

HEAD OF SCHOOL LISTENING TOUR REPORT



International School of Indiana

March 15, 2022
isind.org
info@isind.org

A MESSAGE FROM OUR HEAD OF SCHOOL



It is undeniable how much our families care about our school — and our team, students, and alumni, too. Over the last six weeks, I have met with more than 350 members of our school community. I can say for certain that you care for ISI and that you have a desire for us to reach our full potential, not for the institution, but for the community we serve.

As one parent said, we have all the right pieces at ISI, but we are not connecting them well. The unique combination of studying languages, cultures, and different perspectives should be a key differentiator for our school. Our school culture should be a model for others who want to give students the tools to bridge divides, not just in our own community, but anywhere they choose to go in the world.

You have shared with candor the missteps you believe we'd made in reaching this goal. You have also acknowledged the complexities we face because of the complexities of the world we live in. This is why you share a sense of urgency to make meaningful changes now, resulting in students continuing to develop academically, socially, and emotionally.

You made the point that your expectations of our school are high and that our school needs both clarity and conviction around the culture we desire. You have urged us to be transparent in our decisions and to give you a voice in the future decisions we make.

Ten themes emerged during our Listening Tour. We'll use this information for continued and inclusive development of action steps that support a key pillar of our strategic plan: Engagement. In our April message, we will share with you those action steps that have resulted from these themes.

Though the Listening Tour has concluded, I remain committed to continuing our conversations. We acknowledge that we have serious work to do. Our culture will not be transformed overnight, but I am confident that with commitment, with persistence, with the support of our community, and with a deep affection for ISI, we will create a culture we can all be proud of.

THE LISTENING PROCESS

LISTENING SESSIONS

In February 2022, the Head of School Listening Tour returned as a chance for parents, students, employees, alumni, and alumni families to share their thoughts on the culture at ISI. Listening Tour sessions for current families were organized by similar grade-level groups in order to best focus on the specific needs of families, but families were welcome to attend any or as many sessions as they desired. Special sessions were hosted for Upper School students, all ISI employees, and alumni and their families. These sessions were an important opportunity to hear the thoughts and questions of our community members.

- In total, ISI hosted 21 Listening Tour sessions.
- Prepared remarks were shared with each group, clarifying what has been done at ISI, what is planned to date, and how plans will be implemented and evolve.
- The majority of each session was dedicated to a lightly facilitated discussion that allowed participants to ask questions, share their perspectives and experiences, and their hopes for how we will continue advancing ISI.

INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

In addition to the scheduled Listening Tour Sessions, the Head of School met with more than 50 individuals and welcomed meetings with small groups including Parent Association leaders, the Black Student Union (BSU), and Gay Straight Alliance (GSA).

60 DAYS

80+
hours
listening



21 listening
sessions

500+
ideas shared



40+
individual & small
group meetings

100+
students engaged

12 alumni
engaged

50+
employees engaged



MAJOR THEMES



Hundreds of ideas emerged during the 80+ hours of sessions and meetings, emailed comments, and informal interactions that took place over the past 60 days. The ideas, comments, suggestions you shared can be distilled into ten common themes, which are explained below. Acting on every idea that was shared isn't possible or even in our best interest, but your input has helped us to identify the shared interests and priorities of our community, and will help us determine our next steps.

- 1 | OUR CULTURE & VALUES
- 2 | COMMUNITY BUILDING
- 3 | CHANGE MANAGEMENT
- 4 | DIVERSITY
- 5 | RACISM
- 6 | POLICY & PROCEDURE
- 7 | HOLIDAYS & CELEBRATIONS
- 8 | LEADERSHIP & STAFFING
- 9 | TRAINING
- 10 | CURRICULUM

OUR CULTURE & VALUES

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

The move to ONE campus this summer will be a significant cultural shift for ISI. As a maturing organization approaching the realization of a vision that once seemed improbable, we are changing. You need us to articulate our vision for our culture, and you don't want to see the values that are the essence of ISI lost in the change. You know that all institutions are imperfect, but you believe that we can do the work to create the culture we want and embrace our values so that every person at ISI experiences a sense of belonging and flourishes here.

"It is not just a culture of respect we need - we need a culture of kindness."

"Kids are becoming adversaries because of differences. It is okay to not agree with somebody."

COMMUNITY BUILDING

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

The realities of the pandemic have hindered our sense of community. Students, families, and employees alike long for a range of school events and activities that allow for better, more direct methods to be involved. You want opportunities to create bonds with students, families, and colleagues, and to build bridges between diverse groups so that you can support one another. You need us to create the foundation and forums for community building to happen.



CHANGE MANAGEMENT

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

With so many changes over the past few years, it is hard for you to tell what is permanent versus temporary, intentional versus circumstantial, and where we are headed. Change is inevitable, so we must clearly articulate the need for change, as well as the benefits of the changes we make. If we can manage change well, we will generate meaningful solutions to improve our school culture and we will gain your trust in the process. We are ultimately responsible for making decisions, but we can't lose your voices in the change process. We need to commit to a change process that includes you.

"We've got the right pieces in our school, but they are not being put together well."



THEME 4

DIVERSITY

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

"When it comes to DEI and campus culture it doesn't seem like anyone has the wheel."

Our values and core identity are centered around a diverse educational community. We consider this diversity to be among our greatest assets. Embracing a diverse community requires a recognition that we will find beliefs, perspectives, experiences and views that are different from our own. Our families and employees want us to acknowledge that diversity extends beyond race or nationality, and includes religious beliefs, disabilities, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, family structures, and more. Further you want to see these diverse perspectives not just represented, but also thoughtfully considered, in our school's cultural values and norms.



THEME 5

RACISM

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

Our values are not negated by the behavior of a few. At the same time, the racist actions of the few are extremely hurtful and damaging to the victims and their families, and our school community as a whole. There is no place for racism, harassment, racial slurs, or discrimination of any kind at ISI. It is critical that everyone on our campuses feels safe and treats each other with respect. There is a broad consensus among our community members that our learning environment must be fully conducive to safety and respect.

"Parents recognize that they can't keep their children from experiencing racism in the world, but they expect more here."



POLICY & PROCEDURE

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

How school discipline is handled has a great impact on the learning environment of our school. Students, parents, and employees see opportunities for improvement. Policy and procedure documents cannot contemplate all possible situations we will encounter at ISI, but they play an important role in establishing a transparent operational framework consistent with the values and standards of the community we serve. We must improve this framework to better support our employees, and, in turn, our students and families.



HOLIDAYS & CELEBRATIONS

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

We have heard your passion for holidays and celebrations. It is an aspect of our culture that you miss. You hope that these cultural and community events will return, but are mindful that it means reimagining some traditions so that we demonstrate an inclusive approach that allows every student to feel comfortable being their authentic selves, sharing their values, beliefs, and showcasing their traditions.

“ISI’s stance on holidays and religions is unknown - it feels like we are taking a neutral stance, but neutrality isn't teaching respect and appreciation for others.”



LEADERSHIP & STAFFING

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

The effects of the last few years have jarred our community. We don't know how it will continue to impact our students, but we know that more support is needed to address students' social and emotional health and wellbeing, and their academic success. We need to expand our team, adding personnel that can address our most pressing priorities and that further diversifies our team.



"One counselor is not adequate. The prevalence of mental health issues is widespread, and ISI needs to focus on how we can provide support to kids."



THEME 9

TRAINING

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

Schools are complicated organizations compounded by complications from the world around us. To ensure a learning environment that reflects safety, respect, intellectual freedom, freedom of inquiry, and critical thinking requires ongoing investments in the training of our employees. If our employees are well trained, they can transform our learning environment.





THEME 10

CURRICULUM

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

Language learning and the IB curriculum are intended to help our students foster a cultural understanding that provides the foundation for lifelong learning. You want to see our commitment to diversity reflected in the histories, texts, values, beliefs and diverse perspectives shared in our classrooms.

"The IB specializes in difficult conversations but we don't see that exemplified here."

NEXT STEPS >>>

Thank you for your participation in this process. Though the formal listening tour is complete, our work is not. Over the next few months, there will be continued listening, discussion, thinking, and analysis of where we go from here. We will build on the themes that emerged from you, and through our strategic planning efforts we will continue to define action steps that bring us real solutions. You can follow our progress and learn more about ways to engage with us, through our monthly reports published on the community culture webpage. Your valuable input is informing our work, and spurring meaningful change.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
CONTINUED SUPPORT!**

