

# Learning & Teaching Policy

ROTTERDAM INTERNATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL

A POLICY CREATED BY TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND PARENTS

This policy will be next reviewed in  
September 2024.

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# Rotterdam International Secondary School

## Learning and Teaching Policy

### Mission, Vision and Core Values

This policy is born from the need to respond further to our vision for “Educating for self-awareness, curiosity and integrity in a changing world” and contribute to embedding our mission “for every student to enjoy their youth” within our central business: learning. It also seeks to align our instructional practices with our accrediting bodies, International Baccalaureate ([IB](#)), Council of International Schools ([CIS](#)) and The New England Association of Schools and colleges ([NEASC](#)). The school governance, leadership, teachers, students and parents support, embody and promote this document as a way of consolidating our day-to-day practice.

The document is also inspired by our core values of respect, responsibility, relationships and courage. They are our key principles and guiding ideals when working for and with our students. We aim to establish a culture of learning in line with our identity as provider of international education united by a common belief in the importance of an inclusive, culturally diverse, child-centred, enquiry-driven education that not only prepares young people for university and life beyond but that ensures young people actually enjoy their youth too.

The above also serves to help set a desired level of performance within our practice as indicated in our key strategic drivers, linked to leadership, curriculum, community, wellbeing, professional development and organisation. Ultimately the school seeks to become an exceptional example of an international school.

### Purpose

**This document aims to encourage teachers to reflect on their current practice, identify areas of success and development and ensure that high standards of provision and expectations occur when preparing for the lesson delivery to students. Therefore, this is a document for RISS practitioners to guide the principles of lesson practice in our school.**

It also serves to emphasise the importance of teachers as experts and leaders of instruction, encouraging them to take professional pride and responsibility that celebrates teaching and learning as a professional and expert endeavour. Based on our school values, this policy seeks to strengthen the relationship and partnership between students and teachers in the process of negotiating the challenges of learning.

### International Mindedness and Internationalism

At RISS, we strongly believe that international mindedness is our capacity to recognise that we are one world - a world whose inhabitants are interconnected as one community

with values, aspirations and faiths better served by focusing on our commonalities than our divisions. As a community we promote internationalism and interculturalism as dynamic processes where people from different cultures engage, question and learn from each other, while retaining a strong sense of appreciation of their own identity. This increases our ability to understand each other, work together more effectively and enhance the sense of sharing, while creating a community that in the end will look after one another and this planet.

As teachers, we will foster the [five skills](#) to develop international-mindedness in students:

1. Know yourself
2. Develop empathy
3. Be a champion of intellectual humility
4. Learn languages and
5. Do not fear conflict, and learn how to negotiate

(Leyva, 2018)

## Definition of Learning

Put simply, learning is change.

At RISS, we endorse the view that learning is a change in an individual's conceptions, knowledge and competencies that then affect their relationship with themselves, others and their understanding of the world they inhabit. This change is shaped by the values and commitment of supportive and caring adults that guide student learning.

We also recognise that learning is complex, personal and conditioned by diverse factors. What's more, the challenge for any practitioner is that there is never certainty of how much learning takes place in our students. However, we believe that we can expertly optimise and contribute to the conditions that make this process achievable. Teachers contribute to this process by collaborating with each other, connecting with students and creating first-hand experiences that make learning possible, manageable, perdurable and enjoyable.

## RISS Learning Manifesto

- ❖ It is about growing, achieving and going further by experimenting, by acquiring new knowledge and skills and by applying our conceptual understanding that interprets things beyond the factual.
- ❖ We will always recognise and value our entitlement to learn languages to celebrate diversity and unity.
- ❖ benefits from our reflections, criticality and thinking that becomes increasingly expertly performed as we journey through the school.
- ❖ happens anytime and anywhere; but it is at school where we critically consider its content, need and scope.
- ❖ allows us to demonstrate our understanding, knowledge, skills and values to become more responsible as individuals.
- ❖ provides space for creativity and ethical, real and action-led experiences.

- ❖ is enhanced by the integration of learning [technologies](#) that transform and maximise our opportunities to learn further and, so doing, we become confident digital citizens.
- ❖ is challenged by exploring the unfamiliar, considering diverse viewpoints, asking the right questions and taking informed risks. Indeed, it is during those moments where we may experience a sense of failure that we really grow.
- ❖ is guided, transferable and inspirational. This allows us to negotiate its content, to apply it to different circumstances and to enable us to continue learning further.
- ❖ provides us with opportunities to develop the attitudes and dispositions for thinking, communication, social competence, self-management and research skills, allowing us to reflect and consider our next steps as we grow as independent learners and thinkers.
- ❖ is varied, diverse and inclusive. We have many different approaches to learning and this is recognised by our community.
- ❖ not only acknowledges the life stage we are at but also challenges our knowledge and beliefs.
- ❖ is conditioned by our wellbeing and our state of mind and we all work together to ensure the best emotional health for the whole community to enjoy to the full our learning.
- ❖ recognises that we are a unique international learning community school in Rotterdam. Our core values are clearly stated and lived as our intended identity.

### RISS Teaching Manifesto - At RISS,

- ❖ We believe that we add value to the student learning experience via Inquiry-Based Learning ([IBL](#)), a focus on conceptual understanding ([CBC](#)), the development of effective teamwork and collaboration and the recognition of differentiated strategies, all informed by assessment in its various forms.
- ❖ We recognise that our students have many different approaches to learning; we will respond to their strengths and needs within lessons and beyond with the support of our Learning Diversity policy.
- ❖ We will deliver with Teaching and Learning ([ATL](#)) in mind in line with an IB education, its principles and practices.
- ❖ We will foster [language learning](#) as a tool to reach and engage with others and their communities within our commitment to internationalism and Interculturalism.
- ❖ We believe that we must promote a culture of high expectations, good progress and solid outcomes that inspire and challenge our students. Thus our practice will move from [pedagogical](#) to more andragogical teaching strategies as the students progress through the school.
- ❖ We believe that we must be continuously updating our practice, skills and subject knowledge to confidently deliver our very best to our students.
- ❖ We believe that much care should go into planning, preparing and designing learning scenarios that have a meaningful impact on student progress.
- ❖ We believe that feedback needs to be both formative and summative and given regularly for students to respond and progress in their learning
- ❖ We believe that teachers and students share the responsibility to engage in learning opportunities in which everyone is aware of their role, purpose and potential outcomes.

- ❖ We believe that student data plays a strong role as the start of a conversation in student progress. We will build learning, mentoring and counselling programmes for the effective use of data for parents and students.
- ❖ We believe that learning happens in a safe and secure climate. We will manage behaviour fairly and consistently with high expectations, strategies and praise/rewards that enable students and teachers to maintain positive relationships and model social behaviours that support student growth. This process is in line with our work on restorative practices.
- ❖ We believe that we all make a positive contribution to the school vision, mission and values. When it comes to teaching, seeking appropriate professional development, responding to advice and feedback from colleagues and developing effective relationships with all school members fosters a culture of collaboration, joy and pride in our school community.
- ❖ We believe that students need to become self-aware about their learning, progress and new understandings and how they can relate to this new knowledge and skills to support them and their communities and develop the courage to act.
- ❖ We believe that learning is a process whereby teachers and students have the courage to take risks, self-reflect for personal growth, gain knowledge/skills and make connections with real-life events while having fun doing it.
- ❖ We believe that learning involves appreciating the world from different perspectives, through a process of experience, interaction and discovery.
- ❖ We believe that learning is a process in which curiosity, self-motivation, and resilience are encouraged through positive relationships and experiences, leading to an appreciation of the world from different perspectives and the courage and capacity to solve problems and face challenges.
- ❖ We believe that lessons should be an authentic, innovative and dynamic step-by-step process in which teachers use approaches that enable students to acquire skills, knowledge, behaviours and ways of processing the world around them.

## IB Learner profile plus!

We are an IB Diploma Programme School and we have a duty to develop the Learner's Profile from early on and across the school to secure appropriate transition, continuation and progression for our students within the principles and practices of the programme. The learners profile plus applies to teachers and students.

- ❖ **Inquirers** - We develop our natural curiosity. We are skilled in inquiry and research and show independence in learning. We enjoy and are engaged in their own learning and this will be sustained throughout their lives.
  - Students: "I ask questions to help my learning."
- ❖ **Knowledgeable** - We explore ideas and issues that have local and global significance. We acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.
  - "I try to learn many things."
- ❖ **Thinkers** - We exercise initiative in thinking critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems. We make reasoned, ethical decisions as a consequence.
  - "I try to connect the things I know."

- ❖ **Communicators** - We are confident, creative and fluent in expressing complex ideas in a range of ways and languages. We work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.
  - “I share my ideas with others.”
- ❖ **Principled** - We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities. We take responsibility for their actions.
  - “I try to do what is right.”
- ❖ **Open-minded** - We understand and appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. We are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view and are willing to grow from the experience.
  - “I listen and accept other points of view.”
- ❖ **Caring** - We show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. We have a personal commitment to service and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.
  - “I help others and I am nice.”
- ❖ **Risk Takers** - We approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought and have the independence of spirit to embrace new roles, ideas and strategies. We are enterprising individuals.
  - “I try new things that add value to me as a person!”
- ❖ **Balanced** - We understand the importance of intellectual, physical, economic and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others and they are in control of their own lives. We can act independently but we understand our responsibilities as citizens.
  - “I work and play hard!”
- ❖ **Reflective** - We reflect deeply on our lives, knowledge and experience in ways which may be profoundly spiritual and emotional.
  - “I think about what I do and how that can help me.”
- ❖ **Leaders** - We show character and have vision and can motivate others to achieve it. We are brave and articulate in defending our beliefs. We understand and take responsibility for others in the process.
  - “I believe that this is the right path for me and my community.”
- ❖ **Adaptable** - We have the attitude and skills to respond to and take advantage of changes in an increasingly technological world.
  - “I know what and how to do this in this case.”
- ❖ **Global minded** - We understand that we are citizens of the world. We understand global interdependence and appreciate diversity and have the confidence and skills to relish the challenge of the future in a global society and workplace.
  - “I feel that the misfortune of others is my own and I want to do something about it!”

## Progression and Assessment

RISS will seek to provide a curriculum that is coherently and purposefully built around subject areas via formal and written scope and sequences that represent the learning for students within their year and across their years in the school. The curriculum will be mapped and aligned with the school's guiding statements and the accrediting bodies it adheres to. These actions will identify a clear progression for students from foundation to senior years. This will also enable us to map our programmes across the school and determine skills and content with a coordinated connection within and across subject areas for analysis, review, action and change.

RISS will seek to develop a culture of assessments that measures the effect of learning on our students. It will always include qualitative and quantitative criteria and be creative in its conception, planning and delivery. This will include the different facets of assessment to establish progression. They are *Assessment **for** Learning* – or a continuous observation of a child's progress that influences instructional practice; *Assessment **of** learning* – or a snapshot in time that informs students, parents and teachers of progress and *Assessment **as** Learning* – or students as their own assessors of their progress that encourage ownership and lifelong learning.

The assessment will need to consider the learning stage of our students, their needs and how this represents genuine progress for them. In this regard, our school seeks to communicate effectively with parents with respect to student achievements and well-being, ensuring that a culture of partnership develops with families to maximise student progress.

## Learning environment

Although the teacher is the most significant external influence on a student's learning in the classroom, there are other factors at play too. This includes the physical learning setting, (known as The Third Teacher), the culture and ethos generated and demonstrated by the relationships and interactions within a school and its community. This also extends to the learning stimuli and inspirations taking place outside the classroom and even beyond the school, especially and increasingly those thrown up by modern technologies. Therefore, we will seek to make a provision that goes beyond the classroom setting and explores the potential of [technology](#), the school and the community of Rotterdam and beyond to enhance the learning experiences of our students.



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