

SELF-STUDY VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

FOR

REDEEMER INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL THAILAND

JOINT WASC AND ONESQA VISIT

November 16 through 20, 2008

Visiting Committee Members

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Introduction

Just approaching Redeemer International School of Thailand one gazes out of the bus to beautiful houses adjacent to ponds sporting flowers one only imagines in dreams. The school entrance to a fairly new building welcomes the traveler into a six floor complex of classrooms surrounding an atrium. People are smiling everywhere and the students give every visitor a friendly greeting.

The feeling of good, wholesome, education prevails. One notes a well cleaned, well-run school filled with meaningful educational experiences for children.

The Visiting Committee was not disappointed over the course of the visit. In fact, we were instilled with the goal to give the school upon leaving a document filled with concrete observations, commendations and ways the RIST stakeholders can work together to move the school forward.

We thank the Board, parents, students, administration, teachers and support staff for being so courteous, kind and helping. We hope we fulfilled our goal and wish the school immense successes in future years.

The words of Edna St. Vincent Millay ring true in our ears when thinking of our hosts at RIST, “The World stands out on either side, no wider than the heart is wide.”

The Visiting Team

CHAPTER I STUDENT/COMMUNITY PROFILE

Student/Community Profile as presented in part from Redeemer International School Thailand self study report.

Redeemer International School Thailand (RIST) began in 1996 as a division of Ruamrudee International School (RIS) to prepare students with minimal English to enter the regular grades. Redeemer received a separate school license in 2003 and began operations in a new building adjacent to Ruamrudee. The purpose of RIST is to provide a full English-medium international curriculum for ESL students whose English is still developing and who would not normally be accepted into the regular grades at Ruamrudee. Sharing a campus with RIS, which serves 1800+ students, gives RIST access to significantly increased physical and human resources.

There are two pathways for which students are admitted into Redeemer International School Thailand. Families either choose to apply directly to Redeemer or students who apply to Ruamrudee are recommended for our school depending on their level of English. The admission process consists of a submitted application, previous school records (credit review), admission test in English comprehension, math and writing and a school interview. Once all of the information is gathered the final decision is made by the Principal. In May 2008 the Administrative Council made a decision to hire a joint Director of Admissions for RIS and RIST.

Students are placed into grade levels, according to their age for elementary and middle school students, and according to age and a credit review for high school students. Students who join the school beyond grade 10 with limited English may be recommended to repeat a grade to give them additional time to prepare for graduation TOEFL score requirement (500 paper-based).

RIST is one of many new international schools in Thailand serving a growing expatriate and host-country community. The vast majority of students in Thai international schools are not from Western families but children of the business, professional and diplomatic communities of Thailand and other Asian countries.

RIST strives to be a model English-acquisition school where English is acquired, used and strengthened through the whole curriculum. Benefiting from small classes with dedicated, qualified and experienced teachers, RIST students have proved the success of this approach. New students are admitted to RIST at all levels throughout the year from grade 2 through 12. Students either transfer to Ruamrudee as their English improves, or continue at Redeemer to graduate with a high school diploma.

There were 158 students enrolled in RIST as of January 2008. The ethnic breakdown is:

Thai	Japanese	Korean	Taiwanese	Indian	Chinese	Swiss	US
51%	32%	12%	3%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%

To maintain cultural diversity and the international nature of the school community, the quota for Thai students is maintained at approximately 50%. Data indicates that there has been a gradual increase in Japanese enrollment since the school began, mainly in high school. This is largely because the Thai-Japanese School in Bangkok does not accommodate students beyond grade 9,

and RIST has promoted itself among the Japanese expatriate community in Bangkok. The number of Korean students has decreased by about 5%. There has not been any other significant change.

School enrollment has increased from 82 students in 2004 to 150 students in 2008. The following chart indicates the school breakdown.

Elementary	Middle	High
22	40	88

RIST regards all its teachers as teachers of English and every effort is made to ensure that the teachers are trained and proficient in teaching receptive and expressive English skills through the content areas. The teacher student ratio is very generous and class size is limited to 15, with the average class size in 2007-08 being 10.

The school has a total of 33 full-time faculty members including administrators.

American	19	Filipino	2
Thai	6	Japanese	2
British	3	New Zealander	1

The teachers at RIST are very well qualified. Seventy percent have a Masters degree in Education or in ESL. In addition, 22 have completed the ESL in the Mainstream Course that is required and provided at RIS/RIST. Both administrators have Master degrees in Educational Management, and the Principal has a doctoral degree in Educational Science and is a certified school psychologist. The school counselor has a Master degree in Counseling. Data on faculty retention is not included since the school is relatively new and is expanding.

Students who do not transfer to RIS have the option to remain and graduate from RIST. RIST graduated 15 seniors in June 2007 and 6 in June of 2008. Of these, 7 went to undergraduate courses in Japan, including prestigious universities like Meiji, Nagoya and Chuo. The remaining 14 were accepted in universities in Thailand.

Comments on significant findings of the profile and other items not included in the profile.

Early in 2008, the former Heads of both RIS and RIST made a proposal to merge the two schools. The new RIST School Board initiated a study of various options for the future of the school. Since that proposal, the schools have decided to remain independent entities. Although RIST is a new school, it is facing many challenges. Challenges that face the school include:

- Maintaining a rigorous academic curriculum for students whose English is below grade level
- High turnover of students who transfer to RIS each year
- Being perceived as a “second best” option in comparison with Ruamrudee
- Being one of more than 100 international schools in Thailand

CHAPTER II PROGRESS REPORT

Beginning in August 2006, it was evident there was the need for RIST to modify the existing ESLRs carried over from RIS. After polling parents (in four languages Thai, Japanese, Korean and Chinese) and taking the results to the other stakeholders of the school, a number of modifications occurred and the present ESLRs were established. An extra line was added to the descriptions to cover health, safety and environmental objectives under “Caring Global Citizen.” This action plus the results from the Initial Visit from WASC to RIST, created new governance with a modified autonomy. An ensuing visit in March 2006 saw a final growth element in that grade 12 was included in the WASC recognition of the school. By June 2006 an interim progress report was submitted to WASC that summarized progress in addressing the recommendations set forth by the Initial Visit Committee. The following reflects the progress in all of the areas recognized as in need of improvement.

All in all it is clear most of the content of the Recommendations from the last two visits have been addressed in a comprehensive and professional manner.

Recommendation 1: That the governing body continues to review its purpose and mission so that the school's unique character is maintained, clearly articulated and understood by all stakeholders.

RIST had established its identity and with the graduation of its first fifteen students, the present attitudes and attributes of the school were established. It clarified its purpose and mission in public documents (See: Program of Studies and the Faculty and Parent-Student Handbook) and just before this visit, the school has further evolved according to the parameters set forth in the School Charter approved by the Thai Ministry of Education.

Recommendation 2: That the school continues to revise Action Plans directed at school improvement in a way that ensures active participation of all stakeholders in development, implementation, and evaluation.

The three-year Action Plan developed as part of the self-study begins with 2007-2008 since the accreditation visit was originally scheduled for March 2008. Although the visit was postponed to November 2008, 2007-2008 remains the first year of the plan to reflect the relationship of the self-study to the action plan, although the whole action plan has been revised to reflect the achievements of the first year.

Please note that since the beginning, RIST's development has been driven by action-planning with an increasing level of participation by stakeholders. Where action plan tasks have fallen short of expectations they have been included again, recognizing that the school continues to persevere towards its goals of improving teaching and learning.

The school has created ongoing monitoring procedures that go beyond the accreditation process in order to ensure that action plans are implemented and evaluated. These procedures rely on five ongoing School Development Committees and a Curriculum and School Development Council, all of which are representative of faculty, staff, parents and students.

Recommendation 3: That the school continues to develop its assessment practices and uses the results to inform and drive the development of curriculum and instruction.

Since the Initial Visit, schoolwide testing of reading comprehension, math and writing has taken place in November of each year to provide information on the student body as a whole and on individual students; results are detailed in the School and Community Profile. Stanford standardized tests have been used for reading comprehension and math, and the Six Traits scoring rubric has been used for the writing samples. The comprehension test was updated in November 2006 to a criterion-referenced version that provides more detailed diagnostic information. Each year after, the tests are scored the information is shared and interpreted with the faculty to identify whole school issues and inform program and curriculum development planning.

A whole school approach to writing improvement was made possible by the decision to establish Six Traits as the standard protocol for writing instruction and assessment. Paradigm workshops were given internally by a faculty expert on the Six Traits of Writing and the schoolwide effort was monitored thus improving skills of struggling ESL students.

Culminating unit assessments that are aligned with the standards and benchmarks addressed in each unit of instruction are a requirement of the RIST developing curriculum using the Atlas Rubicon software. These are a mixture of traditional and performance assessments. Beginning with an all-faculty presentation in September 2007 the school began an initiative to increase the use of authentic assessments at the end of instructional units.

Through examination of student work and using the results to inform instruction Recommendation 4 was further addressed. The Standards in Practice Protocol was adopted and in effect with full school training. All school departments have regularly and collaboratively examined student work to further provide for the academic and extra-curricular needs of RIST students.

Recommendation 4: That the school explores viable and meaningful ways in which to provide for the academic and extra-curricular needs of all its students.

The needs of the large Japanese portion of the student body were addressed. Japanese native language courses were added for students in grades 9-12, adding grades 7 and 8 in 2007-2008. Physical education courses have been increased so that all students in grades 2-12 have P.E. classes. Writing for College in grades 11 and 12 was added in 2006-2007, and Advanced Math was added in 2007-2008 beginning with grade 10. Art facilities have been updated and given strong attention, aiming at a future AP Art curriculum. Drama was consciously introduced in grades 2-8 as a way of strengthening students' oral English skills and building confidence. This, in turn, prompted Theater Arts to be extended to grade 10. The addition of such courses as Visual Arts, Computer Science and Business Studies were also added, rounding out the curriculum and in harmony with the recommendation. Finally, Advisement classes were recently added in grades 2-8.

Hiring a full-time counselor in 2005-2006 has helped students get the best benefit from courses, select their majors, and plan ahead for college by providing career and personal counseling services. The counselor has established the Student Study Team and monitors with the Assistant Principal at-risk students through the Academic Watch program. Also being provided by the counselor staff are such services as psychological assessment, special needs, and speech therapy.

Extra-curricular opportunities have also increased significantly seeing the RIS/RIST Extended Day Program started for all grades. Dance, Thai Language (Beginner), Chinese Language (Beginner,

Intermediate and Advanced), French (Beginner), Japanese (Beginner), Swimming (Beginner and Intermediate), Thai Instrumental Music, Cooking for Fun, Drama, Safety and First Aid, Soccer, Tae Kwon Do, and Study Hall. Joint RIST and RIS interscholastic sports teams that compete with fourteen schools in the Bangkok International Schools Athletics Conference (BISAC), and with eleven schools in the Southeast Asian Students Activities Conference (SEASAC) have been added to the schools program.

A good amount of extra curricular growth emanates from a thriving, active, and relevant student council. Community service has always been a feature of the RIST program and opportunities for students to participate in service-learning have grown.

The academic and extra-curricular programs meet in Week Without Walls which takes place every year. This activity sees middle and high school students spend four to five days on extended field-trips that incorporate hands-on activities planned by their teachers and related to the curriculum.

Recommendation 5: That the school put in place the necessary policies and practices to ensure clear communication and school decision-making by all stakeholders.

Efforts are ongoing to improve participatory decision-making. The new Director and Board have been attentive to stakeholder opinions about the future of the school and have made efforts to promote effective communication.

The Principal is a Board member, and a parent representative has just been appointed. Faculty, students and parents are represented on the Curriculum and School Development Council, the School Development Committees, and the campus-wide Anti-Bullying Committee. The monthly cycle of after-school Wednesday meetings (Faculty – Departments – Professional Learning Communities – School Development Committees) is a valuable structure for strengthening internal communication among faculty and between faculty and administration. The Student Council aims to give students a voice in the running of the school, and there is a small but active Parents' Auxiliary with which the Principal and Assistant Principal meet regularly to discuss any concerns. Improving communication within the school community remains a priority. Newsletter, mailers and Manuals and Handbooks ensure expanded participatory empowerments. The website is an important updated channel of communication and key content is sent out in five languages: English, Thai, Japanese, Korean and Chinese. The addition of a part-time Japanese liaison officer in 2006-2007 has proved invaluable in creating a strong communication channel with Japanese parents, prospective parents, and students at the beginner-level in English.

Recommendation 6: That the school continues to develop and refine its written curriculum so that it is clear, well-articulated, and aligned, with well-defined standards and benchmarks.

Course descriptions for all courses were completed during the 2006-2007 school year and are published in print and online in the HS and ES-MS Programs of Studies, with yearly updates. Standards and benchmarks are now in place for all subjects and levels. The Atlas Rubicon online database enables the standards and benchmarks and all units of instruction across the curriculum to be accessed by all faculty.

All units of instruction within the Atlas Rubicon site have incorporated essential questions or understandings, key concepts, skills, learning activities, and resources. Also included are the language functions, stressing that across the entire curriculum English language skills are taught and reinforced. A Backward-Planning model has further aligned standards and benchmarks and checked against unit content. At the same time many traditional assessments have been replaced by performance or authentic assessments. Master Maps for all courses have been further refined within Atlas Rubicon to ensure the continuity of the curriculum.

Not all units have been aligned with the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results but this area is being addressed and a process of checking and aligning unit assessments with ESLRs has been completed. This is still a work in progress.

Aligning the RIST curriculum with that of RIS is an important consideration since a proportion of the students transfer. Discussions at department level and curriculum modifications have begun but this is a complex challenge.

CHAPTER III SELF STUDY PROCESS

The Visiting Team clearly acknowledges that RIST has accomplished the five parameters of the self study.

1. The involvement and collaboration of stake holders in the self-study

As a result of a realignment of the roles that RIS and RIST will take in their future as an independent school in Thailand, RIST needed to and has taken to the task of participatory management. This school is an open system constantly in change and seeking self-improvement. All of this effort is focused on learning.

As a result of the three visitations in the last three years, the RIST administration and school has placed into action data gathering meetings, surveys, and a constantly listening, observing, and open position of first looking inward to its own improvement that later outward to all stakeholders. It is true that all stakeholders were not reached but the attempt to reach all stakeholders for input and help was clearly evident. And most were proud of their role in the self-study and ensuing visit.

Meetings were held, surveys were done, translators were employed, students were monitored, faculty were hired, in-serviced, and professional development was offered, all of this aiming at collaborating a self understanding towards *Focus on Student Learning* through the prescribed procedures of the schools self-study.

In addressing the present action plans plus the recommendations (see above), RIST provided an on-going infrastructure of committees and defined roles which will take it into future visitations.

2. The clarification of the school's purpose and expected schoolwide learning results

Articulation of the clarification of the school's purpose is a continual struggle because the school has an evolving identity. Stakeholders who have been with the school the past three years seem to know intrinsically the mission of RIST. Successes in the in the school such as the completion of a high school, the first graduating seniors, and moving into a beautiful and practical campus indicate the school's purpose is clear. Certainly a stated mission is available.

The school has truly taken to the utilization of ESLRs and all stakeholders have invested into ESLRs being a part of the institution. Students write about the importance and interpretation of the ESLRs, teachers plan towards them and parents have a clear understanding of their value. The administration uses them as a guide for leadership, planning, and accountability of resources.

3. The assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria

RIST understands that assessment is part of an on-going process. Future development through the WASC process is not only understood but expected. Additionally, the Thai Ministry states that all international schools are to be accredited.

The evidence assembled and communicated indicates that a wide amount of strategies are being employed. What's more is that even though what is in place is quite effective, the vision of stakeholders is to the future. Certainly this is a school that is introspective and an ever increasing amount of students who stay with RIST indicate that the meaning of a RIST education is of strong value. Even students who leave RIST to go to the prestigious RIS which shares the same campus and facilities seem to have a need to reconnect with RIST in many ways.

The evidence produced by a large ESL population in media productions, writing samples produced, goals fulfilled such as university admissions, community pride and service and the response to small classes indicate student learning.

4. The development of a schoolwide action plan that integrates subject/area/program and support plans to address identified growth needs

At RIST, Action Plans are viewed as an opportunity for school improvement. They have been re-written in compliance with multiple visits and the school's emerging role as a self contained school within itself newly relating to the school (RIS) from which it sprang, testifies to this. They were taken seriously and addressed with passion.

5. The development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the action plan

A transparent accountability system is in place. Although autonomy of the school to govern itself exists to a practical extent, the results of this visitation will be scrutinized by all stakeholders and in many instances without initiation from the above two entities of the institution. The overriding Board will also monitor the progress of the Action Plans. The Thai Ministry of Education will closely monitor the school and its progress and programs.

In addition to all of this is the over-riding WASC Focus on Learning process itself. The school is clear in its dedication to WASC and its expectations and support.

While ESLRs, Action Plans and recommendations from this report will occupy the central focus of the school's future operation, other things need to be taken into account. Still ahead is the clear definition of the roles of governing groups is always in compliance with Thai law. Clear functions and guidelines need to be written to address the issues, as follows: the chain of command, job roles and descriptions which are available to all, and a constant vigil on the purposes and use of resources, particularly those shared.

CHAPTER IV QUALITY OF THE SCHOOL'S PROGRAM

A. Organization for Student Learning

A1. School Purpose:

The school has established a clear statement of purpose that reflects the beliefs and philosophy of the institution. The purpose is defined further by adopted expected schoolwide learning results that form the basis of the educational program for every student.

Since the school grew from an ESL feeder program at Ruamrudee International School, the philosophy and purpose of the two schools are very similar. Both were established and are administered by Catholic priests and emphasize a commitment to ethics as well as academic excellence. And since the school provides access to a full international school curriculum for students whose English is still developing, its constituency consists mainly of families of Thai, Japanese, Korean and Chinese descent.

These two considerations – the religious foundation and the ESL constituency – have mainly guided the creation of the school's philosophy, mission and Expected Schoolwide Learning Results.

The philosophy refers to both ethical development and the acquisition of English through content area study in a culturally diverse context. The mission promotes a nurturing and community-connected learning environment required by the two guiding principles.

The Expected Schoolwide Learning Results were initially adapted from those of Ruamrudee. The first ESLR, Effective Communicator in English is clearly determined by the nature of the constituency, and the fifth, Caring Global Citizen, reflects the Christian ethics of the Redemptorist fathers. In the initial stage of the Self-Study, beginning in August 2006, these founding ESLRs were reviewed by parents and faculty and a number of modifications were made. The revised ESLRs were discussed by the Student Council as representatives of the student body. However, student opinion in the survey suggests that they feel under-represented in decision-making processes such as this. The revised ESLRs were approved by the Curriculum and School Development Council and the School Board.

Although parent involvement is strong there is concern that not all parent groups are equally represented in the decision making processes. The school's ESLRs are well publicized within the school. Efforts need to be made to communicate these ESLRs to parents and board.

A2. Governance:

The governing authority adopts policies that are consistent with the school purpose and support the achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results for the school, delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff, and monitors results.

An interim RIST School Board was created in April 2008 following changes in Redemptorist personnel responsible for both RIST and RIS. It consists of seven Redemptorist fathers and the Principal, plus a legal adviser and a secretary. The legal adviser was appointed to help prepare the school to meet the requirements of new Thai educational laws. Board members were appointed by the Redemptorist Foundation. The interim Board has met to consider the merger proposal and decided to form a working committee to conduct a full study to determine the future direction of the school. At the time of finalizing the self-study (August 2008), the new school by-laws have just been approved by the Ministry of Education, and a new school board is being appointed to satisfy the new legal requirements. This will consist of the License-Holder as Chair, the Head of School, and the School Manager, parent, faculty and community representatives – a total of eight members.

The School Board meets at least twice a year to approve the budget, review reports and projections of the building administration, approve recommendations of the Curriculum and School Development Council concerning program development and resource requests, approve the action plan, and, in the current self-study period, approve modifications to the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results and endorse the Self-Study report.

The Board relies on the reports of the building administration for its school effectiveness and performance evaluation information. An administration appraisal system has been discussed in the joint RIS-RIST Administrative Council, and the joint RIS-RIST Curriculum and Professional Development Team has been asked to design this system.

The Principal and Assistant Principal are members of the RIS Administrative Council which meets weekly to make decisions on the application of policies and operations of RIS. Since RIS and RIST share common physical and human resources and policies, participation at the Administrative Council level ensures that RIST has a voice in decision-making that may affect the school.

In some areas of joint management, the relationship between the two schools has become clearer over the first five years of RIST's development: curriculum and professional development are examples. In other areas, such as admissions, finance, human resources, school development and technology, the relationship has yet to be fully clarified.

A3. School Leadership:

The school leadership makes decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energies of the school on student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results, empowers the staff, and encourages commitment, participation and shared accountability for student learning.

It is clear that good leadership exists throughout the school. Procedures and policies seem to enhance the running of the school from day to day. In five years the school leadership has created a positive caring environment for students, staff and parents. They have been transparent and approachable in all ways. Every effort should be made to maintain the current leadership team that has taken the school so far.

It is evident that the school leadership does make decisions facilitating and focusing on student achievement. Planning for student learning takes place at different levels. At the beginning of the year, the imminent tasks of the school's three-year Action Plan are discussed, reviewed and modified by the whole faculty. Departmental goals are then based on the revised year's Action Plan. All department members participate in the fulfillment of the goals, monitored through monthly department meetings and early-dismissal professional development days. For example, in the past two years, Examining Student Work was featured in the Schoolwide Action Plan and is carried out at these times. In addition, the Professional Growth and Appraisal System requires teachers in their third year onwards to set individual goals that broadly support the direction set in the action plan and department goals. A new policy manual is in the process being written by the current administration. This will dictate procedures for carrying out for such policy. From this a procedural manual is to follow.

There are additional layers of leadership at RIST.

Responsibility for subject areas is largely delegated to Department Heads who act as middle-managers and meet regularly with their subject-area colleagues to examine the effectiveness of the program for student learning and to generate annual reports for program and resource development to the Curriculum and School Development Council. Meetings between the administration and the department heads take place approximately once each quarter.

Professional sharing and collaboration takes place regularly during monthly department meetings, and on inservice days and early-dismissal days. Administrative leadership is provided during professional development days that focus on student learning planning teams.

A4. Staff:

The school leadership and staff are qualified for their assigned responsibilities, are committed to the school's purpose and engage in ongoing professional development that promotes student learning.

The Faculty Handbook contains policies and procedures concerning faculty qualifications, including teaching certification and additional requirements to obtain a recognized qualification in teaching ESL in mainstream classes. It is being updated to include the legal requirement to complete a Thai Culture and Ethics course. There is a recruitment process that includes background, qualification and reference checks required by Thai employment law.

Data in the School and Community Profile indicates that administration and faculty are well-qualified for their roles. All have bachelor degrees and teacher certification, with 70% possessing a Master degree. Of the Master degrees, 70% are in Education and 33% are ESL-related. In addition, 22 faculty (67%) have completed the ESL in the Mainstream Course or have been exempted due to prior training. Both administrators have Master degrees in Educational Management, and in addition the Principal has a doctoral degree in Educational Science and is a certified school psychologist. The school counselor is a certified counselor with a Master degree in Counseling. Average teaching experience of faculty (excluding administrators) is ten years, average international teaching experience is six years, and average ESL teaching experience is also six years. Within the scheduling constraints of a small school, teachers are assigned to courses that make best use of their qualifications and experience.

Professional development records show that the administration and faculty have a strong commitment to professional growth. The school's direction in this realm is incorporated into the Action Plans for school development. As an individual allowance, expatriate teachers receive 30,000 Baht per year and local hire teachers 40,000 Baht. This is in addition to courses provided without charge on-site, such as Six Traits, ESL in the Mainstream, and the Thai Culture and Ethics Course. The Professional Development Handbook provides for an approval process that ensures that these funds are used in a way that supports school and individual or group goals and the improvement of teaching and learning. Teachers are provided with three professional leave days per year in addition to personal and sick leave.

The school benefits from being part of a larger professional learning community with RIS. Inservice Days and Early Dismissal Days are shared and offer greater opportunities than a small school could normally provide. The Assistant Principal is a member of the joint RIS/RIST Curriculum and Professional Development Team that meets weekly to plan for such opportunities. The school is also represented on the RIS-RIST faculty committee for professional development that meets monthly to provide input and support.

In addition, the school is a member of the East Asia Regional Council for Overseas Schools and teachers and administrators have access to the program of weekend workshops offered around the region and to the annual EARCOS Administrators' and Teachers' Conferences. The individual allowance normally covers registration, airfare and accommodation for one workshop or a conference. The school has an ETC representative who promotes the conference among the faculty. This year two RIST faculty presented at the ETC in Kuala Lumpur.

The school is also a founder-member of the Bangkok Teachers' Network which for the last two years has provided an annual Saturday conference for sharing best practices in international education and facilitating ongoing job-alike networks in the Bangkok area.

A professional growth and appraisal system was also developed with RIS and focuses on the effectiveness of teaching and learning. It incorporates three plans to ensure accountability and promote professional development – new teacher, self-directed, and professional assistance – that variously combine observation, self-assessment, goal-setting and support. In addition teachers are required to maintain professional portfolios to document their growth. A mentoring program for new teachers also exists to support newly hired faculty.

There are processes for evaluating the effectiveness of professional development activities. Still there is a need for better sharing of what was learned. At an individual level, professional goals are reviewed at the end of the academic year when teachers and administrators meet to assess progress and review evidence. At a school level, the RIS-RIST Curriculum and Professional Development Team reviews the effectiveness of resources based on evaluation data, and makes future proposals based on student and faculty needs, school action plans, and educational trends.

A5. School Environment:

The school has a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school's purpose and is characterized by respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student.

The school has created a supportive, caring, fair and culturally-sensitive environment that is consistent with the ethical traditions of the Redemptorist Fathers and the multi-cultural characteristics of the staff and student body.

Faculty and student rights are recognized in policy. For example, there is a grievance procedure set out in the Faculty Handbook, and the joint RIS-RIST Teachers' Representative Council meets regularly to discuss concerns with the RIS Head of School. A grievance procedure for the Administration would be of benefit for the school. The student body is represented by the Student Council, and the Parent-Student Handbook which sets high expectations for student behavior, refers to students' rights as well as their responsibilities.

There has to be consideration given to the working conditions of support staff. Benefits and professional development need to be discussed.

The school has a full time school counselor to support students in academic planning and to provide personal counseling. The school counselor also acts as liaison with Pupil Services at RIS, providing additional support, such as psychological assessment and speech therapy.

The curriculum and schedule are designed to provide a number of opportunities for students to experience a nurturing, caring environment, and learn about mutual respect and cross-cultural understanding. Examples include: daily homeroom, Values and Religion courses, community service, and the Advisement Program. Although bullying is not a major issue at school, it is diligently monitored. Efforts are continually made to bridge the language gap between parents and the school.

Security provisions have been reviewed and implemented making the campus safer. In spite of existing safety and security measures, a number of teachers believe that a system of emergency contact between the office and classrooms and vice-versa is required.

A6. Reporting Student Progress:

The school leadership and staff regularly assess student progress toward accomplishing the school's expected school-wide learning results and report student progress to the rest of the school community.

School-wide standardized testing takes place annually in November using Stanford reading comprehension and math tests. Writing is also tested using school-developed prompts and the Six Traits rubric for grading. The results are discussed with the faculty and reported to the governing body. Individual results are used by teachers in differentiated instructional planning. Overall, the results of these tests help guide decisions about which students will take the RIS entrance test the following semester. The results are also used to guide curriculum and professional development.

All units of instruction contain culminating assessments to determine to what extent students have achieved the benchmarks associated with the unit, and thereby the ESLRs. These assessments are varied and include authentic as well as more traditional assessments. Assessment expectations are built into teacher appraisal with the understanding that it be both formative and summative. Atlas Rubicon curriculum software facilitates the alignment of these assessments with standards and benchmarks and the ESLRs. That alignment is not complete in all cases because of the introduction of new subjects and changes in some standards and benchmarks.

Concern has been expressed that the present reporting system does not completely reflect ESLR and standard attainment. The staff has expressed interest in developing standards based grading. In addition to regular reporting, two parent-teacher conference days are held each year.

Around one-third of students move to RIS each year at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, after successfully completing the transfer tests conducted in the second semester. Up to now the school has not carried out formal follow-up studies to ascertain how well they are performing and what improvements may be made to the RIST program to better prepare them.

A7. School Improvement Process:

The school leadership facilitates school improvement which (a) is driven by plans of action that will enhance quality learning for all students; (b) has school community support and involvement; (c) effectively guides the work of the school; and (d) provides for accountability through monitoring of the school-wide action plan.

As a result of the initial visitation, RIST has established a process of collaboratively developing action plans for school development and improvement. The term “development” is preferred over “improvement” because the school is still in its early years of growth and therefore still developing. Hence the school’s focus groups are called school development committees.

The Curriculum and School Development Council (CSDC), consisting of the school administrators, parent, student, staff and faculty representatives (including the chairs of the School Development Committees) is responsible for examining areas for growth and drafting the school's action plan. This council acts as the WASC Self-Study leadership team and will be responsible for monitoring all ensuing action plans. The School Development Committees are an ongoing feature of school organization and will meet approximately monthly to monitor progress in their areas of the action plan and report to the CSDC. This group will ensure that parents and students are truly active stakeholders in this area of school improvement.

Strengths

- In accordance with the philosophy, mission and ESLRs, RIST has firmly established a unique identity and school culture that is valued by students, parents and faculty in just five years.
- The administration provides leadership and encourages collaboration and shared accountability that supports teaching and learning.
- The school has well-qualified administrators and faculty, many with specialist ESL expertise.
- The school has a strong professional development program and benefits from the combined professional learning community with RIS.
- RIST constantly monitors safety and security needs.
- The school has created a supportive, caring, fair and culturally-sensitive environment.
- Efforts are continually made to bridge the language gap between parents and the school.
- The school has adopted measures to assess and report student progress.
- The school improvement process at RIST is ongoing, collaborative and involves all stakeholders.
- There is alignment between action plans, professional development, and resource allocation.

Areas for Growth

- The school needs to continue to find ways to increase the involvement of all parent groups.
- The governing authority needs to clarify and better communicate its role in the development of the school and better publicize its policies and procedures.
- There is confusion about the extent to which RIST functions as a separate school or as section of RIS and in certain areas of joint management clarification of responsibilities is needed. All clarification of administrative roles should be in agreement both in the Charter as well as in school documents.
- There is no system in place for the evaluation of administrators or the School Board.
- The school needs to improve its processes for admission and student transfer from RIST to RIS.
- Effective communication among the staff constantly needs to be reviewed.
- Although professional development is encouraged and supported, it needs improved follow-up.
- The school needs to provide a means of emergency communication between the office and the classrooms.
- While the school has adopted measures to assess student progress towards curricular goals, its assessment plan needs to be further developed.

- While the school has adopted ESLRs and subject standards and benchmarks, the reporting process does not specifically indicate level of achievement of those outcomes.
- The school needs to track the progress of students who have gone on to higher education or transferred to another school, in order to determine what improvements may be made to the program.
- There has to be consideration given to the working conditions of support staff. Benefits and professional development need to be discussed.

Evidence

- Policy Manual
- Action Plans
- Department and individual goals
- RIST Faculty Handbook
- Atlas Rubicon database
- Daily Bulletins
- E-mail Communications
- Stakeholders' Surveys
- Faculty and Department Minutes
- School Community Profile
- Curriculum and Professional Development Team Goals and Minutes
- Mentoring Program

B. Curriculum & Instruction

B1. What Students Learn:

The school provides a challenging, coherent and relevant curriculum for each student that fulfills the school's purpose and results in student achievement of the expected school wide learning results through successful completion of any course of study offered

Students at RIST study a modified international curriculum reflecting the Asian context and particular Thai language and culture. The curriculum incorporates standards and benchmarks in harmony with the ESLRs to formulate a program rich in content and detail yet responding to the specific needs of English language learners.

The program of study for students in elementary and middle school includes language arts and social studies, science, math, Thai language and culture, information skills, music, physical education, values, art and drama. At the high school level, students take English, social studies, science, math, values or religion, and physical education. In grades 9 and 10 they take exploratory courses in business studies, computer science, and visual and performing arts. In grades 11 and 12 they choose to specialize in a "Major" of business studies, studio art or computer science.

In English/ language arts, all students study English mainly through the use of literature-based units, many of which are Asian-based. In math most RIST students continue to excel, as standardized test scores indicate. Science classes are rich in the study of local flora, fauna. Being

a second language school use of a spiral curriculum allows coverage of a number of science concepts building on prior knowledge. Values classes focus on health and character development emphasizing the ESLR Caring Global Citizen. Community service is included in the high school values classes. Students are required by law to take Thai language and culture. In addition RIST offers Japanese language from grade 7 onwards for Japanese students. Technology is taught separately in information skills classes up to grade 8 and also integrated in all grades throughout the school.

Because the RIST curriculum is always evolving, three programs were added during the last two academic years. Drama was introduced as an enhancement to English language learning, Advisement was introduced to respond to the needs of the elementary and middle school students, and the Japanese language class to acknowledge the needs of the growing Japanese population.

In choosing which majors to offer at grades 11 and 12, subjects were chosen that were considered to be ESL-accessible. AP Studio Art has been submitted and accepted by the College Board. Additional resources from the “History Alive” series have recently been acquired and are valuable for ESL learners. Also to recognize the importance of physical development and the benefits of a balanced program, physical education is now a required course up to grade 12.

Realizing the importance of staff collaboration, departments meet monthly and share best practices, review curriculum and collaborate on planning units. Examining student work using the Standards in Practice Protocol occurs about once a quarter. Course outlines are clearly articulated in the Program of Studies. Graduation requirements mandate that students fulfill 28 credits (six credits of English in the four years of high school, three credits each of social studies, science and math, two credits of either values or religion, one credit each of PE and art and then nine credits from electives). In addition students must score above 500 on the TOEFL and meet the Thai Ministry of Education requirement.

The curriculum is documented in the Atlas Rubicon online database shared with RIS. Here teachers develop their units and assessments, aligning them with the subject standards and benchmarks and the ESLRs. Teachers can attach their teaching, learning and assessment documents and also browse all other courses to promote articulation and alignment. Department heads hold master maps of all courses to maintain the continuity of the curriculum. This is a good beginning for vertical alignment, however, as students are mastering standards based education and acquiring second and third languages, there is a sense of urgency regarding vertical alignment. A schoolwide effort would benefit all students.

All stakeholders agree that small class sizes are one of the true assets of the school.

B2. How Students Learn:

The professional staff a) uses research-based knowledge about teaching and learning and b) designs and implements a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students at a high level of learning that is consistent with the school's purpose and expected school-wide learning results

Professional development is strongly promoted at RIST and the school benefits from being part of a much larger professional learning community with RIS. Teachers are encouraged to remain current in educational theory and practice by the use of an individual professional growth fund. In addition faculty has access to numerous on-site opportunities.

RIST's annual Week Without Walls is a tribute to teacher collaboration, and is an excellent example of cross-curricular teaching and learning. Week Without Walls is different at each section level, incorporating different learning styles and multiple intelligences and a discovery approach to learning.

All RIST teachers strive to implement highly effective ESL strategies, and apply research-based planning methods. A major strength of the RIST program is the commitment to small class sizes. This is, perhaps one of the key components to truly being able to accommodate different learning styles, differentiate curriculum and reach the range of English language learners within each class.

Teachers and students use technology extensively for research and presentation. A number of teachers have personal websites to support student learning, and most deliver content through multi-media options. Of special note is the pilot laptop program started in the 2007-2008 school year providing a laptop to all students in grades 11 and 12.

B3. How Assessment is used:

Teachers and students use assessment frequently and integrate the information into the teaching/ learning process. The assessment results are the basis for measuring each student's progress towards the expected school wide learning results and are the basis for evaluation and improvement of curriculum and instruction as well as the basis for the allocation of resources.

RIST teachers use a wide variety of assessment strategies, including a balanced mixture of traditional and authentic tools to evaluate student progress. The teachers are well-versed in the use of authentic assessments, performance indicators, and culminating assessments and actively employ the use of rubrics and scoring guides that define and measure student growth and progress towards the standards and benchmarks. Emphasis was placed on increasing the use of authentic or performance assessment in order to extend students' complex thinking and problem-solving skills as well as their ability to combine and apply knowledge and skills.

Students' writing in English and social studies is being assessed using the Six Traits rubrics for consistency and to ensure that our students' writing progress is sustained. The use of Six Traits as both a teaching and assessment strategy promotes solid writing development as students become familiar with the terminology and rubrics and work with the teacher to identify their own particular areas for growth.

The English department regularly uses data from the Scholastic Reading Inventory to form book groups, to assess progress and diagnose individual reading concerns. They also use the information from the Stanford Assessment to develop general strategies for reading and teaching writing.

In most classrooms, student feedback is an integral part of the assessment process. Most teachers reported that they would adjust a lesson, re-teach a concept or offer test corrections if and when student feedback reported that there were gaps in the learning process.

Teachers should consider the development and use of frequent and short assessments in order to: identify which students have not demonstrated the essential standards; identify effective instructional practices; and plan and target student interventions.

There is need to examine the value of a schoolwide policy on grading and the development of a reporting system that identifies both level of achievement of the standards and benchmarks and habits of mind.

Teachers monitor student progress towards the standards and ESLRs in various ways including a grading program, running records, portfolios, student interviews, and through self-reflections and self-assessments. Also, the collective examination of student work by departments allows for a dialogue about teaching and learning between grade levels and is a valuable way to evaluate the effectiveness of assessments and maintain a culture of continuous improvement.

Strengths

- The curriculum is well-documented in the Atlas Rubicon database showing alignment with standards and benchmarks and ESLRs.
- Curriculum development is responsive to students needs, for example providing exploratory courses in grades 9 and 10 as well as the offering of majors in grades 11 and 12.
- Maintaining small class size helps optimize effective teaching and learning.
- The school provides and supports professional development to enable teachers to remain up to date in research-based teaching and learning best practices.
- Teachers employ a wide variety of ESL teaching strategies to help students achieve the standards, benchmarks and ESLRs.
- Technology is widely used in the teaching and learning process.
- Teachers use a variety of assessment techniques to evaluate and improve teaching and learning.
- Teachers collaboratively examine student assessment work in order to improve teaching and learning.

Areas for growth

- Where possible, better alignment of RIST and RIS courses is required in order to improve students' transition to RIS.
- Follow-up studies of students are needed who have moved away from RIST.
- Improve vertical articulation of the curriculum.
- There is need to examine the value of a schoolwide policy on grading and the development of a reporting system that identifies both level of achievement of the standards and benchmarks and habits of mind.
- Teachers should consider the development and use of frequent and short assessments in order to: identify which students have not demonstrated the essential standards; identify effective instructional practices; and plan and target student interventions.

Evidence

- Expected Schoolwide Learning Results
- Atlas Rubicon database
- High School Program of Studies
- NSSE Survey Results
- Samples of Student Work

C. Support for Student Personal & Academic Growth

C1. Student Connectedness:

Students are connected to a system of support services, activities, and opportunities at the school and within the community that meet the challenges of the curricular/co-curricular program in order to achieve the expected schoolwide learning results.

RIST is deliberate in putting the students' needs first. There are many "usual" ways an international school supports their students, documented in this section, and some more "unusual" and thoughtful ways that may be unique to RIST. An example is the Speak-English policy that is based on incentives rather than punishment. Additionally, RIST requires that all of its teachers are trained in ESL in the mainstream strategies. Although parents, students and staff do not feel bullying is an issue, the school was proactive in the development of an Anti-Bullying policy.

RIST has developed a number of different ways for students, teachers, and parents to access referral and support services. Thai, Korean and Japanese interpreters are readily available for parents upon request.

A fulltime K-12 certified counselor is on staff to deliver social, emotional, academic, college and career counseling. The counselor provides materials and lead activities for teachers and visits Homeroom, Advisement and Values periods to deliver guidance related curriculum. This program is aligned with the school's ESLRs. Students and parents can set up individual appointments with the counselor via email, in person, or inform homeroom teachers if they are in need of a meeting.

Weekly Student Support Team (SST) meetings are conducted to ensure that the needs of all students are being met. The team comprises of: Teachers, Assistant Principal, Counselor, and RIS School Psychologist/Speech Therapist as well as teachers of the identified student. The focus of these meetings is to discuss identified students' academic/social/emotional needs and make recommendations for an intervention plan. This plan is then monitored and revisited to make sure it is serving the student's needs. Additionally there is an Academic Watch program in place for the most at risk students.

These meetings and programs are conducted in a supportive manner for the student and not meant to be a punishment.

At the high school level, students are educated in the importance of post-high school planning, researching colleges and universities and career planning. College fairs, college nights and visitations are offered throughout the school year both at RIST and RIS. Historically the Thai

College Fair had been the most popular event at RIS and most of the high school students competed for the attention of the admission staff. This proved to be intimidating for many of our students and they were apprehensive about attending the event. To remedy this problem, beginning 2006, RIST offered its own Thai College Fair which proved to be helpful for the student population. Parents also play a vital role in their students post high school planning. In conjunction with RIS, RIST parents are invited to “College Parent Night” and College Fairs, and in August 2007 time was allotted at the Parent/ Student Orientation to discuss our credit system, transcripts and early graduation.

At the middle school and elementary school level, an advisement period was added in the 2007-2008 school year. During this time, together with the Values and Religion classes, students are taught the importance of being a caring global citizen. It promotes the school’s concern for developing well-rounded students with a positive sense of self and good interpersonal skills who will make a positive contribution to their families and communities. Elementary and middle school resources were obtained – the Second Steps program targets violence prevention and Steps to Respect is a bullying prevention program. Each of the programs has been designed for ES and MS students with age-appropriate lessons and activities that promote a safe school environment. Advisement trips have been specifically designed for MS students to promote relationship-building with peers and homeroom teachers.

After-school activities have been created to allow students to participate in activities that may not be included in their school day schedule and also to balance the academic program. Additionally various sports teams are available throughout the school year. These activities support the school’s ESLRs. Students also have a choice to participate in the Extended Day Program classes. Additional and creative options could be explored to allow for more student participation in extracurricular activities.

Student Council plays a vital role in providing an avenue for student opinions as well as school connectivity. Student Council helps coordinate student activities, fundraisers, and the cultural show. It also provides representatives who sit on various school-wide committees. The Council has also been the impetus for several major all-school activities including spirit week, environmental week, and the Talent Showcase. These activities have been central to improving morale and community spirit at RIST.

To maintain the students’ growth in English language, RIST requires all students to participate in a three-week summer school program provided by an accredited school/ program or the RIST summer school program. In summer 2007, 109 RIST students participated in the RIST summer school and the remainder of the students studied elsewhere.

Cultural Week is a unique opportunity for the students to share their own cultural backgrounds as well as learn from their friends. Teachers incorporate various learning activities on a variety of cultures. Students have the opportunity to share knowledge and understanding of their own culture through special projects, displays and performances.

C2. Parent & Community Involvement:

The school leadership employs a wide range of strategies to ensure that parental and community involvement is integral to the school's established support system for students?

Parents play a vital role in the planning and executing many of the RIST activities. There is a small but strong Parent-Teacher Auxiliary (PTA) group that is crucial for sharing information with other parents. The PTA is active in providing parent representatives for the School Development Committees (Focus Groups).

The PTA sponsors a number of events throughout the school year: Loy Kratong and Songkran Thai cultural festivities, International Week Food Sale, Teachers' Day Lunch for faculty, Graduation buffet, Japanese Music Concert, Christmas Sale, and the PA Information Booth during Open House. There is normally at least one parent item in the annual Cultural Show.

There is a Japanese Liaison officer on staff to work with the Japanese population, providing interpretation, translation and general/marketing support services, as well as teaching Japanese classes. A part time Korean interpreter has also been hired to assist parents. Efforts are ongoing to promote greater involvement from the other parent groups, particularly the Thai parents who are under-represented.

Following RIST's commitment to parent involvement, a Parent Orientation is held at the beginning of each school year. Parents are separated into language groups and translations of materials and interpreters are provided. RIST further promotes parent involvement by providing Coffee Mornings with the administration and English language lessons.

Effective communication with parents is an ongoing priority. Parents have access to daily online school bulletins through the RIST website which also contains translated versions of all major documents and notices as well as a constantly updated collection of photographs of school events and activities. Weekly parent letters are sent home at the elementary level to communicate homework, upcoming events and projects.

Strengths

- Well-qualified and caring faculty, administration and support staff provide a nurturing environment for students.
- Small class size helps create a supportive personal and academic environment.
- There is a range of school support services, as well as a comprehensive program of school events and extra-curricular activities.
- Parents are positive about the school and are involved in ongoing school development.
- There is a strong commitment to community service in Thai classes and grades 11 and 12.
- Students benefit from a quality and creative counseling program.
- The Japanese Liaison Officer provides highly effective support to the Japanese community.

Areas for Growth

- Additional and creative options could be explored to allow for more student participation in extracurricular activities.

Evidence

- Student Community Profile
- Faculty Handbook
- Referral Forms
- Atlas Rubicon database
- Student Council Documentation
- Student Support Team (SST)
- PTA Minutes
- RIST Website
- Community Service Documentation

D. Resource Management & Development

D1: Resources:

The resources of the school are sufficient to sustain the school program and are effectively used to carry out the school's purpose and school achievement of the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results

Each department produces an annual report to be submitted to the Curriculum and School Development Council in December. The report contains a review of department goals in relation to student learning and the ESLRs. The report also contains a program development section where detailed requests for new resources are justified by a rationale based on curricular objectives. Input originates from teachers themselves through monthly department meetings. Often a variety of sample resources are obtained for review by teachers before requests are made.

The appropriation of a budget enables the educational program. Although the teachers understood and utilized the process, items did not arrive or were rejected without timely notification. There was concern that during the above stated process the status of requests was not transparent. In fact, knowledge of an educational budget would be of benefit in planning for students' needs.

The annual budget is set by the School Board with the Principal bearing responsibility by receiving monthly updates for the year's expenditure remaining within budget. Income and expenditure is handled at the central Accounts Office which is shared by RIS and RIST. Accounts are audited annually and an income-expenditure balance sheet is made available to the administration and faculty.

RIST enjoys good facilities to enable the delivery of a quality program in keeping with the ESLRs. There exists, however, times when shared facilities with RIS leaves one school or the other without equal access. So that all students can enjoy the exceptional facilities, communication between the two administrations is essential. Sometimes compromise needs to be made.

There are other amenities that are shared with RIS and the system for allocating those facilities normally works very well. These include the Performing Arts Center (at RIST), Sound and Visual Studios (at RIST), libraries, bookroom, clinic, gymnasias, swimming pools, canteens, and multimedia/presentation facilities.

The educational technology resources are good with two dedicated computer rooms and a class set of computers in the library, sound and visual recording studios, and wireless throughout the building. In addition there is a laptop program for students in grades 10-12. The majority of classrooms have digital projectors and the plan is for all to have this facility by the beginning of the 2009-2010 academic year. However, the process for renewing technology resources is outside the budget system and relies on requests being made to the Senior Administrator at RIS responsible for campus-wide technology.

The facilities are functional, safe and well-maintained. Security measures in place are emergency exits, smoke detectors, elevator automatic warning system, a camera surveillance system, and emergency lighting. For better security and safety and time management, the need for an intercom system connecting classrooms with the office has been requested by faculty.

Many of RIST's faculty are recruited overseas at hiring fairs in the United States; some are recruited locally. A joint RIS-RIST Salary and Benefits Committee consisting of parents, teachers, and administrators has met for the past two years to discuss ways by which tuition could be increased so that an attractive salary and benefits package could be set up to draw teachers. The school takes pains to help teachers adjust to working overseas by providing an orientation manual and six-day orientation period. Efforts are made to improve this by holding feedback sessions each year with new teachers.

D2: Resource Planning:

The governing authority and the school leadership execute responsible resource planning for the future

According to the new Thai Private Education Act, RIST has become a legal entity, with a requirement to transfer assets and debts from the Redemptorist Foundation to RIST. New by-laws have been developed and approved by the Ministry of Education for the governance of the school and the management of its finances. The new Board is now in a position to create a long-term master financial and resource development plan for the school. In the meantime, the school has established an annual budgeting system that is guided by the current three-year action plan.

Strengths

- A budgeting system for school resource needs is in place.
- Students and teachers benefit from good facilities and resources.
- The school provides a comprehensive professional development program.

Areas for Growth

- A master finance and resource plan needs to be established by the new School Board.
- The introduction of a curriculum cycle would improve resource planning.
- Library resources are improving but more books and audio-visual materials are needed.
- Technology resources are currently quite good there is a need to develop a technology plan in order to remain up to date, and to introduce a more clearly-defined budgeting structure for technology.

Evidence

- Student Community Profile
- Faculty Handbook
- Daily Bulletins
- Atlas Rubicon database
- Weekly Letters to Parents from ES Teachers
- Referral Forms
- NSSE Parent Surveys
- Student Council Documentation
- Student Support Team (SST)
- PTA Minutes
- RIST Website
- Community Service Documentation

E. Thai Language & Culture

Standard 1: Students have integrity, moral conduct and desirable values

Students value their cultural heritage

It is evident that Thai Language and Culture curriculum at RIST builds the following four capacities in young people: disciplinary knowledge, thinking skills, citizen participation, and commitment to desirable values. A strong emphasis is placed on student understanding of cultural heritage, national pride and identity, and civic consciousness as part of personal development.

Educational fieldtrips, visits to local communities, and community service develop a sense of empathy among Thai students and build cross-cultural and inter-faith understanding among foreign students. To show respect for Thailand and the monarchy, students, both Thai and foreigners, learn the Thai National Anthem and sing it at school assemblies. The Royal Anthem is played prior to activities and performances. All students stand in silence to show respect for the King and the country.

Students also have many opportunities to extend their learning beyond the classroom through a variety of activities. They express appreciation of Thai culture, local wisdom and fine arts through cultural performances, dance, drama, music, national holidays and festivals. Significant celebrations such as Loy Krathong, the King's Birthday, Songkran and Wai Kru at RIST are meaningful extensions of classroom activities and often involve all members of the school community, including parents and families who are very much a part of school life.

Students maintain their cultural identity and appreciate others

To integrate knowledge, make language learning relevant, and develop an appreciation for Thai culture, literature is an integral part of the program and is used as a springboard for developing concepts, attitudes and skills. The Thai Language and Culture curriculum is enriched with appropriate Thai fiction, youth literature and non-fiction including historical fiction, biography and autobiography, speeches, diaries, poetry, myths, legends and plays.

Students learn broad themes and ideas that have been pervasive throughout Thai history. How people lived, worked, and played is examined. Religion, ideas, art and music, entertainment, sports and Thai etiquette are important aspects of life and are included in the units of study in order to instill cultural identity and pride. Students develop critical thinking skills by analyzing cause and effect, distinguishing between fact and opinion, and viewing historical events from multiple perspectives in order to appreciate the contributions of significant people of the past and be inspired by them. To foster national identity, students examine important elements that unite Thailand as one: the nation, religion, and the monarchy. Recognizing the diversity of Thailand, the curriculum also highlights multiculturalism to develop tolerance and respect among students.

Standard 3: Students develop aesthetic and physical fitness through participation of fine arts, music and activities

Students appreciate and maintain good local Thai arts, culture and tradition

The program provides hands-on opportunities for students to meet people at the grassroots level, discuss issues of concerns, and reach out to the communities. The integration of research, social studies, Thai Studies, Thai Language and technology allows students opportunities to analyze aspects of life, culture, assets and concerns, and innovations for changes in the chosen local community. Students are exposed to real life experiences in a meaningful, practical way that develops understanding about Thailand and its people. As the buildings are still quite new, additional representations of Thai life could be displayed more prominently in the school property. Though students follow Thai etiquette and perform the *wai* in Thai class, efforts could be made to strengthen this important tradition.

In order to build caring citizens and emphasize the importance of civic responsibilities, students, as well as teachers, are encouraged to reach out to the local communities through community outreach programs. Students take greater ownership of their own learning and growth through a Community Action Project Portfolio that reflects evidence of their involvement.

Standard 5: Students demonstrate essential knowledge and skills in the Thai language and culture curriculum

Students have an ability to communicate in Thai

To ensure that students have essential knowledge and skills in Thai language, all Thais are required to take a full year of Thai Language and Culture courses based on the Ministry of Education Standards.

At the primary level, children learn to read by developing strategies to enable them to effectively use both sight and sound approaches. Upper elementary classes use a literature-based approach. Students also study essential grammar. Through an interdisciplinary approach, students develop an understanding of Thai language, culture, geography, history, and literature. Various language activities encourage students to become effective language users through oral and written expression. The writing process is one of the strategies used to help students improve both the quantity and quality of their writing. In high school, students study and analyze a variety of literary genres. Courses focus on the famous Thai literary works for youth and aim to develop student ability to think critically and independently. Students analyze literature in depth and use language to participate in discussions and debate. Structured arguments, coherent and persuasive with relevant support and examples, both in writing and oral, are emphasized. Language skills are reinforced and refined within the context of literary analysis and written compositions. Connections with contemporary and controversial issues in Thai society enhance student learning. The Thai Studies program also provides classes for foreign students.

Standard 9: The instructors engage in a student-centered teaching

Thai language and culture teachers are effective in using student-centered teaching methods

Teachers design unit plans that incorporate student-centered thematic instruction. Lessons and activities are designed to integrate knowledge from a number of subjects allowing students to work cooperatively.

Students are actively engaged in creating, understanding, and connecting to knowledge through a variety of learning activities from literature circles, reciprocal reading and writing and debate to drama. Students are encouraged to explore, experiment, and discover on their own. They are not just memorizing information, but are encouraged to work with and use the information alone or with peers to generate diverse thoughts and perspectives on topics and issues. Through layered assessment, students are given choices to challenge themselves and progress at their own level. It is also evident that teachers strive for students to reach their potential by accommodating their learning style, learning needs and interests. Students learn collaborative and cooperative skills as well as independent learning.

Standard 10: The administration demonstrates effective leadership skills

The administration develops skills in managing and empowering multi-national personnel

The RIST administration is committed to maintaining an atmosphere that encourages open communication and effort to involve personnel in decisions regarding school matters. Empowerment is evident as they share information through the regular schedule of staff and department meetings, in-service training, daily bulletins and one to one interaction; all of which build a sense of trust and team spirit. Both administrators also provide workshops for faculty.

Accountability of student learning and achievement is the responsibility of the RIST Administration which, in addition to overseeing the daily operations of the school, is in charge of Thai curriculum development with the Thai department head. The Thai department head supports colleagues in their teaching, reviews samples of student work, conducts peer-observation, provides knowledge on current educational trends and methodology, and identifies appropriate resources, as well as sets strategic plans and directions. Thai teachers have ample opportunities to grow professionally through on-site workshops at school as well as attend educational conferences overseas. Each year, the Thai department head gives an annual summary report which evaluates the strengths and areas for growth of the program to the Curriculum Council.

The administration has demonstrates the ability to equitably supervise and manage a culturally diverse faculty and staff.

Standard 12: The school's curriculum and instruction is student-centered

The school provides activities that enable students to appreciate and take pride in their own culture, host country and other cultures

Each year during the International Week in October, students celebrate their unity of diverse cultures by holding the annual cultural show. The whole community is involved with cultural celebrations and activities that include performances, games, music, displays, and cuisine from the various nationality groups. Significantly, students plan and prepare their own presentations for the Cultural Show with support from their teachers and parents.

Throughout the year, the Thai department provides teaching and learning activities, including field trips that aim to deepen student understanding and appreciation of Thai culture and wisdom. Students actively join in Thai national celebrations and festivals such as Thai Mother's Day, Loy Krathong, the King's Birthday, Wai Kru ceremony, and Songkran.

Standard 13: The school has a curriculum that is suitable for students and community, including appropriate resources to enhance the learning process

The school has a program on Thai language and culture

The Teaching and learning of Thai language, culture, and history at RIST are guided by the standard achievements and learning domains specified in the National Educational Act of 2001, criteria of quality assurance of SOR MOR SOR Standards for International Schools, and RIST ESLRs. Courses offered are Thai Language and Culture for native speakers, Thai Studies for non-native speakers and Thai as a Foreign Language for non-native speakers.

The program aims to provide students with an understanding of Thailand, its language, history, people and culture, and knowledge of key developments and forces that shaped its past, distinguishes its present, and challenges its future. Through an interdisciplinary approach, the program develops an understanding of fundamental concepts and language skills from a wide variety of learning experiences.

Knowledge and in-depth understanding are central to learning. Using the principles of the Backward Design, the programs focus first on the learning goals. These are the enduring understandings that the students are to develop at the completion of the learning sequence. There is also a focus on a number of essential, or guiding, questions. Enduring understandings go beyond facts and skills to focus on larger concepts, principles or processes. Then, teachers decide how students will demonstrate their conceptual understanding through explanation, interpretation, analysis, and application and identify the standards and specific benchmarks.

Finally, the summative assessment is the culminating task that requires students to draw upon the skills and concepts they have developed throughout the unit in order to demonstrate their essential understanding of a particular unit of study. Students must be able to apply skills, concepts, and understandings, rather than a mere reporting of information. Unit maps are documented in the Atlas Rubicon curriculum database. These unit plans are eventually interpreted into weekly lesson plans. In so doing, the department attempts to provide meaningful, everyday-life activities according to specific objectives and learning outcomes for each lesson.

Authentic learning and teaching for understanding; reading, speaking, and writing are meant to develop high level of thinking, not discrete skill practice. When detailed weekly plans are implemented, through teacher review and reflection, daily modification and adjustment is made to accommodate the individual needs of students. The teachers meet, discuss and share their plans formally and informally. Collegial sharing is very much a part of professional development. Teachers meet quarterly to examine student work, using the Standards in Practice protocol and use findings to modify teaching and learning. All unit plans and lesson plans are posted online.

There is a need to periodically evaluate all courses in the Thai program in order to modify the program to maintain effectiveness. An example would be to incorporate more Thai dance, arts and music.

RIST has four Thai teachers teaching the three courses: Thai Language and Culture, Thai Studies, and Thai as a Foreign Language. All are highly qualified with teaching certification and wealth of experience locally and internationally.

Strengths

- Thai culture has been strongly respected by the school community.
- Students are well disciplined, humble and respect the diversity of others.
- Students have many opportunities to broaden academic experience, both in and out of the classroom, and to develop a sense of commitment to serving others in various communities through structured learning activities that help them to become responsible members of society.
- Both Thai and expatriate students have many opportunities to express appreciation of Thai culture and arts.
- Students have the opportunity through a variety of media resources (i.e. the broadcast studio) to showcase learning.
- Through an interdisciplinary approach, students develop an understanding of Thai language, culture, geography, history, and literature, including inviting in local experts and authorities.
- All Thai instructors use a variety of research based methods of instruction and assessment in the classrooms.
- Expatriate students have the opportunity to analyze and compare their own culture with Thai culture.
- The school has developed a comprehensive, coherent, relevant and challenging program on Thai Language and Culture consistent with school, national and MOE standards. Courses offered are Thai Language and Culture for Thais, Thai Studies for expatriates and Thai as a Foreign Language.
- The school provides good language lessons for students with gaps in their Thai language skills.

Areas for Growth

- More representations of Thailand should be displayed throughout the school. For example, students follow Thai etiquette and perform the *wai* in Thai class. As one representation of Thai culture, efforts could be made to strengthen this important tradition.
- There is a need to periodically evaluate all courses in the Thai program in order to modify the program to maintain effectiveness. An example would be to incorporate more Thai dance, arts and music.

Evidence

- Thai Language and Curriculum documentation
- Thai Department Minutes, Goals, and Activities Calendar
- Week Without Walls programs and photographs
- Atlas Rubicon database
- Community Action Student Portfolio
- Samples of student work

Part B:

The stakeholders are commended for the thoroughness in the preparation of the *Focus on Learning* document. All stakeholders assisted the Visiting Team in the collection and clarification of data that was needed in order to analyze the existing status of the school. The Visiting Team found that students were extremely congenial and appreciative of the efforts made to improve the quality of educational opportunities available to them.

Schoolwide Areas of Strength:

1. The administration provides leadership and encourages collaboration and shared accountability that supports teaching and learning.
2. In accordance with the philosophy, mission and ESLRs, RIST has firmly established a unique identity and school culture that is valued by all stakeholders in just five years.
3. Well-qualified and caring faculty, administration and support staff provide a nurturing environment for students.
4. The school provides a comprehensive professional development program.
5. The school has developed a comprehensive, coherent, relevant and challenging program on Thai Language and Culture consistent with school, national and MOE standards. Courses offered are Thai Language and Culture for Thais, Thai Studies for expatriates and Thai as a Foreign Language.
6. The curriculum is well-documented in the Atlas Rubicon database showing alignment with standards and benchmarks and ESLRs.
7. Maintaining small class size helps optimize effective teaching and learning.
8. The Japanese Liaison Officer provides highly effective support to the Japanese community.
9. Students and teachers benefit from good facilities and resources.

The subsequent list of critical areas for follow-up is a synthesis of (1) growth areas addressed by the school in the action plan, (2) suggestions to strengthen these areas already identified in the action plan sections, and (3) additional areas identified by the Visiting Team.

Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-up:

The Visiting Team concurs with the school's identified areas that are outlined in the schoolwide action plan. These are summarized below:

1. There is confusion about the extent to which RIST functions as a separate school or as section of RIS and in certain areas of joint management clarification of responsibilities is needed. All clarification of administrative roles should be in agreement both in the Charter as well as in school documents.
2. There is need to examine the value of a schoolwide policy on grading and the development of a reporting system that identifies both levels of achievement of the standards and benchmarks and habits of mind.
3. Additional and creative options could be explored to allow for more student participation in extracurricular activities.
4. The introduction of a curriculum cycle would improve resource planning. The Visiting Team recommends that the Curriculum Review Cycle be implemented immediately to better address the planning for professional development, as well as for effective purchase of school resources.

In addition the Visiting Team has identified other critical areas for follow-up:

1. There is no system in place for the evaluation of administrators or the School Board.
2. More representations of Thailand should be displayed throughout the school. For example, students follow Thai etiquette and perform the *wai* in Thai class. As one representation of Thai culture, efforts could be made to strengthen this important tradition.
3. The school needs to continue to find ways to increase the involvement of all parent groups.
4. Teachers should consider the development and use of frequent and short assessments in order to: identify which students have not demonstrated the essential standards; identify effective instructional practices; and plan and target student interventions.

CHAPTER V ONGOING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The RIST self-study process generated a three year action plan starting in 2007. This process involved all stakeholders and has resulted in an action plan highlighting specified critical areas of follow up. The goals identified by RIST in their schoolwide action plan are:

Goal A1: Study the advantages and disadvantages of RIST maintaining a distinct mission and purpose separate from RIS and involve all stakeholders in planning for the future

Goal A2: Clarify and communicate the role, policies and procedures of the School Board, Head of School, and RIS personnel in the operation and development of the school

Goal A3: Provide staff development that meets the needs of the school and faculty through needs analysis, evaluation, and expansion of alternative collaborative models

Goal A4: Improve the processes of grading, reporting and tracking student progress

Goal B1: Improve the alignment of the curriculum with the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results

Goal B2: Improve the vertical articulation of the curriculum

Goal B3: Expand the range and variety of curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students

Goal C1: Increase efforts that engage the whole school community in ensuring that students are safe from bullying

Goal C2: Improve the effectiveness of the admission, placement and transfer processes

Goal C3: Increase the involvement of the community (alumni, parents, local businesses) in the school's career education, community service and other programs

Goal D1: Improve resource planning through closer collaboration between the governing authority and the building administration and through the introduction of a curriculum cycle

Goal D2: Implement a Technology Plan

Goal E1: Systematically evaluate all courses in the Thai program and use the findings to improve teaching and learning as needed

The Visiting Team finds the action plans are appropriately directed toward improvement of the school's performance with respect to the concepts contained in the criteria categories. However, the action plan needs to be updated as some goals mentioned above have already been accomplished, and new growth areas have been identified by the Visiting Team.

Existing factors that support school improvement

RIST is fortunate to have a high degree of enthusiasm, support and professional commitment by the leadership, staff and other school community members to implement these action steps. The Visiting Team noted four areas that make RIST such a unique school. Those four areas are the dedicated, extremely capable and forward thinking veteran administration, the creative and dedicated staff, students who are eager learners, and good facilities. The combination of those four areas provides a platform for successful school improvement.

Impediments to school improvement that the school will need to overcome in order to accomplish any of the action plan sections

The Schoolwide Action Plan incorporates important schoolwide issues and relates them to the concepts of the *Focus on Learning* criteria. Implementation of the action plan has already begun

indicating the level of commitment to continue this process. However, in keeping with the school's goal area of clarifying management responsibilities, found in the Organization for Student Learning section, the school needs to clearly determine and communicate administration roles. Additionally, use of the Curriculum Review Cycle will assist the school in planning well for professional development, resource acquisition, and ensure curriculum remains relevant and effective. Significant change in the current administration and/or teaching staff will impede school improvement.

To ensure the timely and effective completion of the action plan, some of the action plan items need a clear process detailing how the task will be completed.

Soundness of follow-up process to monitor accomplishment of schoolwide action plan

Overall the school community members are committed to a follow-up process. The School Development Groups will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the action plan. The school's action plan incorporates important schoolwide issues and relates them to the concepts of the *Focus on Learning* criteria.

The veteran leadership of the administration promotes confidence in the school's ability to lead the school in completion of the action plan.