

AISH

# LEADERSHIP

## Playbook for International School Heads



# Leadership Playbook: Threads of Leadership & Standards of Excellence



*We'll get you where you want to go.*





**AISH'S PLAYBOOK** consists of professional Standards and “Threads” of Leadership that shape an International Head of School’s approach to the position.

It was developed to equip you with tools for getting things done. Containing resources such as areas of leadership, standard operating procedures and examples of mission driven actions, it will help you outline consistent responses for the go-to plays of the Headship.

Have your playbook on hand for guidance as you draft goals, reflect on strategy, and think about approaches ahead of time.

# CONTENTS

1

## The Leadership Playbook

Merging the responsibilities of the work with the distinctive and individual strengths that a player brings to the position.

3

## AISH THREADS OF LEADERSHIP

The skills and practices of leaders that are necessary to enable a community to thrive.

5

## AISH STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

A self-reflective tool to assess performance, identify areas for growth, set goals, and note development.

## STANDARDS

### MISSION FOR LEARNING

The Head of an International School leads with a mission and vision that focuses on the desired results for student learning.

### GOVERNANCE

The Head of an International School, in partnership with the governing body, develops a culture of responsibility and accountability for the fulfillment of the school's mission.

### HUMAN & ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Head of an International School enacts legal and ethical practices to safeguard students' well-being and sets high levels of performance in staff so that each student can attain academic success.

### OPERATIONS & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Head of an International School ensures a safe, secure and supportive environment that is strategically resourced to achieve the mission and vision.

### SCHOOL-HOME-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Head of an International School cultivates positive relationships with families and the community to achieve partnerships that will benefit student outcomes.

### PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The Head of an International School models behavior consistent with the school's values and is continuously improving to meet the challenges and opportunities of leading a high performing school.

# Leadership Playbook



The mission of the Academy for International School Heads (AISH) is to serve International School Heads through focused advocacy, support and professional development.

To this end, we have developed the Leadership Playbook for your use. This resource is based on current educational and leadership research, and our goals are simple:

- To make a positive impact on student learning
- To help leaders develop the skills to reach their potential and
- To contribute to the future of learning and leading.

### What you will find in the Leadership Playbook

We know that there is a “what” to the job of school leadership, the various areas of responsibility that leaders must implement for effective school management. We capture the “what” of the job in the six AISH Standards of Excellence for International School Heads.

We also know that the “how” is critically important: how does an individual leader develop and grow the skills and practices necessary to make a school community thrive? We capture the “how” of the job in the five AISH Leadership Threads.

We call the interplay of the “what” and the “how” of leadership the playbook of the position, which melds the responsibilities of the work with the distinctive and individual strengths that a leader brings to that job.

In addition, the “why” of leadership is written into every statement to ensure that the leader is continually aware of one’s purpose and makes decisions for optimal impact. Such phrases as “for the accomplishment of the mission for learning,” “so that each student can attain academic success,”

“empower students to take responsibility for their own learning, “ keep us outcome focused as leaders.

**Rationale:** Thoughtful school leaders cultivate a clear understanding of what they must do and how they will do it. We are at our best when we realize what we need to do and bring our authentic selves to the work.

### How to use the Leadership Playbook

International School Heads can use the Leadership Playbook in multiple ways:

- To self-reflect and set goals to improve performance
- To target professional learning
- To impact student learning
- As an aspect of a Head’s performance appraisal, if desired by the Head
- To coach a colleague
- To develop potential Heads of school
- To develop capacity in leadership teams

AISH will also use the Leadership Playbook in multiple ways:

- To provide professional learning aligned with the Leadership Playbook, including AISH’s online Leadership Skills and Impact Series
- To organize the 2,000 resources in the AISH Library on the member website
- To organize the structure for AISH’s “New and Aspiring Heads Institute” curriculum
- As a resource for the Mentor and Coaching program

# Threads of Leadership

The Threads run throughout our actions as leadership practices that enable us to achieve extraordinary results. Whatever our plays, it is the Threads that take us beyond the basics to achieve our mission-driven goals.

## **Model the Way**

International School Heads serve as Lead Learners and show people how to “walk the talk” each step of the way towards the school’s purpose. They co-create standards of exemplary behavior based on the school’s core documents (mission, vision, values, and learning outcomes). They treat others the way that they wish everyone in the organization be treated and intentionally set and demonstrate behavioral norms for all to follow.

## **Inspire a Shared Vision for Learning**

Heads should lead with a clear, brave vision in mind, preferably one that is co-created with the school community. With this compass, Heads relentlessly articulate, motivate, and interpret the desired future state of the learning organization, encouraging individual and collective learning along the way. Every interaction is an opportunity to both clarify the vision incarnate and reinforce actions that move in the intended direction.

## **Challenge the Process**

Lifting people’s sights beyond the status quo toward a compelling future is the Head’s daily task. They support innovative ways for the school community to design its future, establishing a safe and trusting culture in which thoughtful risk-taking is the norm. Seeking ever-improved systems and welcoming divergent views are embraced as part of the constant learning ethos.

## **Enable Others to Act**

School leaders intentionally build collaborative communities in which all members’ views are sought and respected. Power is thoughtfully shared in order to demonstrate trust and maximise the potential of both individuals and the group. Teams are intentionally constructed to reflect the diversity that the community represents, and they are given real responsibility to effect progress towards the desired goals.

### **Encourage the Heart**

Heads nurture the collective international community spirit of the school by inviting members to be active participants, honoring and recognising the unique contributions that each member brings to the group. With empathy and compassion, leaders guide students and adults to be reflective, positive contributors, motivating each individual to be their best self in the service of the school's mission.

Adapted with permission: *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership Model*, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. *The Leadership Challenge*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey. 2017.



# of Excellence

The Academy for International School Heads (AISH) developed the Standards of Excellence for International School Heads as a self-reflective tool to assess performance, identify areas for growth, set goals and note development over time.

Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004), as well as others, indicated that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.” Yet surprisingly, the continued development of the “lead learner” in the school is frequently overlooked in our systems.

AISH believes that by paying attention to our growth as leaders, we can deepen the impact that we have in our schools. We therefore encourage you to look at the Standards as a self-reflective tool. Use them to get feedback from others, identify your challenges, set leadership goals, seek professional learning and chart your development as a transformational leader

## **Heads Work in Collaboration with Others**

We know that the Head does not work in isolation but rather in collaboration with one’s staff, students, parents and school community. Depending on the size and structure of your school, you may have others accountable for many of the areas detailed in the Standards and may chose to use them for coaching purposes with members of your leadership team. Regardless, we know that ultimately the Head of School is responsible for all operational functions and as a result, we have provided a comprehensive set of Standards for the leader at the helm.

## **Understanding the Context**

The Standards require an understanding of the international context of one’s school, knowing that leadership actions vary in consideration of school and community culture, size, government regulations, and a myriad of other factors. Some of our schools have governance structures of a non-profit board while others are owner operated. As you read the document, make necessary adjustments for your context.

## Six Individual Modules

Each Standard has further resources in a module format. The modules include the international research that underpins the Standards. As new research is published, we will update the research so the document remains current.

Also included are Impact Examples that provide a realistic illustration of the results of leadership behaviors from Heads of International Schools that are aligned with the Standards and Indicators. While there are multiple examples provided, they are intended as suggestions. If you are drafting a goal, we suggest that you select the one or two examples that are most relevant for you and your school.

AISH's online Leadership Series is launching in February 2020 with courses designed, developed, and facilitated by International Heads of School specifically for International Heads of School. "Skills" courses provide practical strategies to address a leadership challenge and "Impact" courses are a deep dive into the topic with relevant practical outcomes, feedback and coaching. Each course is mapped to the AISH Standards and Threads with more courses

under development in each area. They will enable current and aspiring Heads of School to personalize their growth as a leader according to their strengths and needs with job-embedded application and highly respected AISH leaders providing feedback and coaching.

## Alignment with International School Accreditation Protocol

It is helpful to know how school improvement efforts, such as those required to lead a self-study, link to development as a leader.

As the Head of an International School is responsible for all operations in a school, there are numerous links between the accreditation requirement and the AISH Standards of Excellence. For the agencies that are partnering with AISH in this endeavor, we aligned AISH's standards to the accrediting agency's protocol. The alignment is available in the online version:

- [AdvancED](#)
- [Council of International Schools](#)
- [Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges](#)
- [Western Association of Schools and Colleges](#)

*“School leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on pupil learning.”*

- Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom

# The Head of an International School

## MISSION FOR LEARNING

... leads with a mission and vision that focuses on the desired results for student learning.

- Energizes the school community with a clear, contemporary and contextual mission to build understanding and commitment for high expectations.
- Uses a definition of learning, developed from the school's shared culture and context, to guide curriculum planning, instruction and assessment so that classroom practices align with research and provide a medium for students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Ensures a coherent curriculum derived backwards from agreed upon student outcomes and rooted in best practices to support the achievement of all students.
- Builds organizational structures and fosters practices for collaboration that increase teacher effectiveness and have the optimal impact on learning.
- Develops, implements and monitors data-based actions to ensure systematic student progress and program improvements.
- Advances the development of intercultural competencies in the school for students and staff to gain insights about themselves and others, build connections and to demonstrate respect and empathy.
- Communicates regularly the achievement of the school's mission and vision to provide

evidence of measurable gain, celebrate student progress, and to use the information for further improvements.

- Ensures that the school's mission, vision, values, policies and practices reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and justice.

## GOVERNANCE

... in partnership with the governing body, develops a culture of responsibility and accountability for the fulfillment of the school's mission.

- Supports the Board in the review and periodic revision of the mission, the development of school policies, and the setting of the strategic direction and priorities for the long-term sustainability of the school.
- Develops effective working relationships with Board members and establishes clarity of roles and responsibilities in order to have an atmosphere of trust to promote candor and transparency that honors the school's established values and leads to a positive culture of governance.
- Collaborates with the Board to focus the agendas, attention and discussion on the substantive, strategic and symbolically important issues for the school.
- Ensures that, together with the Board, there is a thorough understanding and implementation of best practices in Board governance for the long-term sustainability of the school.

- Works in tandem with the Board to develop and implement an effective and relevant professional and personal growth and development plan for the Head of School that supports the successful fulfillment of the mission.
- Promotes the professional growth of the Board, including knowledge of educational research and emerging trends in teaching and learning so that the Board can establish the mission and fulfill its oversight responsibilities for student learning.

## HUMAN AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

... enacts legal and ethical practices to safeguard students' well-being and sets high levels of performance in staff so that each student can attain academic success.

- Ensures that recruitment and retention practices are in alignment with the school's mission, vision and values and reflect the school's unwavering commitment to child protection.
- Provides, participates and personally leads professional development guided by principles of learning so that staff continues to develop their knowledge and skill, working together to improve learning.
- Utilizes performance standards for staff with ongoing coaching, mentoring and feedback to evaluate impact on learning, and to build a school of empowered leaders.

- Creates a climate that supports collaboration focused on improving learning.
- Energizes staff to examine, practice and innovate to maximize the effect of their teaching on all students.
- Creates a diverse, high-performing, collaborative leadership team in order to make good decisions and advance the mission and vision of the school.

## **OPERATIONS AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

... ensures a safe, secure and supportive environment that is strategically resourced to achieve the mission and vision.

- Strategically aligns fiscal resources to support the mission and vision.
- Seeks avenues for raising additional resources to support the mission and create opportunities for students and staff.
- Manages and monitors facilities, grounds and equipment to provide for an optimal learning environment.
- Oversees the admission of students to the school to ensure alignment with the family and the school's mission.
- Enforces legal requirements and regulations of the host country for the sustainable development of the school.
- Establishes effective procedures for student

behavior and school safety that ensure an environment where learning is paramount.

- Supports operational functions with data and communication systems that allow for efficiency and goal attainment.

## **SCHOOL-HOME-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

... cultivates positive relationships with families and the community to achieve partnerships that will benefit student outcomes.

- Builds connections between home and school, intentionally promoting inclusivity and a culture that provides support for students to achieve learning goals.
- Empowers parents to make meaningful and valued contributions in the school, building on the strengths and assets of a school's diverse communities, knowing that parental involvement is key to student success.
- Communicates effectively with the community, utilizing formal processes and informal exchanges, to build positive partnerships that benefit students.
- Utilizes the external environment as a resource for learning, engaging individuals and organizations in promoting high standards that advance the mission.

## **PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

... models behavior consistent with the school's values and is continuously improving to meet the challenges and opportunities of leading a high-performing school.

- Creates a climate of trust and evidence-based professionalism, honoring commitments, and handling conflict directly and respectfully.
- Demonstrates organizational and self-management skills to focus on the priorities of the school.
- Seeks and uses critical reflection as part of continual improvement and sustainability of one's own and the school's performance.
- Uses data to support changes and effectively leads innovations that result in improved learning.
- Builds external relationships and networks outside of the school for support and improvement, as well as to contribute to the future of learning and leading.
- Demonstrates a passion and energy for improving learning that can be seen in actions, decisions and student learning gains.

## COVER PHOTO

- 1) PATRICIA MARTINEZ-OROZCO, Director, most recently American Academy Casablanca, Morocco
- 2) BRENT MUTSCH, Superintendent, most recently American School of Dubai, UAE
- 3) CHRISTOPHER CHARLSON, Director of Education, International School of London Group, London, UK
- 4) VANITA UPPAL, OBE, Director of the British School, New Delhi, India
- 5) SHEENA NABHOLZ, Head of School, Lincoln Community School, Accra, Ghana
- 6) EVELYNE ESTEY, Interim Head of School, Lycée Français de New York, NYC, NY
- 7) JAY TESTON, Director, Qingdao No. 1 International School Shandong Province, China
- 8) ELLEN STERN, Head of School, most recently American Embassy School, New Delhi, India
- 9) COLIN BOUDREAU, Head of School, Ben Franklin International School, Barcelona, Spain
- 10) MADELEINE HEIDE, Superintendent, Asociacion Escuelas Lincoln, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 11) JAMES DALZIEL, Head of School, most recently GEMS World Academy, Switzerland



## DEVELOPMENT

# of the Leadership Playbook

The Standards were developed by AISH under the leadership of CEO Bambi Betts and the AISH Board of Directors. In 2015-17, CEO Deb Welch and the Board enhanced the Standards and added indicators and evidence. Consultants Pam Harper of Fieldwork Education and Jay McTighe assisted in the development, and AISH members provided feedback. Consultant Deidre Fischer ensured that the Standards and indicators were research based and aligned the document to various accreditation protocols. In 2018, the Standards were revised based on member feedback and Board members Coreen Hester and Tim Carr were instrumental in incorporating the five Threads of Leadership.

The Academy for International School Heads (AISH) serves international school Heads and Deputy Heads through focused advocacy, support and professional development. Our membership consists of 45 different nationalities, in 90 different countries and spread across six continents. AISH is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) foundation, established in 1999, “for Heads, by Heads.”

The Leadership Playbook for International School Heads advances AISH’s vision of providing targeted and differentiated professional and personal development opportunities for educational leadership.

For more information about AISH, visit our website at [www.academyish.org](http://www.academyish.org) or email [office@academyish.org](mailto:office@academyish.org).

*“In schools of every size in every nation, the evidence is clear: Courageous leadership makes the difference.”*

- Douglas Reeves

## Academy for International School Heads, Board of Trustees, 2019-2020

President: Charles Barder, most recently United Nations School of Hanoi, Vietnam

Vice President: Chrissie Sorenson, Bavarian International School, Germany

Secretary: Coreen Hester, International School Head, Resource Group 175

Treasurer: Andy Page Smith, American International School of Johannesburg, South Africa

Richard Boerner, Graded School, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Forrest Broman, International School Head, The International Educator (TIE)

Tim Carr, Avenues School, New York City, NY, United States

Catarina Song Chen, Escola American de Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Kevin Glass, Atlanta International School GA, United States

Thomas Hawkins, American School of Doha, Qatar

Rachel Hovington, International School of Hannover, Germany

Alan Knobloch, International School of Dakar, Senegal

Vladimir Kuskovski, EF Academy, New York, NY

Anu Monga, Bangalore International School, India

Sheena Nabholz, Lincoln Community School, Accra Ghana

Eileen Niederman, Mercedes-Benz International School, India

Audrey Peverelli, International School Head

Tarek Razik, Jakarta Intercultural School, Indonesia

Jeff Trudeau, American International School of Monrovia, Liberia

Martin van der Linde, British School Manila, Phillipines

Deborah Welch, CEO, Boulder, CO United States

Professional and  
personal development  
opportunities for  
educational leadership.





# IF

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two imposters just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop to build 'em up with worn out tools; . . .

Excerpt from *IF* by Rudyard Kipling

To continue with STANDARD #1 [CLICK HERE.](#)



[academyish.org](http://academyish.org)