

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS

Using Education to Improve Local and Global Communities

To challenge all members of the school community to consistently reflect on and question what it means to be acting at one's fullest potential as a learner, leader and global citizen.

SCHOOL INFO:

Location: San Antonio, TX

Type: Magnet

Focus: International Education

Network: Asia Society

Asia Society's International Studies Schools Network (ISSN) is a national network of 34 design-driven public, charter and private schools focused on delivering an academic program that prepares students for college, work, and civic roles in a globalized environment.

BY THE NUMBERS:

Date Opened: 1994

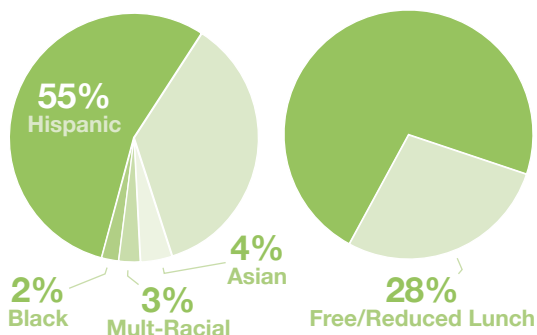
Grades Served: 9-12

Enrollment: 476

Teachers: 22.5

Per Pupil: \$5,487

Students Demographics:



What is Deeper Learning?

Deeper Learning teaches students to master core academic content, think critically, solve complex problems, work collaboratively, communicate effectively, direct their own learning, and develop an academic mindset.

“Relevance is a major tenet of the school,” said Kathy Bieser, director of the International School of the Americas (ISA). “Teachers utilize strong pedagogy, weaving state standards into meaningful disciplinary and interdisciplinary units whose authentic assessments link learning to the ‘real world’.” For example, students at ISA participate in public exhibitions of their work, judged by teachers and external evaluators, Model United Nations Simulations, and simulate town hall meetings about relevant topics.

Bieser emphasized the importance of imbuing students with global competence—the ability to investigate the world, recognize perspectives, communicate ideas, and take action, noting that they are expected to embrace lifelong learning in and out of the school setting. Students’ global competence is developed through a variety of programs in addition to the core curriculum such as career-exploration internships and travel experiences that integrate inquiry and reflection.

Engagement with and ownership of the school by students, staff, and families is essential to producing an empowered community that shapes the school’s identity and creates a relevant form of high school education.

The ISA’s pledge to graduate reflective life-long learners, individuals who approach each new experience mindful of previous learning, and open to the possibilities of new learning and growth, forms the foundation on which all learning takes place.



ISA’s annual participation in the Model UN project enables students to apply the Deeper Learning skills they engage with all year. (Illustration by ISA student Delaney McDaniel.)

Student Spotlight:



Julio Resendiz with his college acceptance letter.

Julio Resendiz, ISA class of 2013, lacked the confidence necessary to articulate his opinions in front of others when he first entered the school. However, over time, Julio began to take ownership of his education and enrolled in the hardest classes available at ISA. Julio also participated in leadership roles in clubs and truly maximized his high school experience.

He is the only son of a mom who works long hours in a school cafeteria and a dad who died suddenly in 2010. In elementary school, Julio decided he wanted to go to college to make his parents proud and ultimately buy them a home. His teachers, and Bieser, have no doubt he will keep his promise. They are certain that Julio will build on the confidence he gained at ISA and will go on to approach each new experience with his heart and mind open to the possibilities of new learning and growth.

CREATING THOUGHTFUL, MEANINGFUL AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

According to Bieser, the ISA curriculum is rigorous, thematic, interdisciplinary, authentic, collaborative and complex. She described major annual student projects:

- Two months into freshman year, students identify an international folktale, write and memorize a script based on that folktale, create sets and props, and perform their story for an elementary school class;
- Sophomores engage in a cross-disciplinary study of acculturation versus assimilation and create a publicity campaign in support of an indigenous group at risk of losing their land, culture, language, or heritage;
- After studying the American civil rights movement and traveling to Alabama, juniors create multimedia presentations identifying a modern injustice and proposing a solution;
- ISA students at all grade levels work with seniors to run the largest student-led Model United Nations simulation in the US, managing a budget of over \$30,000 and handling negotiations with hotels, caterers and the media for an event that brings in more than 1,000 guests over the course of three days.

In addition, Bieser noted that all students participate in week long, grade level travel experiences aligned with state and Advance Placement standards outside of Texas. Students also have the opportunity to travel outside of the country through partnerships with sister schools in China, Japan, South Korea, Sweden and Mexico to enrich their international awareness and global competency. “It’s not the same as simply going on a trip to another country, teachers at ISA want their students to have a thoughtful, meaningful, and educative experience.”

Another essential element of education at ISA is the Service Program. It is designed to ensure that students participate in 120 hours of meaningful, personally relevant service, and requires them to blog and write multiple reflections throughout the process.

ISA honors the power of reflection to deepen learning. With that in mind, the “growth mindset” that is so important at ISA is developed by “students continually assessing their learning strengths and challenges, writing reflectively, and creating annual and cumulative portfolios throughout their high school careers,” said Bieser.



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Deeperlearning4all.org

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