

COMMUNITY CULTURE AT ISI



International School of Indiana

March 15, 2022

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HEAD OF SCHOOL LISTENING TOUR REPORT



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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

40+
individual & small
group meetings

500+
ideas shared

350+
individuals engaged

180+ parents | 50+ employees

100+ students | 12 alumni



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.

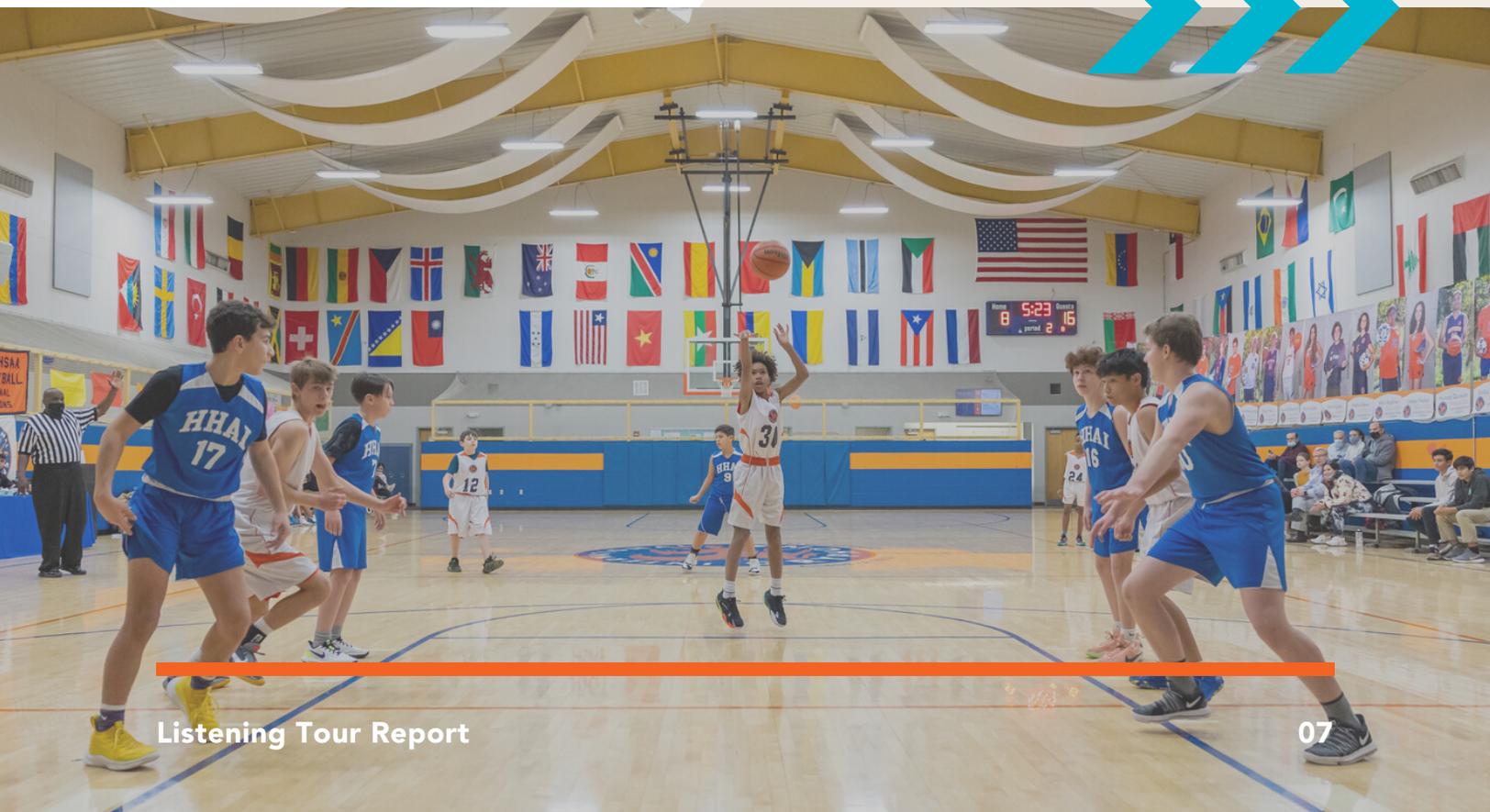
"It is not just a culture of respect we need - we need a culture of kindness."

"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



International School of Indiana

April 1, 2022
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HOW LISTENING TOURS HAVE AND CONTINUE TO INFORM OUR WORK



Following a 2019 Listening Tour, the 2020-2024 ISI Strategic Plan was developed. The purpose of a strategic plan is to set clearly defined goals for the growth and success of the organization. The initial five year ISI strategic plan contained four strategic priorities: Distinct Academics, Sustainability, Engagement, and Recruitment. Related objectives were published with the initial plan, and the strategic priorities have been operationalized through individual schools, academic departments, and administrative offices with regularly adapting action items. Reporting takes place monthly through the senior leadership team to the Head of School, quarterly by the Head of School to the Board of Directors, and annually to the school community at the Open Board Meeting.

A strategic plan, no matter how carefully conceived, must remain nimble. Over the past three years, our school leaders have remained prepared to adjust ISI's plan based on changing conditions both internally and externally. This has been especially important as the plan was first developed before the realities of 2020. In the summer of 2020 the Engagement pillar was expanded to include diversity and inclusion, and action steps have been regularly updated in each of the four pillars.

In 2022, ISI once again embarked on a Listening Tour that created a forum for parents, students, employees, alumni, and alumni families to share their thoughts on the culture at ISI.



HOW WE REAFFIRMED OUR PRIORITIES AND SELECTED A NEW ONE

More than 500 worthwhile ideas related to a broad range of topics extending far beyond culture, to area of operations, curriculum, human resources, social and extracurricular activities, financial, and more were shared throughout the listening tour. So how did we determine where to focus?

We understand that progress is not made possible by a single action, program, or innovation. Rather it is through the careful prioritization of efforts that will benefit the families we serve. In selecting priorities we must be authentic to our mission, and realistic in reflecting commitments we can keep. That requires sound reasoning and an awareness of available resources, including how they can best be allocated.

Many of the themes that emerged during the 2022 listening tour reinforce that the existing pillars of our strategic plan remain relevant. However, it also revealed a gap related to our school culture. As a strategic plan is meant to evolve, the plan will be further expanded to include an additional pillar: **Community Culture**, as well as additional objectives and action steps in our existing pillars of the plan.

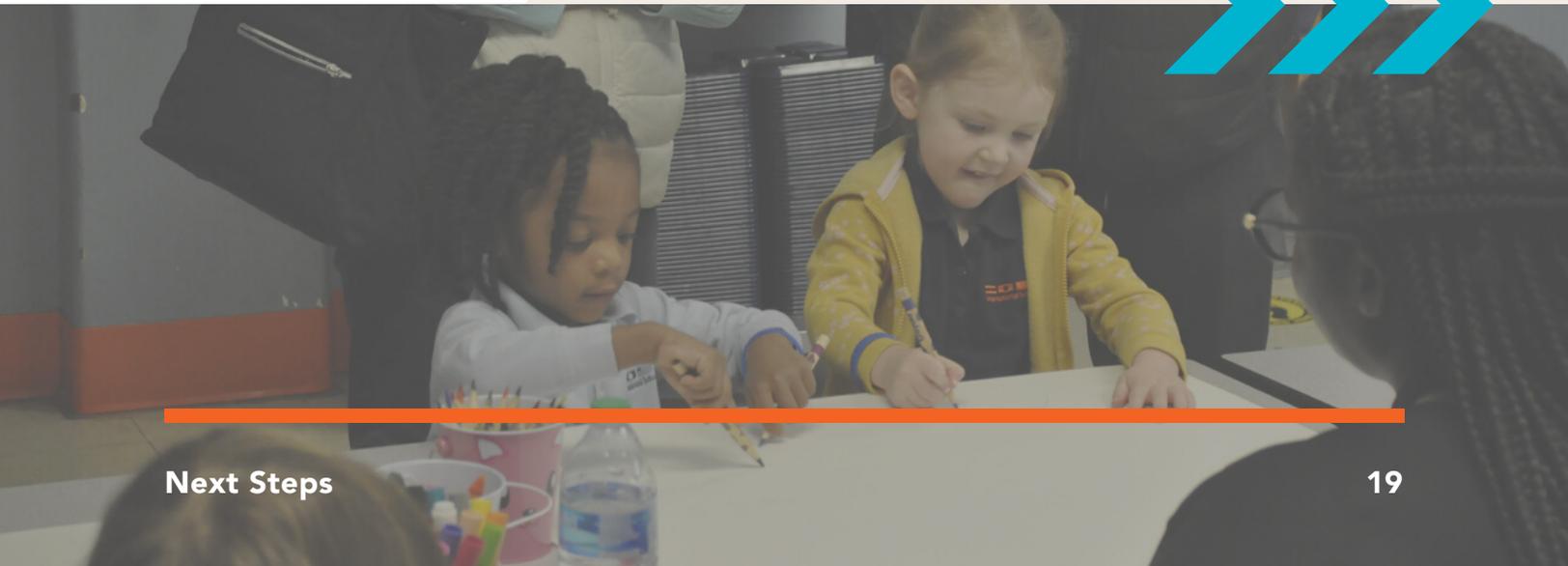
RATIONALE FOR THE NEWEST PILLAR OF OUR PLAN

COMMUNITY CULTURE: SHAPING OUR CULTURE AND REFLECTING OUR VALUES AS ONE ISI

The move to ONE campus this summer will be a significant cultural shift for ISI and the fulfillment of a two-plus decades long vision for our school. When the capital campaign began an intentional decision was made to focus on creating a unified campus. Now the larger challenge is to seize this opportunity to use our unified campus as a foundation upon which we can build a unified community culture.

A single campus is intended to foster new synergy and consistency of experience, to present new learning opportunities by creating an environment better suited to mentoring and other forms of meaningful and authentic engagement between our students across grade levels and our faculty members across disciplines.

The emotional, social, ethical, and academic needs of students can be met through the unique combination of studying languages, cultures, and different perspectives. As we strive to create a school culture that gives students the tools to bridge divides, not just in our own community, but anywhere they choose to go in the world, we intend to focus on our interconnectedness, helping students reflect on their own perspective, culture and identities, as well as those of others. By engaging with diverse beliefs, values and experiences, and by learning to think and collaborate across cultures and disciplines we will create a community culture that reflects our values.



5 REVISED PILLARS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

COMMUNITY CULTURE:
SHAPING OUR CULTURE AND REFLECTING OUR VALUES

DISTINCT ACADEMICS:
LEVERAGING ASSETS THAT MAKE US THE REGION'S BEST ON A NEWLY UNIFIED CAMPUS

SUSTAINABILITY:
NEW FOCUS ON ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP AND FISCAL POLICY TO SECURE THE FUTURE

ENGAGEMENT:
REVITALIZING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT THROUGH DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

RECRUITMENT:
REINVENTION OF ENROLLMENT PROCESSES TO BOOST RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION



PILLAR 1

COMMUNITY CULTURE

SHAPING OUR CULTURE AND REFLECTING OUR VALUES

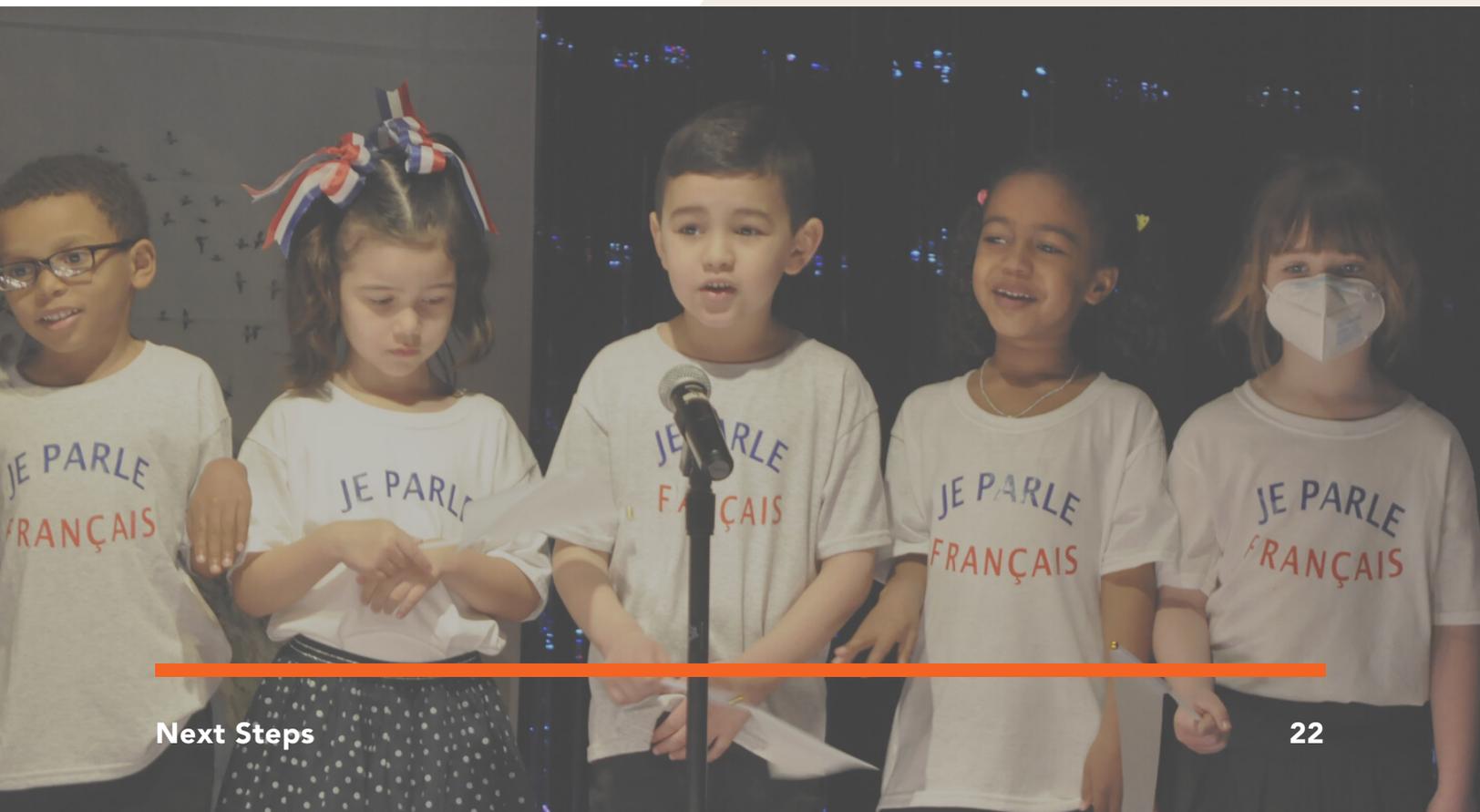
- 1. ONE ISI:** Prioritize key initiatives that have the greatest impact on creating a cohesive school culture and a shared identity for all Gryphons.
- 2. Culture of Respect & Kindness:** Intentionally create, embrace, and promote an inclusive campus environment that reflects empathy, compassion, and respect.
- 3. Pride:** Develop a sustainable program to ignite pride, and generate excitement among internal (students, families, alumni, faculty, and staff) and external (community, prospective students) communities.





LEVERAGING ASSETS THAT MAKE US THE REGION'S BEST ON A NEWLY UNIFIED CAMPUS

1. **Commitment to IB:** The hallmark of our institutional culture and classroom experience will remain for generations to come.
2. **Language Immersion:** We were first founded as a language school, and language immersion will remain at the heart of what we do.
3. **Campus Unification:** Decades in the making, our future is ONE ISI, a unified campus on Michigan Road by 2022.





PILLAR 3

SUSTAINABILITY

NEW FOCUS ON ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP AND FISCAL POLICY TO SECURE THE FUTURE

- 1. Fiscal Accountability:** Driven by new department leadership, we will set and meet new revenue goals with a blend of new policy and more centralized management.
- 2. Culture of Philanthropy:** The successful ONE ISI capital campaign launches a new fundraising era, sustained by families, alumni, employees, and a new network of corporations and foundations.
- 3. Faculty Retention:** A renewed commitment to the satisfaction of our educators will include reimagined compensation packages and policies that enhance workplace culture.



ENGAGEMENT

REVITALIZING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT THROUGH DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

1. **Awareness and Reputation Management:** Name and impact recognition will be tracked through the identification of relevant data points and a new measurement program.
2. **Increased Central Indiana Visibility:** The creation of an annual external-events-planning calendar will ensure leadership attends the region's most crucial cultural, developmental, and networking events.
3. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Identify both broad and specific diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives that leverage institutional resources to engage all students and help them thrive at ISI.





PILLAR 5

RECRUITMENT

REINVENTION OF ENROLLMENT PROCESSES TO BOOST RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- 1. Support Systems:** Assessment of current systems will give way to investment in new technologies that best equip our team to meet our enrollment goals.
- 2. New Partner Scholarship Network:** We will grow our prospective student pipeline thanks to new partnership agreements across the service and education sectors.
- 3. International Investment:** We will dedicate new funding to break through in the international market to bring more students from more countries to ISI.



SUMMARY OF NEW ACTION ITEMS RESULTING FROM THE 2022 LISTENING TOUR

In addition to the initial action steps committed to in January 2022 the following action steps have been added to operational plans throughout the institution.

NEW COMMUNITY CULTURE ACTION STEPS



ONE ISI ACTION STEPS:

Create a vision for a singular community culture:

- Develop a decision-making facilitation tool that generates reasonable consistency in our approach to decision making.
- Define essential ISI events and traditions and allocate budget to support them
- Define our approach to celebrations and holidays
- Create a master calendar reflective of these priorities

Establish a culture of employee collaboration that bridges schools and departments:

- Incorporate staff social events into annual planning and budget
- Incorporate shared planning and turning into approach to in-service days and regular meetings for general vision/mission topics

CULTURE OF RESPECT AND KINDNESS ACTION STEPS:

Assess needs to

- Select and Implement a tool for Student Culture Assessment
- Provide employee trainings monthly on topics of Diversity and Culture

PRIDE ACTION STEPS:

- Develop an athletics master plan that uses athletics as a cultural unifier
- Create a framework for how to engage parents in building community



SUMMARY OF NEW ACTION ITEMS RESULTING FROM THE LISTENING TOUR

NEW DISTINCT ACADEMIC ACTION STEPS

- Strengthen academic program through vertical articulation
- Strengthen inter-level integration of students
- Enhance Curriculum/Programming to align with desired culture priorities

NEW SUSTAINABILITY ACTION STEPS

- Invest in personnel to support strategic pillars:
- Dean of Counseling and Culture
 - Lower School Counselor
 - Middle School Assistant Principal

Revise Policies and Procedures to align with our values





SUMMARY OF NEW ACTION ITEMS RESULTING FROM THE LISTENING TOUR

NEW ENGAGEMENT ACTION STEPS

Engage parent community in creating meaningful programs and services

- Affinity groups for ISI families
- Educational Programming on DEI and other topics of interest to parents
- Create a regular forum for Listening to ISI constituents with listening sessions three times per year
- Establish a DEI Advisory Group in the 2022-2023 school year led by the Dean of Counseling and Culture

NEW RECRUITMENT ACTION STEPS

Allocate \$2.5+ million dollars to financial aid for the 2022-2023 academic year to retain and recruit a diverse student body



HOW WE WILL CONTINUE TO COMMUNICATE OUR PLANS

Throughout the Listening Tour, it became apparent that ongoing discussion with stakeholders throughout our school community is needed to ensure that the strategic plan provides transparency for where we are currently focused, and how we are aligning resources to support our goals.

Though ISI has been and will continue to be intentional in the implementation and monitoring of our plan we are committing to provide more frequent communication about our progress. For the remainder of this academic year, we will publish our community culture updates on the 15th of each month as we have previously committed to do.

During the 2022-2023 School year we will move to a September, November, February, and April Strategic Plan communication schedule. We recognize our responsibility for making decisions and advancing the plan, and we are committed to a change process that includes you.

