

August 21, 2017

Dear students and families,

A big welcome to 5th grade! Fifth grade is a special year, full of fun, increased independence, and preparing for middle school. I can't wait to get to know you all and share this important year in the children's academic journey with you. First, a little about myself: This is my 12th year teaching, and my second year here at ISS! I have a Bachelor of Arts in international relations from the University of Notre Dame, a Master of Science in international education from Oxford University, and a multiple subject teaching credential from Alliant University. San Francisco, California, is my home, but my journey as an educator has taken me from the United States to Belize to Mexico. I'm so happy to be living here in the beautiful Dominican Republic, and love teaching in a community as international as ISS. As a teacher, I firmly believe in fostering lifelong learning, empowering students to take ownership of their own educational journeys, and working hard to develop each child's own unique potential.

Fifth grade is a special year, one of transition, exploring identity, and enjoying the responsibility and privilege that comes with being leaders of the elementary school. They aren't simply bigger fourth graders; fifth grade is a unique time in students cognitive, social-emotional, and language development. They are experiencing changes not only physically, but also in their attention span, sense of humor, friendships, and capacity for abstract thinking. We will go over expectations for the year in further detail at Meet the Teacher Night on Thursday, September 7th.

Academically, I firmly believe that building a daily reading habit is the best thing students can do for themselves. It fosters academic curiosity, strong spelling, vocabulary, and grammatical knowledge, and opens the doors to unlimited new content. Students will be asked to read 20-30 minutes each day. In addition, daily math practice will be assigned in order to reinforce concepts covered at school. Please support your child by ensuring that he or she has a quiet place to work each day with minimal distractions. Fifth grade is about finding a balance between autonomy and guidance; students are encouraged to ask questions, but if you find that they are not able to complete the work independently, please communicate this to me. We will discuss strategies for supporting students academically further at Meet the Teacher Night.

In order for students to reach their highest potential, it is incredibly important that they come to school rested, on time, and excited to learn. For my part, I will work hard to create a classroom environment that is welcoming, challenging, and student-centered. At home, I ask that you encourage students to get plenty of sleep, and remind them to shut off devices an hour before bedtime in order to provide ample time to rest and recharge for the coming day. When students are well rested and nourished, and understand that they have a strong support team of family and educators behind them, it is incredible what they can accomplish!

I take my role in guiding the students during this important developmental stage very seriously; at the same time, I recognize your importance as your child's first teacher and firmly believe that in order to best support these wonderful young people, it is critical that we work together. To this end, I welcome and encourage frequent communication. The more students understand that we are work as a team, the better we can support them. I ask that you visit our class website regularly - <http://www.issosua.com/grade-5.html>, as I will be posting important dates, information about homework and curriculum, and pictures of the kids in action. I also encourage you to be in touch via email, [lzika@issosua.com](mailto:lzika@issosua.com).

Best regards,  
Lindsay Zika  
Grade 5 Teacher