



Personal Reflections

9/19/2018

Dear IMSA Family,

During Parent Day at IMSA on September 15, 2018, several parents commented to me how much they enjoy these Personal Reflections. I smiled and said “It’s actually time for me to write another one. Thanks for the encouragement.” In this reflection, I want to share several comments I heard at Parent Day and provide an update on an IMSA priority for this Academic Year.

IMSA Proud

One parent commented to me that her daughter, a junior at IMSA, sometimes calls upon her brother, a junior in college, to ask questions about her math assignment at IMSA. Her brother, who is also an IMSA alumnus, sometimes remarks that he is working on a similar math problem as a junior in college, a math problem that he worked on as an IMSA student. As the parent hurried off to her next “mod,” she said that IMSA prepares students very well for the next level.

Another parent said to me that during their visits to colleges this summer, he and his family were so impressed that the colleges he visited were familiar with IMSA. IMSA’s reputation is strong and rankings like Niche increase its notoriety. Kudos to our College and Academic Counselors (Julia Husen, Dave McGovern, Karen Molenhouse, and Susan Sepulveda) who work with our students and promote IMSA to Admissions Counselors at universities.

Several other parents thanked me for the opportunity that their child has of attending IMSA. A couple of parents introduced me to a younger sibling saying that they hope the younger sibling will be accepted to IMSA. And one dad said to me, “It would have been hard to say ‘no’ to him. He feels like he is at home here. I realize that he doesn’t live with us anymore, but rather ‘visits’ us because IMSA is his new home. I didn’t think this day would come this early in his life, nor ours.”

United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Over the next few issues of my Personal Reflections, I plan to share with you more information regarding our four Academy priorities for this Academic Year. I referred to these priorities in my last Personal Reflection/Welcome Message. One priority, our focus on the United Nations (UN) 17 Sustainable Development Goals, stems from IMSA’s commitment to strengthening our identity as a learning laboratory, by which we mean, that IMSA wants to continue to innovate, to iterate, to conduct learning experiments, etc.

Our current theme in being a “learning lab” is guided by the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which is providing a real-world context for teaching and learning at IMSA. If you’re



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interested in reading more about my perspective on this matter, read the April 2017 [“BackTalk”](#) in Phi Delta Kappan. This magazine published my piece about how world challenges, such as climate change, humanitarian crises, etc., offer great learning opportunities for students through their focus on grappling with authentic, real-world problems.

IMSA continues to integrate the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals into our curriculum, student life programs, and outreach efforts. Faculty members are integrating the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals where appropriate into their curriculum. For example, the science team is using three goals (Good Health and Well-Being, Clean Water and Sanitation, and Sustainable Cities and Communities) to contextualize student learning in the new Advanced Biology Systems course. Additionally, faculty in History and Social Science are addressing multiple environmental goals by having seniors at the end of the semester consider relevant scientific, economic, political and ethical issues, and evaluating possible strategies for addressing a specific Sustainable Development Goal.

IMSA’s Student Life programs are in their second year of using the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for students to choose an issue which they wish to solve. They will have an opportunity to research and present their selected topic at the end of the year. Students are connecting with industry experts, entrepreneurs, and educators in order to better understand how global issues manifest locally. Each sophomore student has the opportunity to explore at least one UN Sustainable Development Goal through their LEAD project. Students will deliver their findings on May 1 at the Student Leadership Exchange.

Finally, our Outreach staff wrote curricula that address concerns regarding human impact on climate. The updated curriculum engages participants in investigations that help them develop climate science literacy. Participants, then, identify the issues and actions they want to take to address climate change. The Outreach team is researching and developing additional programs that focus on solving intractable problems in areas such as energy and health care.

IMSA is strengthening our identity as a “learning lab” by integrating the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals into our curriculum, student life programs and outreach. and, even robotics programs. In my next Personal Reflection, I plan to focus on another priority for this year: Developing an International Strategy.

Finally, I want to leave you with an additional source of information on IMSA. At each Board of Trustees meeting, I give the Board a “Report of the President” that includes information about Academy activities and progress that we are making to meet our strategic goals. You can read the reports [here](#).

Respectfully,



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José M. Torres, PhD

President

PS – As you know, the Governor recently signed IMSA’s bill into law modifying the IMSA Law to permit admission of a freshman class as well as tuition-paying, non-Illinois students. As part of the August 16 Community Day program, Dr. Hernandez and I led an open dialogue with staff, including faculty about the pros and cons of a freshman class. Based on the feedback from these conversations, at this time, we have chosen not to pursue a freshman class. I wanted you to know that I shared this decision with the Board of Trustees at our September 19, 2018 Board meeting. [Click here](#) for more information about SB 2939 to Expand IMSA.