



## Staff Handbook 2008-2009

This handbook is intended to define the rights and responsibilities of staff, enabling all members to be effective in their work with children, parents, colleagues, and administrators.

# The International School of Sosúa

## History

The International School of Sosúa (ISS) is the realization of a long-time dream to provide superior educational opportunities for children of the North Coast. In 1988, a group of parents, including newcomers and original settlers, joined to establish a school to provide improved educational opportunities.

In 1989, through an appropriation of land and one building located in an ideal setting, the International School of Sosúa began offering educational services with one certified teacher from the United States teaching kindergarten and first grade.

The outstanding community response to the International School of Sosúa demonstrated a demand for quality education in the region. The newly formed school began to grow in order to meet the needs of its community and today offers services from PreK to grade 12.

## Growth

In the beginning, ISS followed a correspondence program provided by the Calvert School in Baltimore, Maryland. Today, classes are taught by teachers from the United States, Canada, the Dominican Republic, and other countries throughout the world. The school has developed a comprehensive curriculum and adopted testing procedures that adhere to current standards of education in the United States and the Dominican Republic.

The school developed additional courses in response to the needs of its international community. These include Spanish, Dominican Social Studies, and Civics (the curriculum for these courses conform to the educational standards of the Dominican Ministry of Education), as well as English as a Second Language and Spanish as a Second Language.

## Accreditation

The International School of Sosúa is accredited by AdvancED and recognized by the local Dominican Ministry of Education. The purpose of accreditation is to document and ensure that a quality education is being offered.

## ISS Vision –

ISS will be the leading educational center in the Caribbean region within the next five years.

## Mission –

ISS provides a quality education which ensures that children achieve **high academic qualifications, essential social and life skills**, and a **global awareness** enabling them to successfully pursue a post secondary education or career in the country of their choice.

The ISS curriculum stresses the development of **basic skills** (reading, writing and arithmetic) as well as **21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills** to aid students to develop into **contributing global citizens**.

### **ISS Beliefs –**

ISS believes that:

- student learning and the best interests of the children are the foremost concerns of all stakeholders and therefore guide the decision making processes of the school;
- education is a shared responsibility between the home and the school;
- effective communication between all stakeholders facilitates the learning process;
- all community members are accountable for their actions and personal responsibilities and must abide by the ISS Code of Conduct;
- a safe and nurturing environment fosters learning;
- all children learn differently; therefore,
  - teachers must use a variety of instructional strategies to engage and motivate students to learn,
  - teachers must use a variety of assessment strategies that permit students frequent opportunities to demonstrate their learning.

### **ISS Expectations for Student Learning –**

- All students will demonstrate the ability to read fluently and use higher levels of comprehension and thinking;
- All students will demonstrate the ability to communicate their ideas orally and in written form;
- All students will demonstrate competency in basic arithmetic and mental math;
- All students will demonstrate bilingualism;
- All students will demonstrate the ability to work independently and in teams to achieve goals and solve problems;
- All students will demonstrate the ability to perform research and use technology to synthesize and analyze information from a variety of sources.

Note – ISS firmly believes that students who master these expectations for learning will be adequately knowledgeable and equipped to make informed judgements and to become exemplary citizens.

### **Teacher Code of Ethics**

The Teacher Code of Ethics states general rules for maintaining high standards of professional service and conduct in the community.

The teacher speaks and acts toward students, parents, and colleagues with respect and dignity and deals judiciously with them, always mindful of their individual rights and sensibilities.

The teacher respects the confidential nature of information concerning students and colleagues and may share it only with authorized persons or agencies directly concerned with their welfare.

The teacher recognizes that a privileged relationship with students and colleagues exists and refrains from exploiting that relationship for material, ideological, or other advantages.

The teacher will communicate openly with all stakeholders.

If a teacher takes issue with a colleague, he/she should speak first with the colleague, and if the issue is not satisfactorily resolved, he/she should bring it to their immediate supervisor. The Director will mediate any unresolved issues.

Gossip demeans the gossiper, maligns the gossiped, destroys relationships and harms the school. Gossiping will not be tolerated! As [\*Adlai E. Stevenson\*](#) said: "He who slings mud generally loses ground".

### **Faculty Conflict of Interest**

No employee will use the school's facilities for financial gain in activities unconnected with the approved school program. No teacher will offer tutoring services for remuneration on school grounds without the specific approval of the Director. Tutoring will be conducted after 3:15 p.m. Teachers recommending students for tutoring must have their recommendations approved by their supervisor. Teachers may not tutor their own students without authorization from the Director.

### **Teaching and Learning about Controversial Issues**

Controversial issues are ideas, policies, or events about which people hold different points of view. The ISS family is committed to the belief that free exchange of ideas concerning controversial issues is beneficial to our community and more productive, leading to greater maturity and responsibility in its future citizens. We feel that free discussion is the core of the democratic process. However, we also recognize that all people do not share this belief. For this reason, all teachers must obtain prior approval from their supervisor before entering into discussions or activities that go beyond the scope of the curriculum. In addition, a teacher shall refrain from using his/her classroom privilege and prestige to promote a partisan point of view.

All parents and students have the right to request alternative assignments if the learning content and/or objectives challenge their personal beliefs.

A permission slip must be sent home to parents before viewing any movie that is rated higher than G and is not pre-approved and part of the curriculum.

## **Professional Responsibilities**

### **Faculty Qualifications**

Classroom teachers must provide documentation that they hold the equivalent of a teacher or professional certification for the subject area that they are assigned in accordance with the Quality Assurance Standards defined by AdvancED and any local Dominican Ministry of Education rules and regulations. If the Director is not able to hire a certified teacher, he/she may hire a non-certified teacher with the understanding that the teacher will work toward certification or until a fully certified professional is retained.

All staff members must complete six (6) professional development credits within every five (5) years of employment at ISS. Professional development credits can be assigned internally for workshops and conferences attended or through accredited institutions.

### **School Calendar**

The school calendar will reflect the contractual obligations for a minimum of 195 work days distributed as follows: 5 teacher orientation and professional development planning work days prior to the start of school, 180-185 instructional days, and 5 professional development days during the school year. In the event of hurricanes or other natural disasters that necessitate the cancellation of regular instructional days, the number of professional development days may be reduced and substituted for instructional days. If necessary, the school year may also be extended to ensure that a minimum of 180 instructional days are performed.

### **Orientation Week**

Orientation is scheduled for the week before the first day of school. During orientation week, the school will review the ISS Vision for Learning and provide guidance on the implementation of the ISS Curriculum and ISS's policies and procedures. Time will also be allotted for preparing for the opening of school. Teachers will be given a schedule of activities on the first day of Orientation Week.

### **Weekly Calendar**

Teachers should notify the Director of planned events, both those off campus (field trips, sporting events, etc.) and on campus (concert rehearsals, standardized testing, etc.) by writing one week in advance. A weekly calendar will be published and posted throughout the school and sent to teachers via email.

### **Daily Schedule**

All full time teachers are expected to be at school from **7:45 am to 3:15 pm** daily except for days when teachers attend Staff Meetings, perform reinforcement or lead an extra-curricular

activity. Teachers are expected to be in their classrooms by 7:55 am. Teachers may leave at 3:15 pm; however, in some circumstances, teachers may be required to attend parent/student conferences before or after school. Whenever possible, such meetings will be scheduled at least one day in advance.

All Kinder to Grade 12 teachers will have a minimum of one planning period per day.

All staff members must be in attendance at Morning Circle (Monday and Wednesday). Teachers are not permitted to leave school property during the school day without the permission of their supervisor.

### **Staff Meetings**

One day a week, all teachers will be required to attend staff meetings before (7:15 am-7:55 am) or after school (3:00 pm-4:30 pm).

### **Reinforcement**

One day a week, all Kinder to Grade 12 teachers will be required to provide reinforcement in their subject area after school from 3:00-4:00 pm. Reinforcement schedules will be coordinated to begin the second week of each quarter. Each teacher must hand in a weekly record of student attendance for the reinforcement session. Students who do not meet classroom learning standards, are missing work or missed days of school will be required to attend. In the elementary school, all teachers must notify parents at least one day in advance if their child is required to attend. In the secondary school, teachers must notify students at least one day in advance when their attendance is required.

### **Extra-curricular Activities**

All teachers who do not provide reinforcement will be required to perform a minimum of 10-20 hours of extra-curricular, student-centered activities throughout the year. Teachers must coordinate and schedule their activity with the Director. All teachers must complete an Extra-curricular Record Form that is signed by the principal and provides a summary of the teacher's efforts and a self reflection on their performance.

### **Course Syllabus/Curriculum Overview**

Each teacher will develop a course syllabus or curriculum overview, including a description of the class and a written explanation of their grading system, to share with students and parents during the first week of school. A copy will be posted online and stored in the ISS Curriculum Binder as well as in the ISS Shared File.

## **Lesson/Unit Plans**

To assist in long-range planning and to assure adequate coverage of the curriculum, teachers must develop lesson plans outlining learning objectives and planned instructional and assessment strategies. Teachers will be provided lesson plan books but may request authorization to use an alternative format. Daily lesson plan books must be easily accessible and available for review by members of the Administrative Council.

Teachers are encouraged to develop long term unit plans.

## **Records**

Teachers will maintain records for grades and attendance. Office personnel will collect attendance records daily and phone parents in the case of any absences. In addition to the office record, each teacher is responsible for keeping daily attendance records. The teacher's records will be considered as the final authority in the event of a dispute.

Teachers must maintain a constant record of the student's performance and achievement. The use of formative and summative assessment which provides frequent and constructive feedback is encouraged. Principals will frequently review teacher grade books and will collect and store each teacher's grade book at the end of the school year. Teachers are also encouraged to use internet-based grade books, affording parents and students the ability to access and monitor their progress online.

Report cards must be completed a minimum of three days prior to the distribution date.

Throughout the school year, teachers will collect exemplary work from the students as outlined in the criteria for student portfolio. The selected work will demonstrate their learning and academic and social progress.

## **Extra Duties**

Duty schedules will be prepared to cover supervision assignments during recess, lunch, after school or at other times as required.

## **Field Trips**

The Director's approval is required before field trips can be planned. Teachers must complete a Field Trip Request form and provide justification of the educational purpose of the trip. All pertinent information regarding purpose, date, time, transportation, cost, necessary food services, chaperones and any risks involved should be included on the form. Once the trip has been authorized, teachers will distribute the Student Field Trip Permission Form to parents and obtain parent signatures.

Parental/guardian permission must be obtained before students are permitted to take part in the field trip.

Field trip costs should be calculated to include costs for all teachers and chaperones. This does not include parent volunteers, who are expected to pay their own way.

For most field trips and activities, one chaperone for every ten (10) students is acceptable; however, that number is subject to change depending on the age(s) of the student(s) and the nature of the activity. ISS will not be responsible for any field trip related costs/expenses.

Teachers are required to take a first aid kit, cell phone, class telephone lists, and copies of student health insurance with them on trips.

### **Emergency Lesson Plans**

All teachers will prepare an emergency lesson plan folder containing three days of work (readings and assignments), a daily schedule, a class list for recording grades and attendance, and a list of any duties (supervision, etc.). The emergency lesson plan folder will be kept on file in the Administrative Office for emergency situations when the teacher is absent. Teachers should review and update their emergency lesson plans a minimum of once a quarter or following any prolonged absence when the emergency lesson plans were applied in the classroom.

### **Teacher Absence Due To Illness**

If a teacher is ill and needs a substitute, he/she **must** notify (by phone) either the Director or Principal at the earliest possible moment.

Emergency lesson plans will **only** be used in the case of an emergency. Substitute lesson plans should be sent or emailed to the Director or designate before 8:00 a.m.

### **Teacher Absence Due to School Related Events**

When a substitute teacher is needed to cover a teacher who is absent for field trips or other planned events, the absent teacher will notify the Director or designate and fill out a Planned Absence Form. Once the form has been signed, the requesting teacher will work with the Principal to arrange a substitute.

### **Selecting a Replacement for an Absent Teacher**

Upon notification of a teacher's absence the Director or designate will arrange for a substitute teacher as follows:

- First choice, by calling a substitute teacher from the approved substitute list;
- Second choice, by using a teacher assistant;

- Third choice, by combining classes where appropriate. For example, when the regular Spanish teacher must be away, the SSL teacher may be able to cover both the regular and SSL classes; If the SSL or ESL teachers are absent the regular teachers may be asked to retain the students who would otherwise be withdrawn;
- Last choice, by assigning off duty ISS teachers and administrators to cover the classes.

## **Personal Business**

Teachers are not permitted to use cell phones during class time and are requested to store cell phones out of the view of the students while on campus.

All long distance calls and faxes (personal and school related) must be logged and paid for by the teacher in the Business Office. The Director must authorize school related long distance charges.

## **Materials Requests**

The director must authorize the purchase of all materials and school supplies. After receiving authorization, the materials will be ordered through the Business Office. A small supply of basic school materials (tape, staples, clips, etc.) is kept on hand.

During the months of March and April, teachers will prepare lists of instructional resources to be requested for the next school year. Requests for resources must be accompanied by justifications for purchase. The Director must authorize all final orders and will do so taking into account the budget and level of priority of the purchase.

## **Clothing**

All ISS staff members are expected to dress in a professional manner. School clothing should be comfortable, yet tend toward the conservative.

Male teachers must wear long pants (slacks or corduroys) and a collared shirt (polo or button down). Jeans, shorts and T-shirts are not considered professional attire.

Female teachers may wear dresses, skirts (knee-length), capris or slacks and a blouse. Shorts, jeans, mini dresses, spaghetti straps or any type of revealing clothing items are not suitable.

During cooler winter months, insignia sweatshirts and other cool weather beach clothes should be avoided in favor of sweaters, plain sweatshirts and light jackets.

Head wear such as hats, bandanas, etc. as well as running shoes and blue jeans are not considered proper attire. Closed shoes or sturdy sandals are recommended.

On special occasions, teachers may be permitted to wear alternative clothing in accordance to the theme of the day.

## **Teacher Evaluation**

The Principal's and Director's role is to assist teachers in achieving the Vision for Learning at ISS. Teacher evaluations will be based on a number of factors including formal and informal class visits, daily and monthly reviews of lesson plans and portfolios of students' work, as well as an assessment of the teacher as a productive staff and community member.

Teacher evaluation will emphasize:

- knowledge of the curriculum as outlined in the Curriculum Guide;
- ability to develop clear and creative lesson plans and units of study that include lesson objectives and outcomes that advance the Curriculum;
- ability to present content knowledge and to work toward skill development in an engaging and efficient manner;
- ability to develop systems to assess students learning in creative and meaningful manners;
- ability to develop programs to aid students with learning difficulties;
- completion of all professional duties and compliance with professional standards;
- compliance with AdvancED standards.

Teachers' evaluations will take place throughout the school year. The outcome of the summative evaluation will be:

- a satisfactory performance rating and continued employment;
- probation with terms and conditions for continuation indicated;
- recommendation to not renew or to terminate contract.

## **Professional Rights and Benefits**

In accordance with school policy, a teacher has the following rights and obligations:

### **Contracts and the Process for Rehiring Teachers**

Following the December School Board meeting, teachers will be asked to indicate their tentative plans for the next school year (yes I want to come back / no I don't). Copies of the tentative contract and next years teacher handbook will be made available to the teachers to review.

By the end of the second quarter of study, teachers will be asked to indicate their firm plans for the next school year. ISS will extend formal contracts to teachers who will be retained by the end of the third quarter of study.

Teachers who return signed contracts to the Director will receive final copies of the contract signed by the Director and the Board President within two weeks of the end of the school year.

Recruiting replacement teachers will begin in December for tentative or definite openings for the next school year. The school may offer current teachers the right of first refusal of jobs for the next school year. Teachers may exercise this right by signing a contract when the Director informs them that a suitable candidate has been found and is about to be offered their position.

### **Part-Time Staff**

Depending on the needs of the school, part-time staff may be hired. Wages and benefits will be prorated according to the percentage of the regular work week for each part-time staff member.

### **Salary**

Salaries are determined by the ISS Teacher Salary Grid managed by the Director and approved by the Board of Directors. The annual salary will be paid in accordance with the terms of the contract.

### **Benefits**

Benefits included in the compensation package are outlined within the terms of each staff member's contract. Benefits may include:

**Health Insurance:** The school may pay for one local health insurance plan for eligible full time professional staff. Teacher payments for additional insurance will be deducted or billed to the teacher. Teachers who are over 60 may receive a US \$ grant instead of a medical insurance package.

**Tuition Waivers for Children of Teachers:** All full-time staff members may receive one and a half tuition waivers for their children to attend the International School of Sosúa if they meet the admission requirements. Teachers are responsible for their child's lunch costs, uniform fees and any other costs of schooling including the annual registration fee.

**Meals:** The school provides lunch and a snack for all staff members.

**Residency Permits:** Foreign teachers who choose to apply for Dominican residency status may apply for a grant from the School Board to support the costs of the application process. Teachers must request the grant in writing no later than March 31<sup>st</sup> of the current school year. Grants typically will range from US \$300-500 per year for a maximum of three years.

Teachers may only apply for the grant if they plan on renewing their contracts for the next school year, otherwise the teacher will be expected to pay back the grant.

**Transportation Allowance:** A transportation allowance will be paid to teachers recruited outside of the Dominican Republic in accordance with the conditions in each staff member's contract. This money is payable to the teacher immediately upon the teacher's arrival at the school. Teachers resigning before the end of the school year will have a proportional reduction in their last payment for their travel allowance.

**Housing:** The School Board and Administration will assist first year teachers in finding the best available housing. Housing costs are the responsibility of the teacher.

**Sick Leave:** A total of eight (8) paid sick days will be allocated per academic year; however, after five accumulated sick days or more than two consecutive sick days, the staff member will be asked to provide a doctor's note or appropriate excuse.

**Personal Days:** All full time ISS teachers may solicit two personal days. Teachers must request their personal days in writing to the Director at least two days in advance of the planned absence. No more than two teachers may take a personal day on the same day, and personal days cannot be taken before or immediately following a vacation (summer/winter) or during parent/teacher conferences.

**Professional Development (PD):** Professional development programs will be developed based on the school's goals and objectives. These will consist of full and part-day programs.

In accordance with the standards established by AdvancEd, all teachers will participate in the necessary professional development activities accruing six (6) credit hours over a five year period employment at ISS. ISS will provide a grant of a maximum of US \$500 for PD courses pre-approved by the Director per year. Payment will be made immediately after the teacher provides evidence of having passed the course, together with supporting documentation (costs etc.). All training must be claimed by March 31<sup>st</sup> of the current school year.

**Maternity, Paternity, and Marriage Leave:** Teachers are entitled to up to three (3) months of paid maternity leave, three (3) days of paternity leave and three (3) days of marriage leave.

**Emergency Leave:** Additional leave for family emergencies (chronic or severe medical conditions, bereavement, etc.) may be granted for up to four days.

### **Resignation, Dismissal and Non-renewal of Staff**

Teachers are expected to fulfill the obligations of their contracts. If special circumstances give rise to a request to resign, either by the school or by a teacher, notice will be given in writing

providing a minimum of sixty (60) days advance notice. The request must be accompanied by appropriate documentary support.

Should a staff member be dismissed, no prior notification is required. The dismissal will be accompanied by appropriate documentary support.

Should a staff member not be rehired, the school will make every effort to provide at least three months notice prior to the following school year.

### **Insurance Coverage upon Resignation**

Coverage on the school's insurance policy will end 30 days after the employee's last day of work or on the day the teacher departs the Dominican Republic, if less than 30 days after the effective resignation date.

### **Teacher's Right to Seek Employment Outside of School**

Teachers will not accept other employment or arrange tutoring without prior consent from the Director.

### **Right to a Private Life – Outside School Activities**

The ISS School Board does not wish to invade the private lives of its teachers or be the moral arbiter of what will be considered correct behavior; however, it does reserve the right to protect the reputation of the school and those associated with it. Illicit actions or involvement in activities that reflect negatively on the school may be considered in the evaluation of a staff member and reason for dismissal or non-renewal of contract. The Director will discuss concerns involving inappropriate conduct with the staff member and provide notice of possible consequences. Extreme cases that exhibit a public violation of professional ethics or law may result in the termination of a contract.

### **Disciplinary Process for Teachers**

All staff members will be held accountable for their actions and are expected to comply with the Teacher Code of Ethics and their Professional Responsibilities at all times. Teacher's who fail to do so will be subject to a disciplinary process that will vary depending upon the severity of the incident. This process includes but is not limited to:

- Verbal warning
- Verbal warning noted in file
- Written warning with copy to file
- Probation
- Suspension with pay
- Suspension without pay
- Termination of contract upon completion (non-renewal)

- Immediate termination of contract

Teachers have the right to view any documentation involving disciplinary incidents. Teachers also retain the right to appeal any disciplinary consequence if they are not in agreement with the decision taken by their direct supervisor. The appeal must be completed in writing and submitted to the Director.