

# INSPIRING YOUR PERSONAL BEST

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



ESCOLA  
AMERICANA  
DO RIO  
DE JANEIRO

FIND YOUR PATH



# INSPIRING YOUR PERSONAL BEST

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EARJ EXISTS TO INSPIRE EACH CHILD TO PURSUE THEIR PASSIONS, STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE, AND ACHIEVE A FULFILLING LIFE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

# OUR APPROACH

## BACKGROUND TO THE PROCESS

Defining Escola Americana do Rio de Janeiro’s unique identity was the starting point for rethinking our strategy, clarifying our unique purpose, and gaining focus as a community for the years ahead. In late-2021, we partnered with NoTosh, a leading school educational strategic planning company. They helped us to undertake a full community listening exercise with the help of an in-house “Design Team” of students, parents, teachers, staff, leadership and Board members:



144

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS  
UNDERTAKEN BY THE  
DESIGN TEAM



155,000

LINES OF SURVEY  
DATA



24

INTERNAL AND  
ACCREDITATION  
REPORTS



50

HOURS OF ANALYSIS  
AND LEADERSHIP  
TEAM DIALOGUE



30+

HOURS OF DEDICATED  
INVOLVEMENT OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS



INSPIRATION FROM OUR  
WORK WITH LEADING  
INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOLS

The Board of Directors and School Leadership Team established the future vision of the school and consolidated this vision with the needs and desires expressed by the community. As a result of the analysis there were 30 choices across five types of choice category. Synthesis sessions with Leadership Team narrowed these choices down by two thirds for a more feasible degree of focus, which were then reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors.

This strategy for the school’s future builds on a strong foundation of its recently revised mission. It centers on one pair of contrasting ideas that, together, give a unique position in Rio de Janeiro: EARJ as a learning environment that is both **rich in local culture** with a **truly global perspective**.

# STRATEGY OVERVIEW

WE ASPIRE TO CREATE A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT RICH IN LOCAL CULTURE WITH A TRULY GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE THAT IS UNIQUE TO RIO DE JANEIRO.

## OUR CONTEXT

Our school's mission, our whole reason for being, is to inspire each child to lead a fulfilling life. And we believe there are two key facets behind this: every child can develop habits of excellent work and learning, and every child can grow to recognise where their strengths can make an impact.

Today, we're arguably the school in Rio most closely associated with a global outlook. We have a good starting point for our community to understand and embrace its local roots - some are born here, others drawn here, but we all call Brazil home. And we also understand the importance of extending our global perspective. **That's why we're a standout global school, rooted in rich local tradition.**

To build on this, we need to continue developing learning experiences and relationships that give our students the opportunity to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences between local and global perspectives, cultures and languages. **Global citizens, rooted in their local context.**

SOME ARE  
BORN HERE,  
OTHERS  
DRAWN HERE,  
**BUT WE ALL  
CALL BRAZIL  
HOME.**

Adapted from Tony Walsh's *This is the Place*.



## WHAT ARE THE TWO BIG IDEAS?

### LEARNING STARTS WITH THE LEARNER

Individual strengths and talents need to be put at the center of designing the learning experience.

This is more than a few personalized highlights scattered throughout the year. A learner-focused approach to learning needs to be woven throughout everything we do. Every learner needs to have the opportunity to discover and pursue the pathway that's best for them.

When we see an opportunity to take a learner out of their comfort zone, and push beyond what they think possible: we drive it with them.

One of the best ways to do this is to harness the power of our innate diversity: our students themselves. Our community's different ways of thinking, seeing the world, our different languages and cultures are a rich tapestry, and sometimes a challenging one. So our learning experiences should be designed in order that students learn, over time, **to work well with anyone from anywhere in any context.**

Professional learning should also be tailored to the adult learner, identifying strengths and building on those. **No 'one size fits all' here, for students or our team.**

### LEARNING IS COLLABORATIVE

**Everyone brings their own strengths** into a particular project, a debate or a new idea. But sometimes, today, they are not given the chance to shine. It is vital that everyone feels valued for what they can contribute to the overall mission of the school.

**We are a school that begins with the strengths of students, faculty and staff and builds greatness from there.**

# OUR APPROACH TO THE WORK



## COLLABORATE FIRST

We can't realise our aspiration by working away alone in a corner, for ourselves, or within our day-to-day class group, team or department. And we can't do it with a top-down decision-making process. If we can provide a north star through simple crystal clear goals, then teams can unite around them rather than sticking to their department and immediate colleagues. This should help push ideas to better places, quicker. And it'll create opportunities for those who want to lead and contribute their ideas to our future.



## START WITH STRENGTHS

It's tempting to look at where someone needs to improve: start by looking at where they can flourish.



## SEEK OUT DIVERSE VOICES

Our diversity is our greatest strength. Diverse voices don't make it easy to build up a project. But they do make it better.



## KEEP TELLING THE STORY

This is the best way to grow a sense of community, to increase the involvement of families, and to make collaboration easy. Everyone needs to know what's going on, where, when, and how they can be involved. They need to know how to share their successes and ideas. Our school's collective brain is incredibly plastic - it can evolve and adapt.

# FOUNDATIONAL SYSTEMS UNDERPIN IT ALL

## DEVELOP A STRONG AND CLEAR FOUNDATION OF TEACHER SKILLS

**We'll create common language around the EARJ Teacher profile** which highlights learning & teaching capabilities rooted in a global perspective and aligned with the school's mission.

**We need to protect ourselves against the "OK Plateau".** EARJ is like any school - there are varied approaches to learning and teaching. This isn't a bad thing as long as the quality is consistent. Arriving teachers need a quick way to know what's expected, and longer-term teachers need a structured way to continue growing in alignment with the school's vision for teaching the full IB continuum. This is an opportunity to get really clear about what the learners need from their teachers.

## SHARE LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES ACROSS THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

**A chain is only ever as strong as its weakest link.** The same is true in schools. Sometimes pockets of great practice sit in one grade level or on one campus. We will make sure that all EARJ teachers are sharing what works, in order to build the capacities of the whole team and consistency across the school. That means building in **guaranteed time for collaborative planning, reflection, problem-solving and engaging ways to share resources and ideas.**

## DISTRIBUTE DECISION-MAKING

**Organizations thrive when decision-making is distributed.** Realising our ambition requires an effort from every corner of our community. We see the power of building empowered teams with the autonomy to follow their own shorter-term stretch goals across the school and between campuses.



There's an advantage, too, in creating more sustainability of ideas when, inevitably, teams change. We all need to direct our work towards just a few shared goals, but we need individual teams to have some autonomy on their own shorter-term stretch goals.

**So we might design and refine a more agile system for getting things done.** This could involve multidisciplinary teams of those with an interest in the area, teams that focus on a goal, working over short periods of time so that they can regularly gauge their success, or change tack.

### SEAMLESS, STREAMLINED COMMUNICATION

**A prominent theme from every corner of our community is the need for better communications.**

But this doesn't just mean better or more emails from the school to home. We will regularly audit the way we communicate, to ensure that everybody gets the right information at the right time, and that includes the schools receiving feedback on how we're going. We need to see the good stuff that happens so that we can share it wider, and share feedback with each other to make it even better. We can't rely on chance meetings - so we need a routine or system, and time with colleagues, for structured, constructive, specific and useful feedback.

# OBJECTIVES AND KEY RESULTS

## WHAT ARE OBJECTIVES?

Our objectives are ambitious goals that express the end result that is desired.

## WHAT ARE KEY RESULTS?

Key Results are the measurable results that we expect to achieve on the way towards realising our Objectives. It's a good idea for the leadership team to identify a small number at the highest level. By looking at the OKRs of each senior team leader, you get a picture of what the overarching key results for the whole school might be. Their key results then cascade down from that. Their middle leaders then need to do the same - how can high school teachers' key results for the year align with those of the senior leader of the high school, for example? And in this way, over time, those working on the delivery of ideas can start to influence and shape the goals of the whole organisation, through their successful projects (and what they've learned from those that didn't work out so well).



## OBJECTIVE 1 - RICH IN LOCAL CULTURE, TRULY GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

All learners will understand and appreciate the similarities and differences between local and global perspectives, identities, cultures and languages. Global citizens, rooted in their local context.

### KEY RESULT

School-wide traditions have been established and consolidated to celebrate local and international communities, but always positioning them within a global perspective or issue.

Teachers feel confident and competent to design learning experiences that develop learners' global competencies, starting with those illustrated in the IB Learner Profile.

The school is connected strongly to local and international communities through community partnership and outreach projects.



## OBJECTIVE 2 - LEARNING STARTS WITH THE LEARNER

We recognize individual strengths and talents and design the learning experience so that every learner realizes those strengths to make an impact. This includes supporting students who need it, but it also includes pushing and supporting strong performers to perform to their fullest.

### KEY RESULT

Develop faculty and students' ability to identify and apply their strengths through a range of experiences designed to take them out of their comfort zone.

Students and faculty work together to design learning experiences that grow learners' strengths.

We can identify and then challenge high achieving students to excel at all levels of proficiency.

## OBJECTIVE 3 - LEARNING IS COLLABORATIVE

We exhibit a strong culture of collaboration. Learners will build their skills, over time, in how to work well with anyone from anywhere in any context.

### KEY RESULT

All members of the community collaborate in empowered teams with the autonomy to follow their own shorter-term stretch goals across the school.

Teams that focus on a goal, working over short periods of time, reflecting regularly are achieving more success.

Communication flows are seamless and streamlined so that every community member has the right information at the right time at their fingertips.

## OBJECTIVE 4 - STRONG & SHARED APPROACHES TO LEARNING & TEACHING

We will create a strong and clear foundation of teacher skills and share learning and teaching approaches across the whole community so that every team member can grow professionally in the best way for them and for the whole team.

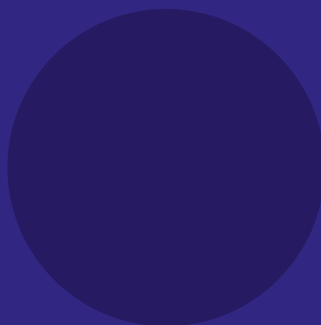
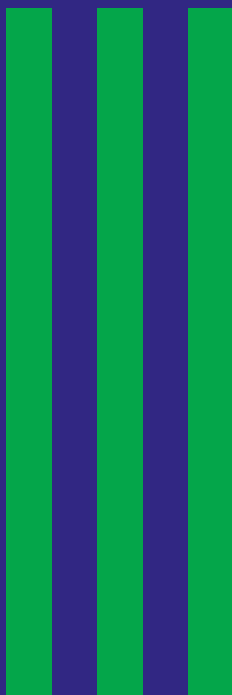
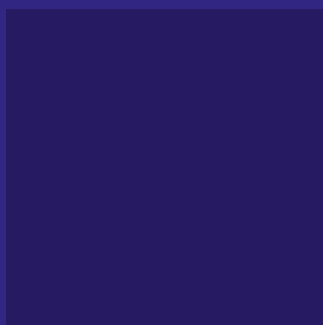
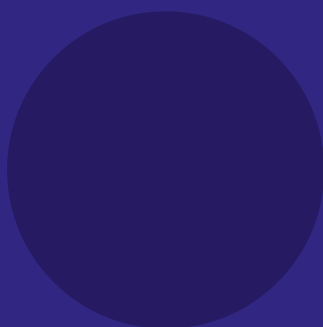
### KEY RESULT

Create a shared expectation of teacher capabilities.

Performance management.

All EARJ teachers are sharing what works, in order to build the capacities of the whole team and consistency across the school.





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