

## IICS OPEN BOARD MEETING MINUTES

**Date and Time:** Jan 26th, 2021, 6:30pm-8:00pm @ Zoom

### 1. Opening by Mr. Ferhat Ferhangil (FF), Board Chair:

- Chair Ferhangil called the meeting to order at 6:35pm. and welcomed the parents.
- FF introduced the Board of Directors and informed participants about the meeting agenda:
  - Head of School & Principals' reports
  - Relocation update
  - Financial report
  - Strategic planning
  - Q & A

### 2. Head of School Report by Nathan Walker (NW)

- NW shared his presentation and highlights are as follows:
  - **We will reopen our campuses:** Early Years students have had the opportunity to physically attend campus for most of the school year.
  - A number of grade levels were able to attend twice a week in a hybrid model in October but as the number of cases in Turkey began to increase, IICS was not able to offer that before winter break.
  - Starting on Thursday, Jan 28th, Grade 8 and 12 students will return to Marmara Campus for face to face instruction through the duration of the Turkish schools break.
  - IICS is expecting to receive an announcement from the Ministry of Education (MoE) on the 5th of February about the official reopening the schools on February 15th.
  - **We will keep our community safe:** Turkish Ministry of Health has updated guidelines and requirements and IICS will communicate those to parents how that might change some of the guidelines on school.
  - Turkish Government has already started to roll out its vaccination. Teachers are in the second phase and will have access. At this time, IICS does not have the option of bringing an organization to come and provide vaccines. However, should that be an option in the future, then the school would consider that.
  - **We will focus on student growth and learning:** NW stated that IICS always focus on student growth and learning through the school improvement process, accreditation, strategic planning, and community feedback. 2020 Parent survey identified areas of concern; Hiring and retaining the best teachers and staff, Health and Safety, Distance Learning, School communication.
  - **MOBIS (Turkish Ministry of Education's Information System for International Schools).** NW explained that all schools within Turkey have a registration system that is linked with the Ministry of Education (MoE). MOBIS is the new registration system for international schools which includes teachers, staff and students. At this time, only students with foreign ID numbers are able to be registered. We are working proactively with the MoE to resolve the situation. NW will update the parents as soon as he has more information.
  - **Accreditation:** NW briefed the parents that IICS accredited by three organizations, New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), Council for International Schools (CIS) and International Baccalaureate (IB). It is a five-year process and IICS is in year three. IICS will start with a preparatory visit by two of those organizations in November of this next school year.

### 3. Primary School report by Primary Leadership Team (PLT):

- **Distance Learning by Rob Grantham (RG):**
  - RG explained the new and a stronger version of DL2.0 for the students.
  - DL2.0 version is more focused on the students, more manageable for the teachers, and more accessible for parents. In this model, PLT planned it for three formats, 1) full-distance learning 2) full potential on-campus learning 3) as well as for hybrid.

- RG emphasized the focus on core skills in literacy and numeracy, small group instruction, wellbeing and connection between students with each other and with their teachers.
- RG also stated that if DL2.0 continues, we're looking for technology tools on a regular basis to introduce and support our staff and being able to use with the students, the importance of wellness for teachers, for students on an individual basis and keeping ourselves connected as a community, and constantly reflecting on ways we can improve the program that includes taking feedback from parents.
- **On-campus Learning by Greta Gazlett (GH):**
  - GH summarized how the PLT worked through the new COVID protocols, new routines and classroom practices when the students were back on campus.
  - She mentioned that the whole staff has been very responsive to be flexible with schedules, having a learning bubble, and ensuring the health and safety for the students.
  - She also said that the school operations team has worked incredibly hard to make sure that the cleaning protocols are on point, the school nurse made sure to have all of the health forms collected and most importantly our dedicated teachers worked so hard for keeping our students motivated and engaged.
  - GH expressed that Primary is maintaining the quality and the continuity of student learning and that is the goal. Whether students are on-campus or off-campus, Primary is trying their very best to make sure students are supported and they know that teachers and staff are all here to support them.
- **Partnerships for Learning by Monika Hoge (MH):**
  - MH thanked parents for their support given the students and their engagement.
  - MH also expressed her appreciation that parents set up an environment for their children at home and gave their continuous feedback about what worked, what didn't.
  - The success Primary had would not really be the success without parents' help, commitment and dedication.

#### 4. Secondary School report by John gates (JG):

- JG acknowledged the faculty who has done an admirable and a very unsurpassable task this year in trying to educate our children.
- JG explained how children are adapting on a daily basis.
- JG mentioned that the biggest change this year is that Secondary has reinstated the full master schedule timetable.
  - Classes are meeting on the regular schedule,
  - Consideration is given to age & subject appropriateness,
  - Regular review of academic progress to produce individualized action plans for student success, Lunchtime and after school study groups are still available,
  - Study skills in every grade level for identified students
- JG said that they anticipate IB exams this year will take place and agreed that the success rate on IB exams is extremely important to parents.
- JG explained how they address students' wellbeing and wellness.
  - Support & Guidance "SAG" reaching out to challenged students,
  - DL Feedback students' mental health is being affected, worse than before,
  - Teenage mental health support groups, homeroom individual check-ins,
  - Community time program in groups and grade levels.
- JG pointed out that the Student Council has been very active since last year for organizing virtual events such as:
  - Spirit Week 19-20
  - Spring Concert 19-20
  - Arctic Assembly
  - DL Student Survey (Screen Time, ManageBac, Responsiveness, Camera)
  - CEESA Gaming (League of Legends) - IICS became 1st and 2nd!
  - CEESA MUN/CEESA Speech & Debate took place virtually and IICS students dominated.
- JG also mentioned the improvements in the Athletics Department. The gym has new banners, we have a set of plaques in the main lobby (Middle School and High School performer of the year, Middle School and High School Athlete of the Year), new IICS caps and Dolphins jacket.

#### 5. Relocation Update by Ferhat Ferhangil (FF):

- FF explained that moving the school to a more central location is a difficult job even though IICS has come to final stages in the past on more than three potential locations, we haven't been really successful in closing one of the deals.

- He also briefed the parents about what is required to move the school to a new location:
  - Ideally a central location such as Kemberburgaz, Gokturk, Sariyer areas.
  - Range of 20,000 square meters of land, 12,00-15,000 square meter building site which includes all classrooms, sports facilities and community meeting areas.
  - Easily fit 750 to 800 students at maximum capacity with the existing criterias that we currently have.
  - The location must have a private education zoning given by the Municipality.
  - We can afford \$8 million to spend on a new campus which covers the construction of the building.
  - Securing a land has always been a struggle.
  - Need to find land from the Ministry of Finance or Education where we can rent 40-50 year period to build our own school and pay affordable rent annually.
  - The Location Committee also has been discussing it with some investors who might have a land themselves or buy a land and build it for us, and then we become a long term tenant being able to pay rent.
  - We can afford to pay \$50k a month but the rent, depending on a location, can go up to \$100k - \$120k where it is payable when/if we reach the capacity of 750-800 students.
  - FF kindly requested parents' support and appreciated if anybody in the community has a connection with authorities or has an idea to help this project going forward.

#### **6. Financial report by Maurizia Moreschi (MM):**

- MM introduced herself and the Finance Committee members and highlighted some topics in her presentation;
  - Financial Outlook – Building Block
    - \* Annual school Revenues - \$13,8 Mln
    - \* Annual school expenses - \$13,2 Mln
  - Financial Outlook – 2020 Outlook
    - \* Revenues decreasing due to reduction of students
    - \* Cost decrease driven by organization alignment to student trend
  - Financial activities to support Parents during Covid-19
    - \* In 2019/20, during 3 months of distance learning, \$300k Operation and Education savings refunded to parents
    - \* IICS will support parents also during 2020/21 with distance learning cost refund (approx. \$200 per student per month)
  - Financial Committee – Ongoing activities
    - \* MM also explained what the Finance Committee have already accomplished and ongoing activities and goals
  - MM kindly asked parents if they are interested in joining and supporting the Finance Committee to send their resume to the Board Secretary at [boardsecretary@iics.k12.tr](mailto:boardsecretary@iics.k12.tr)

#### **7. Strategic Planning by Eddy Massier (EM):**

- EM shared and updated parents about IICS' twelve-month strategic planning cycle:
  - Board to elaborate and align on max 5 Strategic Priorities for the next 8 to 20 months and broadly define what success looks like (Oct 2020)
  - Assign clear ownership – who to work on which priorities/strategic goal setting (Oct 2020)
  - Owners to elaborate and propose Strategic Goals (Nov-Dec 2020)
  - Action Plan & Execution by Operations or Board
  - Regular Update to Board on Progress
  - Annual Review of Strategic Plans by the Board
- EM explained Strategic Planning Committee's strategic priorities:
  1. Education
    - Review and develop the IICS Curriculum (including extracurricular) to meet highest standards.
  2. Financial Stability
    - Foster Enrollment
    - Alternative Sources
    - Cost Efficiency
    - New Business Opportunities
    - Financial Planning

3. Performance Management
  - Introduce LSB (Leading School Board) and 360 Climate Survey
  - IICS Faculty Performance Evaluation System
4. Governance
5. Campus/Relocation

## 8. Q & A:

**Q1: Will the face to face learning continue through this semester? Due to the low infection rate in EY 4 age group and strict control in the entrance, will you consider to go on?**

- We definitely hope to continue the EY program through the end of the year, and we hope that we'll be able to offer that for most of the grades throughout the rest of the year. But it does depend on the infection rate, though as long as we can provide a safe working environment, our choices are to have students on campus.

**Q2: Did you consider shifting the school break to a week before the 15th of February to make sure to have the school break on a known DL week instead of on a possible physical school week?**

- We had a discussion about it, however, with our Early Years students, and now our Grade 8 and 12 students on campus through the Turkish break, it would not be possible for us to consider.

**Q3: Will the school Bus service work this semester?**

- The challenge was the Marmara Campus Early Years due to numbers and attendance. But now, with Grade 8 and 12 students, the bus service for both campuses will be offered for students and for staff members.

**Q4: You are the most reputable International school in Istanbul, with small classes and high school fees, still you have not been able to provide physical school to the same extent as other Turkish private schools and at least two International schools in Istanbul. Have you considered reallocating your budget, for example by postponing renovation works etc. and instead employ a staff member locally that could work with government relations and government compliance, in order to at least provide the same service as other reputable schools?**

- We have had staff members who have been working on communication with the Ministry of Education on both campuses. Omer Kipmen our IB science teacher, IB Diploma Coordinator and a member of the Board, will be serving as a liaison for our staff and for our school, and working with founders' representatives and with the government to try and advocate for us to be able to work with the government. Up to this point, we have been following what the government has given us as far as our ability to open or to who to open for. But that is an important issue for us. We want to make sure that we have all the opportunities possible to offer on-campus education. When the pandemic finishes, we will still have a relationship with the Ministry of Education that we want to make sure that we're in line with them.

**Q5: As a suggestion, could the lectures be recorded and sent to the student in order for him to understand better and review them every time? Also, if the student has questions, he sends them via e-mail or any other appropriate format?**

- We have some teachers already who record a presentation where they're actually explaining something or demonstrating something and we will continue and will do so more. We encourage teachers to take that opportunity. However, we will not mandate that be done. Because we also have privacy rules and regulations. So if students' faces show up on the recording, we're not going to be able to share that because that violates GDPR regulations. So, we'll continue to try and do that with the limitations.

**Q6: Although you cannot provide physical school right now due to government restrictions, have you considered combining the collection of readers with social activities for the kids, for example by letting half class collect readers at the same time during curfew free hours and play half an hour with friends? Of course, voluntary and only for those families who feel comfortable.**

- We have that happening this Friday at Marmara and on Monday at Hisar. The suggestion is to combine that collection with an optional opportunity for kids to be able to have social time with other kids and play, interact at the school until such time as the ministry's regulations allow us to have students at various grade levels beyond current early years. We wouldn't move in this direction nor would it be safe or appropriate for us to do so. Of course, students may be getting together according to their families' choices outside of school time, but

to conduct that kind of thing on campus, with our staff, and in our spaces would be contrary to the regulations at this time. So we certainly want kids and their parents to be able to come and pick up materials for their kids. But we need to do so safely until things change in that regard.

**Q7: Should the school open again, have you considered offering school four half days a week instead of two full days a week? Please do not refer to the commuting situation at Marmara in your response, as we signed up and paid full school fee for the Hisar campus.**

- It may actually be a preference, particularly for Hisar. If we're given that option, it's definitely something that we would consider and work with parents. But, what may work on one campus may not work on the other and we need to make decisions on what is best for the students in the programs we have. If we go to a hybrid model, we would consider dividing a shortened week into more days, if given the opportunity.

**Q8: As we wait to be informed about credit notice due to distance learning days in the 1st semester, please let us know the due date for the 2nd instalment of tuition for the 2020 - 2021 school year.**

- You can find the answer on the presentation - Finance report section

**Q9: I am curious about vaccinations. Will the school be taking a proactive stance in organizing vaccinations for all staff in coordination with insurance and local hospitals?**

- We are being proactive and meeting with our school nurse and the doctor who works with us to find out more information on vaccinations. If in the future, we would be able to coordinate vaccinations potentially on campus. As of right now, our understanding is that's not an option and people must independently register through the online site to be able to set up their appointments.

**Q10: The new IICS campus in Bodrum Kaplankaya. Is it also going to be an option to attend?**

- IICS does not have a new campus. However, we have collaborated with the Kaplankaya community (near Bodrum) to establish a remote learning and EY program.

**Q11: Is it possible to get special permission to have Grade 11 go back to face to face instruction seeing how Grade 11 year is crucial to IB Diploma?**

- IICS complies with the Turkish Ministry of Education's instructions and mandates on which grade levels can or will have face to face learning during the pandemic. Currently, the official communication from the Ministry has been to offer face to face education to Grade 8 and 12 students for the duration of the Turkish Schools' holiday. We will communicate the new announcement regarding the plan for after February 15 with the parents as soon as we receive it. We will investigate the possibility of an option granted by the Ministry for IICS to offer face to face schooling to Grade 11, or any other grade level, other than the ones officially announced. We are reluctant to open the school physically for those grade levels that have not been permitted by the Turkish Ministry of Education.

**Q12: Currently under 20s are only allowed out between noon and 4. Are we being given an exemption to this curfew to allow our students to travel outside of these hours? Or has this curfew been lifted?**

- Grade 8 and 12 students attending school during the three week period when Turkish Schools are on holiday have permission from the Ministry of Education. This permission was communicated to us verbally last week with a promise that a written confirmation would be sent to us in the days to come. We have received a letter from the Ministry of Education on Feb.1, 2021. A copy of this letter along with a Turkish and English explanation of the permission has been emailed to all Grade 8 and 12 parents, and hardcopies have been given to the bus drivers.

**Q13: People who get vaccinated can be carriers of the virus and infect other people. At this case, teachers might infect students. Are any precautions taken for this?**

- It is still unclear if those who are vaccinated for COVID-19 can transmit the virus to others. Early reports indicate it may still be possible, but at a significantly lower rate. However, the WHO and CDC strongly recommend following the same preventative measures even after being vaccinated, such as social distancing and properly wearing a mask.

**Q14: Can HoS give more information on Mobis system registration? Does he have any concern for dual citizens?**

- As mentioned in the presentation, all students attending international schools in Turkey must be registered in the MOBIS system. However, MOBIS requires a Foreign ID number. Currently, those with a Mavi kart or TC ID number are not able to register. We are working with government officials to understand how this may impact our students. Although there is no immediate concern, we are actively investigating the issue and we will provide updates when we have more information.

**Q15: May I ask if there is any news on the new Secondary Principal?**

- The announcement was sent on Monday.

**Q16: Parents in Hisar, desire their children to go to Hisar campus as many days as possible to let them socialize and to learn more effectively. However, parents in Marmara are apparently not on the same page as them because parents in Marmara realize how tiring the commute to Marmara campus could be for their children. Taking this into accounting, I'd like to ask the school to listen to parents carefully by each campus, when the school decides the on-campus schedule.**

- Based on the Ministry of Education's recent announcement, we are planning on a gradual opening for on-campus instruction starting March 1. As we begin developing schedules for on-campus instruction, we will actively seek feedback from parents. Whereas we are one IICS community, we understand that circumstances at Hisar and Marmara campuses are not always the same and we will take that into consideration. Even if we are able to offer different schedules, we will need the Ministry's approval beforehand.

Chair Ferhangil thanked the parents, Leadership Team, teachers, staff and Board members for joining the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:12pm.