incorporation of several research-based approaches into a coordinated whole. For the student, the guided reading lesson means reading and talking (and sometimes writing) about an interesting and engaging variety of fiction and nonfiction texts. For the teacher, guided reading means taking the opportunity for careful text selection and intentional and intensive teaching of systems of strategic activity for proficient reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). After systematic assessment to determine their strengths and needs, students are grouped for efficient reading instruction. While individuals always vary, the students in the group are alike enough that they can be effectively taught in a group. Texts are selected from a collection arranged along a gradient of difficulty. The teacher selects a text that students will be able to process successfully with instruction." Research Base for Guided Reading as an Instructional Approach

## Balanced Literacy

Cayman International School uses a balanced literacy framework for the English Language Arts program in the Elementary School. The components of a 'balanced literacy' approach for reading and writing has four components where there modeling, teachers and students share and guide and then there is independent learning.

# Systems for Designing and Documenting Learning

## CIS Design for Learning

The CIS Design for Learning is a planning process intended to ensure that learning units are meaningful, connected and coherent, with important conceptual, competency and character learning mapped out in balance across the four Ds. It allows teachers to thoughtfully articulate:



Conceptual Learning

- the purposes for learning;
- what is being learning;
- the essential learning experiences; and
- critical assessment tasks

So that our principles and shared practices foster and illuminate student growth in rich and relevant contexts, through pathways of thoughtful questions, and by means of illustrative



CORNERSTONE TASKS

**The Design for Learning is brought to life by the CIS Unit Planner and further clarified by our CIS Learning Glossary.**



# Secondary School Curricular Expectations

The secondary school has three levels of curricular documentation.



Unit Planners for core content subject areas in secondary (grades 6-12) are being developed. These planners reflect the CIS Design for Learning and provide the targeted standards, concepts, competencies, and character at each grade level for every unit in every core subject area. This Unit Planner is a mandatory document to use when planning and articulating units of instruction. Rubicon Atlas is a web based curricular mapping program that corresponds directly to our Unit Planner. Maintaining Atlas Rubicon as an accurate reflection of our curriculum is a requirement at CIS.



Google Classroom is a requirement for secondary teachers at CIS. The first purpose of your Google Classroom for each class is to supplement the unit planners and provide course information. All content in Google Classrooms is saved in CIS team drives.



Planbook.com is a tool that secondary teachers can use to formalize daily lesson plans. An account is provided and teachers can use this electronic format to organize lesson plans as needed for each subject and/or class. All teachers must have daily lesson plans that can be made available to the Cayman Islands Ministry of Education.



# CAYMAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

## Elementary School Curricular Expectations

### **Curriculum Documentation**

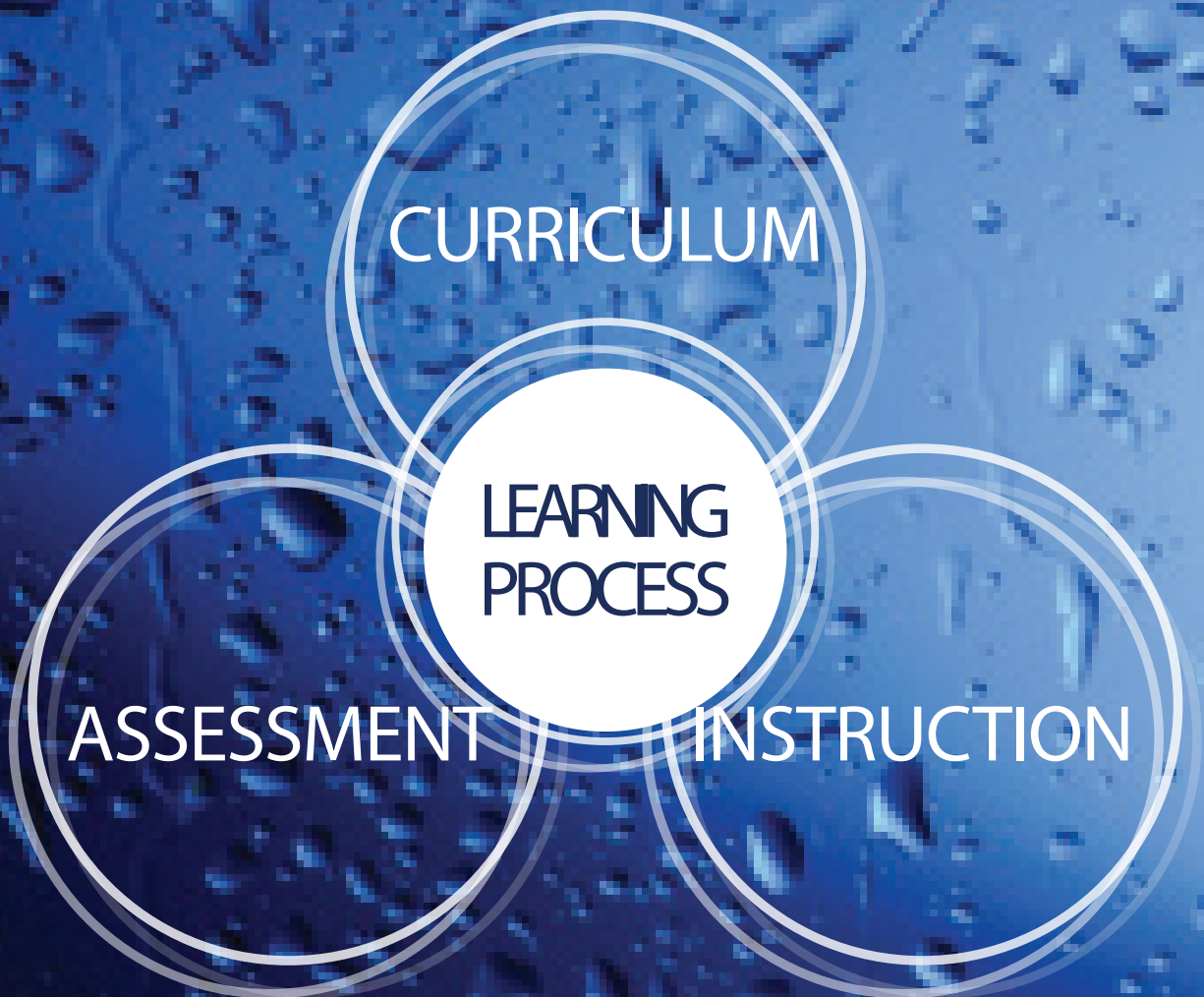
Rubicon Atlas is a web based curricular mapping program that is a requirement at CIS. Each elementary team is required to complete a scope and sequence for each subject area. Next, teams work together to review and develop the units within each subject area. All three stages of learning on the Atlas curricular maps are to be completed and developed in a collaborative effort.

### **Instruction Documentation**

Planbook.com is the tool that elementary teachers are required to use to formalize daily lesson plans. An account will be provided and you can use this electronic format to organize your plans as needed for each subject and/or class. These plans will need to be turned into the Cayman Islands Ministry of Education.

### **Assessment Documentation**

Standards-based reporting focuses on the most important skills throughout a year that are assessed formally (tests and quizzes) and informally (observations, anecdotal notes, quick checks). Progress in those skills is then recorded on the report card through the JumpRope platform. The standards-based model promotes a growth mindset and communicates growth in specific Conceptual understandings (standards and skills). The elementary school report card also includes information regarding a student's character and competency learning.



The background of the page is a deep blue underwater scene. Numerous bubbles of various sizes are rising from the bottom towards the top, creating a sense of movement and depth. The lighting is soft, highlighting the individual bubbles against the darker water.

## Approaches to Assessment and Reporting

### Core Assessment Beliefs

Cayman International School recognizes that assessment plays an integral role in a meaningful teaching and learning process. We believe that the overall goal of assessment is to ensure the success and continual growth of our students. We are guided by the following beliefs about assessment:



## **Assessment should be meaningful, measurable, and relevant**

In order for assessment to be highly effective, methods must be based upon clear and concise goals that are shared with students and parents from the beginning. These goals must be meaningful, measurable, relevant, and made up of internationally comparable components.

## **Assessment should be aligned with curriculum and instruction**

A learning environment is composed of three areas: curriculum, instruction and assessment.

The curriculum is the content offered and “what” is taught. The instruction includes lesson attributes, designs and strategies employed by the teacher to help students learn the curriculum. It is the “how.” Assessment is the process of documenting in measurable terms, knowledge and skills. It is “to what extent” each concept is learned. When these three areas, curriculum, instruction and assessment are aligned and tied together there is evidence of quality student performance.

## **Assessment should be student-centered**

Assessments should celebrate the milestones that occur in student learning in order to acknowledge the progress that a student has made. Assessment should demonstrate a value for where a student is in their learning and not only tell what a student knows but be used to guide instruction and enable the setting of clear personalized goals. Clearly set or layered (tiered) assessment objectives should be shared with students from the outset. When possible, students need to be involved in the process and have opportunities to self assess and set their own goals. Additionally, it is essential that parents are involved in this process.

## **Assessment should be manageable**

Assessment is timely, continuous, and manageable. Assessments should complement and inform instruction and allow time for follow-up with students, either one-on-one, or in small groups. This will facilitate a teacher and student partnership of common goals. Opportunities should be provided that allow for time to explore

misconceptions and to ask deep and meaningful questions that promote higher-level thinking.

## **Assessment should be varied**

Assessment will be varied in order to assess learning and understanding while catering to different learning styles. It should present opportunities for students to demonstrate the application of concepts that have been taught. Both formative and summative assessments play an integral role in the teaching and learning cycle. Multiple assessments using many methods provide opportunities for students and teachers to see growth and improvement, as well as provide useful feedback on an ongoing basis.

# **Early Childhood Assessment and Reporting Practices**

## **Assessment**

In the early childhood program, CIS uses COR (Child Observation Record) Advantage, a child observation-based assessment instrument for our students in nursery through kindergarten. It is designed to measure children’s progress in all early childhood programs. The educational content of HighScope preschool programs is built around 58 key developmental indicators (KDIs). The KDIs are early childhood milestones that guide teachers as they plan and assess learning experiences and interact with children to support learning. Teachers collect anecdotes for each KDI and document the COR during the normal daily routine, so the assessment process is seamlessly integrated with early childhood teaching and planning.

## **Reporting**

COR Advantage provides a detailed report that analyzes a student’s progress. The report is designed for parents and teachers to use during conferencing when discussing growth and next steps for learning.

# Elementary Assessment and Reporting Practices

## Assessment

In the Elementary School, assessment is continuous, varied and standards-based. We use a suite of common formative and diagnostic assessments to take each learner's "temperature" at key points in the school year, ensuring that appropriate next steps for learning can be personalized.

In addition, frequent and regular classroom assessment ensures that students' progress toward end-of-grade level standards is accurately monitored so that instruction can be adjusted as necessary. Teachers regularly observe and speak with students to assess their understandings and competencies, keeping records on these that include checklists, anecdotal notes and annotated portfolio exemplars of work. Formative assessment identifies students' learning needs, while culminating assessment tasks capture their growth at particular points subsequent to instruction.

## Standards-Based Reporting

A standards-based reporting system is designed to inform children and their parents about progress towards specific learning standards. Our learning standards establish high and challenging expectations for all students and are organized to develop core disciplinary concepts and competencies at each grade level. They describe what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each year, and serve as the basis for Cayman International School's curriculum, instruction and assessment model.

# Secondary Assessment and Reporting Practices

## Internal Assessment

In the secondary, formative and summative assessments are an integral part of instruction. Assessment tools are integrated with instruction and include but are not limited to:

- Rubrics
- End of the unit tests
- Quarterly skill summaries related to Specialists
- Reading/Writing Continuums



## External Exams

These examinations are marked by an authority outside of Cayman International School.

Some examples include but are not limited to:

- International Baccalaureate (IB) external exams and essays
- Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)
- Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT)
- Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)
- Other standardized test

## Home/School Communication

Informal Communication is used by all teachers through weekly electronic communication.

Additional types of informal communications that may be used include, but are not limited to:

- Website
- Emails
- Phone calls
- Impromptu meetings
- Class motivational programs
- Individualized behavioral programs
- Weekly agendas

## Formal Reporting

### Report Cards

Formal reports of student achievement are sent home at the conclusion of each quarter. The report contains the child's grade in each subject, as well information about academic progress.

Personalized narratives will be included with the child's report card once per semester.

### Progress Reports

Progress reports may be sent home at any time during the school year when a teacher feels it necessary to communicate formally with parents. Initially, all parents receive a report of student progress in the middle of the first quarter.

### PlusPortals and Google Classroom

This is the main communication tool used in the secondary school. These sites inform students and parents about current assignments in each class and gives access to class documents such as course outlines, project rubrics, and study guides. Parents also have access to student's grades. In addition, the ParentPortal site provides an opportunity for parents, students, and teachers to communicate through email.



# Systemic Approach to Professional Learning

The approach to professional learning at CIS has been developed as a coherent, connected alternative to fragmented, ineffective approaches to 'professional development' and 'teacher evaluation'. It suggests that these systems are generally shaped by the wrong metaphor: 'school as factory', with teachers as workers and leaders as supervisors. Our system proposes an alternative metaphor: 'school as ecosystem', a living learning culture in which individuals and groups own their own learning.

As the system progresses it proposes developing shared practices for teachers shaped by the key elements in the school Learning Culture; suggests collective goal-setting for observable learning impact; re-affirms that 'professional development' without follow-up practicing and coaching is a waste of time; recognizes the power of feedback in supporting professional learning; recognizes the need for professional reflection on our experiences if we are to learn. This last point is the most critical: if we wish to increase our impact on student learning, we must learn how to do that, so that our systems draw from the rich research and our experience of how people learn, not the bankrupt stock of failed evaluation systems. The Professional Learning System at CIS supports teachers and teams in positively impacting student learning and enhancing teacher efficacy. The core of the system is drawn from the CIS Strategic Plan, it is organized to be highly collaborative, and it is designed to guide teachers in their reflection practices and pursuits of professional learning.

## **One: Build a Learning Culture**

As Peter Drucker observed, when it comes to organizational success, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." Before engaging in any strategies for improving learning through improving teaching, it is vital to co-create a learning culture in the school. At the very least, this includes a set of shared beliefs in the form of Learning Principles, and a common learning language, in the form of a shared learning definition.

## **Two: Defining the Role of Learning Professionals**

There is no point in developing shared Learning Principles and a shared learning definition unless they form the driving design elements in Shared Practices for teachers. CIS utilizes a set of Continua that advise teachers in their reflection regarding Shared Practices with the aim of guiding development and growth in these key areas.



### **Three: Defining the Role of School Leaders**

Similarly, it is essential that the Leadership Team be guided by shared practices framed by the school's deeply held principles. When school leaders are pedagogical leaders (that is, when they focus most of their efforts on the core business of teaching and learning), they have a greater impact on student outcomes. Leaders support learning across the school by helping to integrate educational knowledge into practice, working alongside teachers to solve the complex problems of teaching and learning, and building relational trust so that a strong community of learning can develop and continuously improve. At CIS, school leaders are challenged to function as leaders of learning, guiding, supporting and working with teachers to align practice with principles in every classroom, every day. Leading by Principle provides guidelines for servant leadership and supporting all learners in the Ecosystem.

### **Four: Collective Impact Goals**

The practice of individual teacher goal-setting, virtually by definition, cannot have a major learning impact on all students in a school. The efforts are too dissipated, and, with few exceptions, individual teacher goals are not written as impact goals (i.e. goals that describe observable improvements in what students understand, are able to do, demonstrate in terms of character development). It is against impact that we need to gather evidence, not against "having done something". The collective goal(s) is/are drawn from the teachers' Shared Practices and are therefore shaped by school-wide agreements on Learning Principles and definitions. The diversity and creativity of individual teachers comes in the form of the strategies each teacher or team employs to achieve the collective goal. Individual teacher goals are supplemental to the approach of leveraging collective impact goals.

## **Five: Team Collaboration**

The extent to which teachers grow as learning professionals is significantly impacted by the quality of their collaborative environment. Engaging in structured collaborative systems that emphasize collective efforts on learning impacts results in higher levels of teacher efficacy. CIS collaborative systems are developed to focus on student learning and enhance teacher development.

## **Six: Purposeful Professional Development**

Huge amounts of resources are expended on 'PD' with little evidence of any substantive learning impact as a result. This can be for a number of reasons, including the fact that evidence of learning impact is rarely sought following PD, the fact that coaching and practicing is rarely engaged in following PD 'episodes' and the fact that the PD itself is often on scattered topics as opposed to the few key practices that make up the Teachers' Shared Practices. The CIS system provides an alternative set of protocols for requesting and receiving PD, framed by the school's Learning Principles and definitions.

## **Seven: Focused Coaching**

We know from research and experience that PD input without sustained practice and coaching has virtually no learning impact, so we invest considerable energy in coaching. Too often though, coaches are expected to assist teachers in a wide range of practices that may have little learning impact and that are beyond the coach's particular expertise. The CIS system aligns coaching to the Continua associated to the teachers' Shared Practices and teachers' professional learning goals, and every teacher has access to a coach to guide them in their development. Coaching is a vital practice for professionals at all levels of experience as educators believe in continuous improvement and life-long learning. At CIS, coaching is not remedial or prescriptive; the dialogue and relationship between the teacher and the coach is meant to be professional yet casual, guided yet individualized, and is always with a positive,

constructive approach. Each teacher is assisted by a coach who is a member of the CIS Leadership Team.

## **Eight: Professional Feedback**

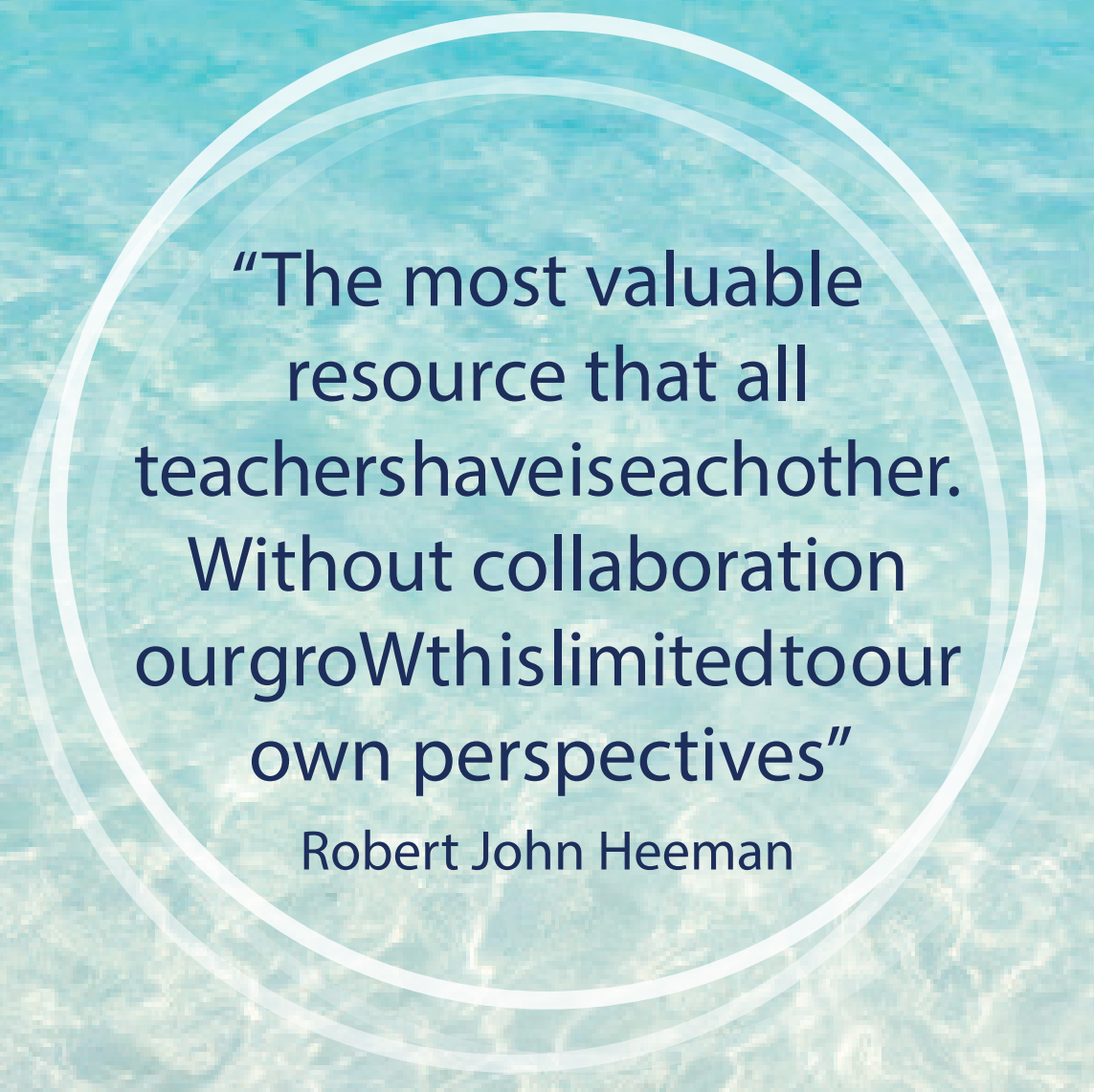
We know that feedback is an extremely powerful learning tool for children and adults. The CIS system focuses feedback upon the Shared Practices, and teachers' professional learning goals. We de-emphasize formal teacher observation and we increase professional conversations around evidence of student progress.

## **Nine: Professional Reflection**

We learn from our experiences. Arguably, we really learn from reflecting on our experiences. We also learn from well-constructed, descriptive professional feedback. This system proposes simple, practical reflection protocols to support teachers and leaders in gaining the most useful, applicable insights from their reflections.

## **Ten: Summary**

A key aim of the CIS philosophy of professional learning is to provide contextual job embedded growth that has direct impact on student learning. This implies a greater emphasis on team inquiry, coaching and reflection at the classroom level; supported by consultants and external experiences where appropriate. With a coaching framework and a collaborative approach, teachers are supported with their individualized learning and growth as professionals. The Professional Learning System at CIS is not designed as an evaluative tool to hone in on the deficiencies of individual teachers. It is not supervisory in nature; instead, the philosophy is to leverage the collective energy of collaboration and teachers' growth as professionals to impact student learning.



**“The most valuable  
resource that all  
teachers have is each other.  
Without collaboration  
our growth is limited to our  
own perspectives”**

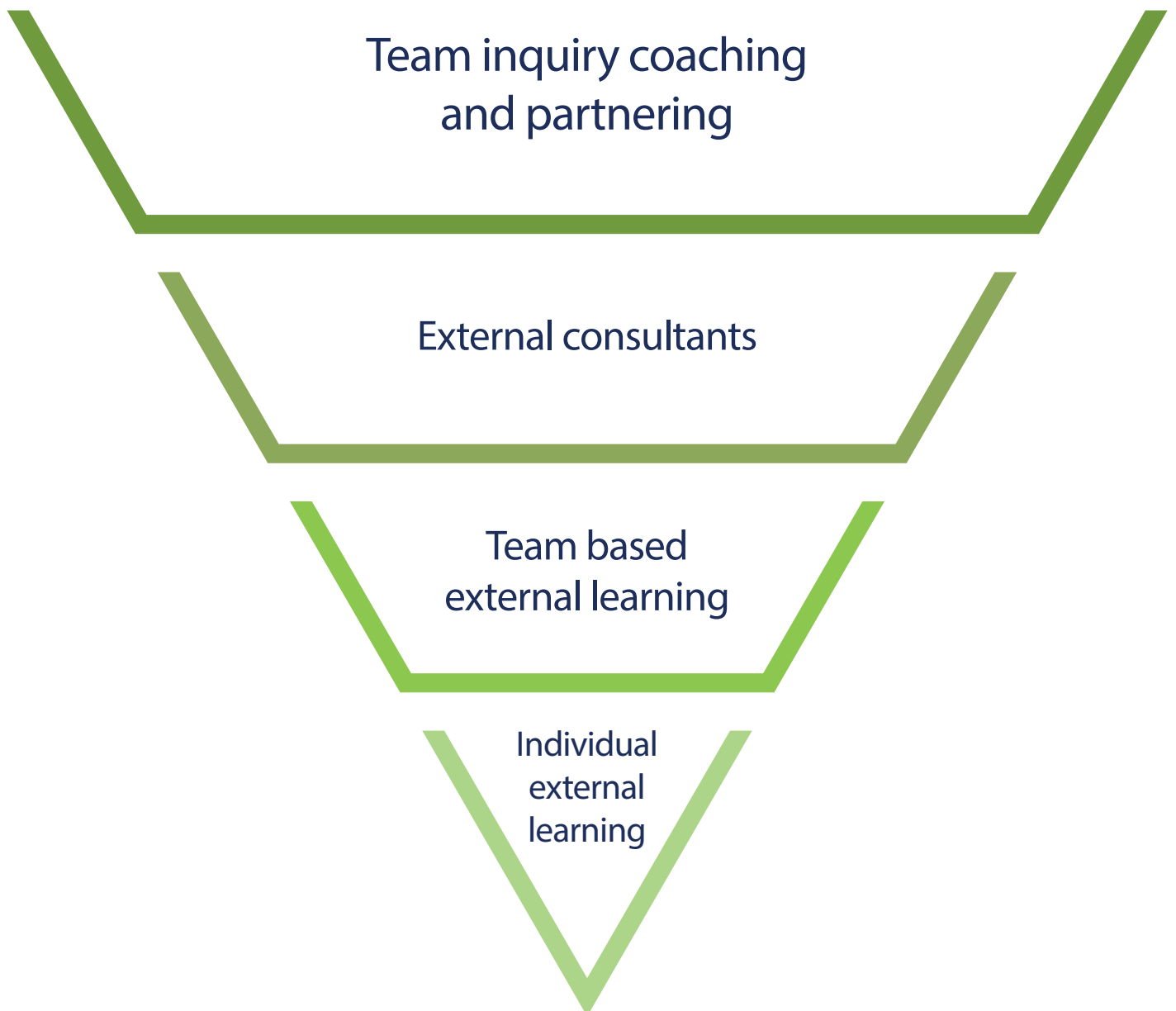
**Robert John Heeman**





# MODEL FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

## ALIGNMENT TO MISSION, VISION AND PRINCIPLES



# Professional Learning Structures

We know that time is critically valuable and is a coveted asset for all of us at CIS. There simply is not enough of it, and we want to accomplish everything. And while we cannot create more time, we can continue to analyze the manner in which we utilize and schedule time so that we can maximize it. Meetings that facilitate meaningful collaboration and professional dialogue are invaluable, and it is incumbent upon all CIS faculty to contribute in positive ways to make meetings purposeful.

CIS provides structured time for various groups to meet and collaborate. These meetings take precedence over other activities and usually occur during the normal teacher school day.

## **Quarterly Conclaves**

All staff and faculty of CIS meet together four times each year (once per quarter) to hear about school updates, celebrate and talk about teaching and learning.

## **Faculty Meetings**

Faculty from each school division (EC, Elementary, Secondary) meet for professional development, collaboration, working on initiatives and sharing insights.

## **School Improvement Meetings**

The entire staff will collaborate at designated times to develop a school-wide vision for service and sustainability to meet the goals of our strategic plan.

# Elementary School Collaborative Structures

In an effort to ensure that our work has the greatest possible impact on our students' conceptual, competency and character learning, we engage in professional planning and growth together. Collaborative time is built into our schedule to provide a protected space to talk about practice, examine evidence of learning and make future plans for growth in a structured and purposeful way. The focus of this time is on improving learning - understanding that student and teacher learning are inseparable.

## Weekly Common Planning Time

One common planning time (approximately 30 minutes) is scheduled during the school day for each grade level team when students are attending specials classes. The purpose of this time is for grade-level teachers to plan weekly lessons and/or discuss grade-level or whole-school issues and activities. Agendas are set by classroom teachers to plan for everyday practice, grade-level issues, or whole-school events.

"ES Common Planning and Collaborative Times 2018-2019"

## Weekly Collaborative Time

An additional, longer collaborative time (approximately 90 minutes) is scheduled between 2:30 - 4:00 for K - 2 grade level teams (assigned on either Monday, Wednesday or Thursday) and during the school day for 3 - 5 grade level teams when students are attending back to back specials classes.

One hour of the session will be devoted to Professional Learning Community (PLC) work facilitated by the instructional coach. The additional 30 minutes will be scheduled for collaborative planning with specialists (i.e. Curriculum Coordinator, Technology Integrator, Librarian, Enrichment Teacher) and/or reflective work.

During these meetings, participating teachers plan for shared learning experiences and assessments, and set collective learning goals for students. Planning responds directly to student needs and practices set forth in paradigms and may include projects, inquiries and other core learning experiences taking place across the grade level. Collaborative meetings are a time to support each other professionally as we work to ensure deep, rich and relevant learning across the school.

"ES Common Planning and Collaborative Times 2018-2019"

## Half-Day Release Time

Grade-level teams take part in one half day release session per quarter (as can be scheduled) to focus on instructional planning and growth. Half-day release times respond to grade-level needs, and may lead to work on project-based learning, common standards-based assessment, writers' workshop and/or other high-priority elements of teaching and learning. Working together to design effective learning experiences, norm assessments and reflect on student growth also gives us an opportunity for shared professional growth as we build on our understanding and proficiency in the CIS Learning Ecosystem. Half-day release sessions are facilitated by the Instructional Coach and the Curriculum Coordinator to ensure a cohesive approach to whole-school planning and a well-articulated, fully-documented curriculum.

[LINK TO SCHEDULE](#)

## ES Specialist Integration

Specialist teachers (Art, Library, Music, PE, Spanish, Technology) enrich projects with skills, habits or knowledge from their disciplines. The Instructional Coach and Curriculum Coordinator meet regularly with specialist teachers to facilitate interdisciplinary work and communication between teams. Specialists then connect learning in their classrooms to important grade-level conceptual, competency, and character learning. These co-curricular links are recorded in Atlas Rubicon for sharing between teachers.

## ES Student Support Team Meetings

Student support meetings between individual teachers and a member of the student support team provide an opportunity for teachers to re-visit students currently receiving services. These times will be scheduled at regular intervals by the members of the student support team in collaboration with individual teachers.

Teachers are scheduled to meet as needed with the student support team to discuss students who demonstrate social, emotional, or academic challenges. The purpose of these meetings is to develop interventions and strategies for success (plan of action). Teachers will be asked to complete a referral form prior to the meeting to ensure these discussions are productive and well structured.

If possible, prior to a student support team meeting, the reading specialist, learning support teacher, enrichment teacher and/or counselor will respond to teacher concerns by providing instructional strategies and conducting classroom observations



## Secondary School Collaborative Structures

In an effort to continue building shared principles and common language that drive learning, regular collaborative times have been created for both grade-level and content area teams. Each Wednesday, the last two hours of the day in the secondary school is designated as CIS-Time. CIS-Time will be used for many student-centered activities, but collaborative team meetings for teachers are central to its purpose. The agendas and purpose of these meetings will focus teaching practice and student work in ways that help teachers develop a shared understanding, language and practice around learning.

Collaboration time in content area teams will focus on developing a clear, concise, viable, and rich vertical articulation for courses in grade 6 to 12. This will occur through reviewing and discussing the content in each course with a particular focus on aligning conceptual understanding goals, competency, and character. The focus of this articulation will center on the Design for Learning and the CIS Unit Planner. A corollary goal of content area teams is to review and evaluate assessment practices, determine effectiveness, and to use results to guide instructional practices. Teachers will use a guided-inquiry process to evaluate the objectives, purpose, and evidence of student learning for each assessment. This process ensures that assessment practices support student conceptual understandings, demonstrate competencies, and build character. Facilitation responsibilities of these meetings rotates among its members.

Secondary grade level teams will meet on Wednesdays to discuss teaching and learning. Using the principles, shared practices, continuums, and professional goal setting protocols, the purpose of grade level collaborative meetings is growing our capacity as learning professionals. The starting place will be goal setting--both as teams and individuals. Goals will be crafted with specific learning impact in mind and aligned explicitly to our shared principles and practices. From there, we will work on growing our competencies by analyzing, discussing, practicing methods and ideas from our CIS Teaching Toolbox. This Toolbox contains the practices and program adopted by CIS that are aligned to our principles and practices.”

### **Faculty Release Days**

Teams of teachers may engage in a release day (or partial release day) to focus on specific instructional planning and growth. We use an inquiry framework to identify and respond to content area or grade-level needs, which may lead to work on design, delivery and assessment of student learning, interdisciplinary projects, curriculum articulation, and other high-priority elements of teaching and learning. Working together to design effective learning experiences,

moderate assessment, and reflect on student growth provide opportunities for shared professional growth. Release days are facilitated by the Instructional Coach and the Curriculum Coordinator to ensure a cohesive approach to whole-school planning and a well-articulated, fully-documented curriculum.

### **Learning Support Meetings**

Learning support meetings provide an opportunity for teachers to meet and re-visit students currently receiving services via an IEP or provide an opportunity for teachers to discuss students who demonstrate social, emotional, or academic concerns. Teachers will meet with the learning specialist and/or middle or high school counselor to discuss interventions and strategies for success. Prior to the learning support meeting, the learning specialist and/or counselor will respond to teacher concerns by providing instructional strategies and conducting classroom observations. Once a student has been identified as having a difficulty, teachers will meet during the learning support meetings to determine a plan of action. The structured agenda will make this process more streamlined and effective.

### **Homeroom/Advisory Meetings**

Homeroom or Advisory provides a daily meeting time for students to connect with a homeroom/ advisory teacher and their peers. This time is designed to assist with academic, social, and emotional skills essential to the success of secondary students. These skills include organizational, social emotional, academic, and college readiness. The homeroom/advisory period is also designed to promote open communication amongst students and teachers, increase connectedness with peers and teachers, encourage healthy problem solving, and facilitate important discussions surrounding academic and social/emotional topics and issues.



# Support for Professional Learning

There is no “one way” to deliver or engage in professional learning; however, as indicated previously, we look to bring the learning experience to CIS, to leverage teams, to provide for individual teachers, and to ensure alignment of all professional learning to our foundational values and the learning philosophies that define our learning culture.





# Application Approval Criteria

## **CIS Strategic Plan**

This area is directly related to the school Mission, Vision and Principles of the school; in particular, furthering the objectives of the CIS Strategic Plan.

## **Improvement in Student Learning**

It is critical in a culture of continuous school improvement to seek professional learning that has a direct and significant impact on student learning and achievement. At several different levels professional learning must be evaluated against evidence of improved student learning as described in the CIS Shared Practices. This criteria is focused on assessing the impact of the professional learning on student results as well as growth, character and motivation.

## **Relevance to Teaching Assignment, Core Knowledge and Subject-area Expertise**

There are many benefits of training that offer new pedagogical approaches and applications for specific content areas-subjects. Deepening the content knowledge and expertise of educators is vital to students meeting rigorous academic standards and meeting the needs of students who learn in diverse ways.

## **Impact on Student Learning Time**

Regular and ongoing contact with our students is important. Professional learning that minimizes disruption to the learning process is given priority, particularly when the experience occurs during the summer break or other extended non-student contact times.

## **Team Utilization**

In line with the school's emphasis on collaboration, teams of teachers may apply for support to engage in professional learning collectively. Working together (not remotely) outside of the normal school calendar may qualify for funding.

## **Ongoing Implementation and Sharing**

Paramount to the success of any professional learning program is the ability to embed the learning in daily work, offer ongoing coaching and sharing to build mastery, and also to provide opportunities for reflection and dialogue. Professional learning must be shared with colleagues. Long-term implementation requires faculty to be contracted by CIS the subsequent year.

Every faculty member is eligible to apply for up to \$1,000 in professional learning funding each school year.

# Additional Learning Context

## International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP)

The IB program provides an internationally accepted qualification for entry into higher education and is recognized by universities worldwide. IBDP students complete assessments in six subjects, one from each subject group, and three core requirements. Students are evaluated using both internal and external assessments, and courses finish with an externally assessed series of examinations, usually consisting of two or three timed written tests.

The program aims to develop students with an excellent breadth and depth of knowledge and the need for students to flourish physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically. The diploma program curriculum is made up of six subject groups and the core, comprising theory of knowledge (TOK), creativity, activity and service (CAS) and the extended essay (EE). Through the DP core, students reflect on the nature of knowledge, complete independent research and undertake a project that often involves community service.

## Technology Integration

At CIS, technology and information are a seamless part of the learning experience, just as they are beyond the classroom. CIS students regularly utilize technology as a tool for learning, and the school is committed to integrating technology throughout the curriculum. Students have access to a full STEAM lab (3D printers, laser cutters, robotics kits, iMacs, etc.), video production lab, and various mobile devices to engage in a variety of learning

opportunities, such as robotics, coding, and multimedia production. CIS continually purchases new technologies and resources in order to provide students with maximum opportunities for high-quality learning.

K-12 classrooms are equipped with either LCD TVs or Smart Boards. Elementary students use devices as a consistent tool for learning in most disciplines, and teachers in early childhood and K-5 are supported by a technology specialist teacher. Middle school students take a technology course during the year and there are elective courses available for high school students. CIS has a robust technology infrastructure and implemented a 1:1 environment for all students with iPads or Chromebook in the elementary. As students progress to the Secondary, all students bring in their own laptop as a vital resource for their classes, and teachers use GAFE and other technological platforms to enhance learning.

## Co-Curricular Learning

At CIS we believe that learning doesn't stop when students leave the classroom. Our co-curricular learning program extends learning outside of the classroom and into the community, onto the pitch, and into the world. CIS offers myriad After School Activities, Clubs, and Team Sports that encourage our students to be active, curious, and engaged in meaningful learning opportunities in and out of the classroom. CIS has a fully articulated K-12 vision for co-curricular learning that is thoughtfully aligned to our learning ecosystem.



## **World Language Instruction**

The Spanish language is an integral part of the curriculum throughout all grades at Cayman International School. CIS recognizes the importance of competence in global communication in a modern world which is growing evermore interconnected in the areas of business, trade and finance, diplomacy, as well as in personal relationships and cultural enrichment. Spanish is taught at all levels from Pre-K through high school with the intent that students will have an opportunity to reach a high level of proficiency. We believe that every CIS student should learn a second language and establish cross-cultural awareness. We believe in the importance of providing every child with the opportunity to cultivate an appreciation of multilingualism and cultural sensitivity.

## **Service Learning**

At CIS, children are taught very early to look out for one another and to care about the world in which we live. As they get older, CIS students are given opportunities to participate in community activities that stretch their understanding about the world and about each other. As they move through the grades, students may help coach and mentor younger children, lead recycling programs, and assist with local non-profit initiatives. Further along at CIS, Secondary students program provide leadership in community service initiatives outside school boundaries. These activities may include visits to children recovering from heart surgery, the collection and distribution of school and personal supplies to needy local children, service trips to

Peru, Honduras, Haiti, and Nicaragua, peer tutoring in local schools, being involved with the National Trust, leading sustainability initiatives and other service efforts. In all that we do at CIS, we keep our focus on preparing our students to be well-rounded global citizens who can impact their world in positive ways.

## **Student Support**

Student support systems, including Counselors and Learning Support teachers serve all CIS students to build social-emotional competencies, and provide support for children with noted exceptionalities. Support teachers enhance the school climate and foster positive relationships among members of the school community. Professional school counselors coordinate parent outreach services, community support services and consultations with other faculty and staff to facilitate collaboration and a greater understanding of students' development needs. CIS offers limited services to meet the needs of students who need support, assistance, or further instruction in order to be successful in the regular academic program. Trained and experienced instructors provide educational intervention to students identified as needing support in their academic course work and work with students according to individualized education plans. The goal of our learning support program is to allow students with special needs to achieve meaningful success at CIS within the regular classroom. Cayman International School embraces the fact that all children are different and they have learning styles and preferences that are unique.

# Continuous Improvement

A philosophy of continuous improvement is inherent within professional learning, and it is also a mindset that we constantly reinforce in all aspects of CIS. The philosophy of continuous improvement is applied to all systems and aspects of our organization. As educators and professionals we are incessantly striving to improve and learn, and as an organization we are forever working to advance, develop, innovate and progress with the ultimate goals of improving student learning and bettering our world.

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## Appendix

- A. Learning Principles (detailed)
- B. Shared Practices Continua
- C. CIS Design for Learning
- D. Unit Planner
- E. CIS Glossary
- F. Summary of goal-setting and growth cycle
- G. Leading by Principle (shared leadership practices)





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