

VIENTIANE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLAN

By August, 2014 VIS Will:

Curriculum Area

- Be an authorized IB World School offering all 3 IB programs; PYP, MYP, DP
- Meet the needs of all by having developed a community of learners
- Support holistic learning with appropriate resources

Finance Area

- Have established effective financial management practices
- Offer its staff a competitive salary and benefits package
- Have an established Development Community providing new income sources

Facility Area

- Have completed Phase III of the master construction plan – with a Performing Arts Center and a Swimming Pool or have access to a Swimming Pool nearby
- Safe campus facilities that have wide access to the Community

School Life Area

- Have a well developed intrinsic attitude towards community service
- Have a positive community spirit promoting cross cultural understanding and open communication
- Have a high level of student participation on sports teams and after school activities

Personnel Area

- Be adequately staffed to meet the capacity enrollment of 550-600 students
- Offer comprehensive professional development to all Lao Staff
- Have a good balance between work load and non-school life for all staff

VIS MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Vientiane International School is to educate, motivate and inspire students and to prepare them to be confident, successful and responsible citizens of the world. VIS will offer a high quality, internationally accredited English language curriculum to a diverse community.

Purposes

The School aims to achieve the following principles, purposes and goals, in accordance with recognized international accreditation criteria:

- to ensure high academic standards through the use of the International Baccalaureate Programme
- to promote its students' international understanding, knowledge and appreciation of the many cultures of the world.
- to challenge and motivate each student to reach his/her potential
- to promote its students' social, emotional, and physical development
- to stimulate creativity and critical independent thought
- to foster self-discipline and responsibility, both personal and social
- to encourage individual accomplishment and reward individual achievement
- to develop in the students a sense of identity and a feeling of belonging
- to provide the students with an appreciation of the people, history, and culture of Lao PDR.
- to foster respect and appreciation for cultural diversity
- to encourage interaction with the Lao community through school activities and service learning opportunities
- to instil enthusiasm for life-long learning
- to maintain a safe, caring and supportive learning environment
- to provide a healthy and safe school environment
- to nurture the values of honesty, mutual trust and respect, appreciation of individual differences and rights, and a sense of responsibility; and.
- to promote cooperation among students, parents and staff in sharing responsibility for education and learning

VISION Environment

Political/Economic: The Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) is a mountainous landlocked country slightly larger than the US state of Utah and is located in Southeast Asia. Ringed by Thailand, Burma, China, Vietnam and Cambodia, it is the least populated and least developed of its neighbors. Laos has a majority Buddhist population of about 5.7 million, composed of 46 ethnic groups. Most Lao are concentrated along the agriculturally rich

Mekong River Region. The rest, especially the non-Lao ethnic groups, are dispersed across rugged upland terrain.

With an estimated \$325 per capita income, Laos is one of the poorest countries in East Asia. Nearly 73% of its population live on less than \$2 a day and 25% live on less than a dollar a day. Other development indicators are also among the worst in the region, and close to the average of Sub-Saharan Africa. Life expectancy is 55 years, infant mortality is 87 per 1000 live births, and illiteracy is around 34%.

Laos has significant natural resources including forestry, minerals and hydroelectric power. Agriculture remains the major sector of the economy, contributing 51% to the GDP and employing 80% of the population. Poor management, lack of human resources and foreign reluctance to invest in Laos have hindered development of the Lao economy.

Laos was under the control of Siam (Thailand) from the late 18th century until the late 19th century when it became part of French Indochina. In 1975 the Communist Pathet Lao took control of the government, ending a six hundred year old monarchy. The government remains communist and is still led by the men who fought against the US backed royalist government 30 years ago. The Indochina conflict continues to cast a long shadow in other ways as well. Unexploded ordnance from that era inhibits economic growth, suspicions of the Thai and the United States linger, and alliances with other communist countries formed during that time still resonate today. In response to the end of the Soviet Union, Laos is gradually moving towards a more open economy and integrating itself more fully into the region. Nonetheless, the Lao government remains authoritarian and highly values control. Personal freedoms are restricted, but some progress, particularly religious freedom, has occurred recently.

History-Culture-Buddhism in Lao: Theravada Buddhism, considered more austere and inward-looking than Mahayana Buddhism, was formally introduced into Laos in the mid 14th century by King Fa Ngum. He brought the religion from present day Cambodia. Fa Ngum is also renowned for forming the Lane Xang empire, the precursor of contemporary Laos.

Today, 60% of the population, most of whom live in the urban and agricultural centers of the south, practice Theravada Buddhism. Among the minority tribal groups of the north, animism is still widely practiced. It is also common to observe some animistic practices among Theravada Buddhists.

In 1975-76, for a short time following the Communist revolution, the new Lao government prohibited the populace from giving food to monks, cutting off an important way for the faithful to gain merit, central to the religion. This forced monks to farm, a practice contradictory to their religious views. Within a short time, however, these orders were revoked. In 1992, the government removed the hammer and sickle from the national emblem and replaced them with an image of Pha That Luang, a Vientiane religious site and the country's most important Buddhist symbol. Today, party leaders make a show of attending the most important annual Buddhist festival held at the same site.

Theravada doctrine (also practiced in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia) stresses three principles of existence: there is suffering; everything is impermanent and there is no permanent soul. The goal of Theravada Buddhism is nirvana, a level of existence where one has eliminated all suffering. One achieves nirvana by being reborn on progressive higher

levels of understanding and surrender. To advance to a higher level in the next life, one establishes merit in this life. Merit is achieved by feeding monks, donating money to temples, worship and following the Buddhist moral code, The Five Precepts – refrain from:

- Destroying life
- Taking what is not given
- Illicit sexual relations
- False speech
- Intoxicants causing heedlessness

The faithful frequently worship at temples according to the lunar calendar: at full, new, and quarter moon. They also worship at times of supplication.

Siddharta Guatama, a 6th century BC Indian prince, was renamed The Buddha, or Enlightened One, following many years of meditation during which he formulated the Four Noble Truths:

- There is suffering
- Suffering is caused by desire
- To eliminate desire, one must eliminate suffering
- The way to eliminate suffering is to follow the Eightfold Path

The Eightfold Path is:

- Right understanding
- Right thought
- Right speech
- Right bodily conduct
- Right livelihood
- Right effort
- Right attentiveness
- Right concentration

Legal/Accreditation: In 2006 the Vientiane International School received legal status in Laos as an independent private school recognized by the Lao Ministry of Education. Vientiane International School is fully accredited by the Council of International School and Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Vientiane International School is the only accredited school in Laos and is one of a small selection of international schools in Asia accredited by both CIS and WASC.

Education: Early in 2005 VIS began a formal feasibility study to determine whether to implement the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program (17-18 year olds). A formal feasibility study for the Primary Years Program (3-11 year olds) was started early in 2006 and the Middle Years Program will follow this. VIS officially received IB Diploma authorization in April, 2008 and we expect to receive PYP authorization during May-June, 2009.

The IB Diploma Program is a rigorous, college preparatory program offered in the final two years of secondary schooling. Over 600 universities in more than 100 countries on all continents have readily accepted students on the basis of their IB qualifications.

The IB Primary Years Program (PYP) offers a comprehensive, inquiry based approach to teaching and learning. The program focuses on the total growth of the developing child, addressing social, physical, emotional, and cultural needs in addition to academic welfare.

The IB Middle Years Program (MYP) is designed for students in the 11-16 age range and is a complete and coherent program that provides a framework of academic challenge and life skills appropriate to this stage of adolescence. It is our plan to become a IB World School offering all three IB programs.

In a small international school such as VIS, we (parents, staff, and students) have the unique opportunity to come together as a school family for the benefit of each child. The education of our children is the obligation of the entire school community working together to bring this about. I invite each of you to become involved and to be an active member of the Vientiane International School family. A very active PTA is open to all VIS parents. In addition, parents with special skills or those who would like to volunteer to help at the school are urged to contact the school office. Your expertise and assistance will enable us to give our students as many positive, constructive experiences as possible.

The VIS Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives is charted as an attached document. The Plan is divided into Five Areas: Finance, Personnel, Facilities, Curriculum and School Life. In some areas there are action plans listed under objectives. There are two formats for the Strategic Plan. The first includes goals, objectives and action plans. The second is without the action plans. This was done to make the plan comprehensive but manageable as a document that is not too long. The procedure for carrying out the Strategic Plan is listed below in “Stewarding the Plan”.

STEWARDING THE PLAN

By the date of the Annual General Meeting in September of each school year the Board will meet to review the Strategic Plan and prepare a status report for dissemination to the VIS community. Special attention should be paid to Objectives which have had a Target Date come due during the previous 12 months. Attention should also be given to Objectives which have an “ongoing” Target Date. These are obviously the most difficult to monitor, but can be among the most important tasks in the Strategic Plan. The Board should point out any Goals and Objectives which have been completed, and should make suggestions for revision of their portions of the Strategic Plan. If there are new Goals and/or Objectives, which the Board would like to propose, this should be done at this time.

The Board should provide a summary to the VIS community at the AGM. This can be done by chart or with a narrative summary or both. The important thing is to indicate progress and comment on reasons for lack thereof on items which are failing to make progress. It should pass through a Committee (set up for monitoring the SP)

during a meeting just prior the date of review for comment and support. The Committee should have one representative from each of the Five Areas of the Plan and include the VIS Director and Business Manager. Each Committee Leader will be responsible for monitoring action plans and meet with committee members as necessary. Committees will replace leaving members with new members as needed. This can be done through communication at large in the VIS community under the guidance of the VIS Director and Board Chairman.

The Board may direct changes to the Strategic Plan in instances where it seems necessary. The important focus should be on keeping the Strategic Plan as a living document. Each five years the Board should review the entire Strategic Plan with a view to changing circumstances which may require an update. The Committee should provide the Board with a complete report at the end of each five year review. In fact, the plan may need to be started again.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMMITTEES – March 2009

Curriculum

Kim Green – Leader
Rebecca Cameron
Biliana Vassileva
Han Sol Kim

Facilities

Steve Alexander – Leader
Simon Ingram
Ben Chayuti
Sabra Leppanen

Finance

Bobby Allen – Leader
Per Wirmen
Jo Furtado Hilger
Bruce Knox
Patrick Durkin

Personnel

Catrin Moore – Leader
Stephen Gluning
Garret Hotrich
Rowland Jepson

School Life

Carmel McCormick – Leader
Nicolette Baan
Corey Foppes
Tony Watters
Flavia Usher

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