



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Name of Charter School: **International Community School**

Proposed Charter Term Length: **5 Years**

Current Grade Range: **K-5** Grade range at the end of the charter term: **K-5**

Expected enrollment at the end of the charter term: **450**

This application was approved by _____ Local Board of Education on _____, 201__

For each year of the NEW charter term, indicate the number of students the charter school plans to serve.

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Year 1	75	75	75	75	75	75								450
Year 2	75	75	75	75	75	75								450
Year 3	75	75	75	75	75	75								450
Year 4	75	75	75	75	75	75								450
Year 5	75	75	75	75	75	75								450

1. State the charter school’s mission and describe why this initiative is important to the students it will serve. Be specific about the needs of the students, as well as the expectations the District and general community holds for a new school. Also provide a brief description of any defining features of the school. Include how stakeholders were involved in the petition process and will continue participating. (350 words or less)

International Community School (ICS) is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School that educates refugees, immigrants and native-born children, providing a rigorous, holistic education.

Approximately 3,500 refugees arrive in Georgia annually, and around 750 enroll in DeKalb County School District (DCSD)¹. ICS meets the need for schools designed to serve these families and has one of the highest percentages of refugee and immigrant students in a DCSD elementary school.

¹ New American Pathways. July 2017



International Community School

Through a focus on schooling that leverages and honors diversity, the school also meets the need for a holistic educational approach that positions native-born peers to benefit from a culturally and linguistically diverse setting. For the 2017-2018 school year, of 437 ICS students, 29% identify as refugees, 22% as immigrants, and 49% as native born. 42% qualify as Limited English Proficient, 4% special education, 9% gifted, and 68% qualify for free/reduced price lunch. Students come from 29 countries and speak 27 languages.

The vision for a school in DCSD that focuses on an intercultural approach to support a superdiverse (“schools and classrooms with at least five language groups represented, and without a critical mass of any one language group”²) student body in the vision of Beloved Community³. The Beloved Community philosophy, coined by Josiah Royce and developed by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., builds connectedness and respect across the diverse community in ways that facilitate socio-emotional learning and a culture conducive to personal growth and makes ICS a school unlike any other in the district or state.

The high levels of parent engagement by which ICS is characterized were leveraged in this charter renewal through staff surveys and listening sessions, the involvement of multiple board committees, focus groups of parents from refugee and immigrant backgrounds created around linguistic and cultural similarities, and an invitation to all parents to participate in a listening session to offer input.

See [exhibit 32](#).

² Hurwitz, Anya, and Laurie Olsen. 2018. Supporting Dual Language Learner Success in Superdiverse PreK-3 Classrooms: The Sobrato Early Academic Language Model. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

³ The King philosophy. (2018). *The King Center*. Retrieved from: www.thekingcenter.org



International Community School

2. Describe the charter school's academic program, specifically focusing on why it is innovative in DeKalb County School District, and more specifically, about the school students currently attend. How will this school be academically different from the traditional public schools within the community? Include mention of any waivers of state law and SBOE rule that is needed to be able to implement the academic program. Be sure to describe any special characteristics of your charter school, such as a special population or some other feature or features which enhance educational opportunities. (350 words or less)

The addition of a weighted lottery starting from the 2018-2019 school year allows us to maintain the intentional diversity contained in our mission. The staffing, instructional program, and school structures have all been developed in response to the school's uniquely inclusive approach and vision for Beloved Community⁴. In addition to the supports provided to immigrant and refugee students and their families, the ICS model prepares all students to engage respectfully in a diverse community and serve as collaborators within an increasingly globalized environment. A recent study in Georgia⁵ documented an English Learner (EL) graduation rate of only 44% and described limitations on the capacity of teachers and schools to meet the unique needs of immigrant and refugee students due to the number of cultures and languages represented by DCSD families and the superdiverse learning environments that emerge.⁶ ICS has been designed to go beyond meeting these challenges by embracing a superdiverse learning environment and providing an education that is tailored to meet students' needs in individualized and culturally appropriate ways.

The school's academic program has evolved over the last charter term to better leverage assessment data and the IB framework to determine students' needs and facilitate atypically rapid growth. The use of data from MAP tests and Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) to drive small, flexible groupings, such as guided reading, is anchored in a holistic approach to student support that includes culturally relevant balanced

⁴ Perry, T., & Fraser, J. W. (1993). Reconstructing schools as multiracial/multicultural democracies. *Freedom's plow: Teaching in the multicultural classroom*, 3-24.

⁵ *Education Reform in a Changing Georgia: Promoting High School and College Success for Immigrant Youth*, (Hooker, Fix, McHugh: Migration Policy Institute Report, March 2014), p.3.

⁶ DeKalb County Schools, 2013 <http://www.dekalb.k12.ga.us/support/ell/>



literacy, individualized instruction and mentorship for nearly 25% of the students through the School Within a School (SWS) program, daily second language and arts/elective instruction for every student every day, integration of multicultural perspectives across curricula and practices, recruitment of culturally diverse staff and volunteers, and supplementary programming for families that encourage engagement.

2. Describe the charter school's organizational structure, specifically focusing on its innovation and need for flexibility, its general partnership structure with an educational service provider (ESP) (if applicable), DCSD and GaDOE, and the school's community interest and need. (350 words or less)

ICS is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors that oversees the governance of the school and sets and monitors the goals of the principal/CEO. The leadership roles at the school have shifted (see [Exhibit 31d](#)) to provide each staff member with dedicated coaching and developmental support and each student with data-driven intervention. ICS does not use a charter management organization (CMO) or education services provider (ESP) and collaborates with DCSD, several local partners, and a robust team of volunteers to provide a uniquely flexible, supportive, and inclusive program to diverse learners.

The school's need for flexibility is aligned with its target population, which is largely comprised of students with specific academic and emotional needs. Refugee children benefit from settings wherein they can connect with children from similar backgrounds,⁷ and refugee families are more likely to participate in school programming (such as conferences and school-wide programs) with translation services and close relationships with staff from similar backgrounds.⁸ ICS intentionally builds close relationships with families through community cultural events, home visits, family services (like the food pantry and mentors), and translation services. The ICS staff reflects the diversity of its student community, and the 61 staff members hail from 19 different countries and speak 13 languages. Translation and interpretation

⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4780292/>

⁸ http://newamericanpathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2017.01.25-Final-Submitted-Application_NewAP-LSG-21st-CCLC.pdf



services are available for nearly all languages spoken by ICS families, and innovative programming like School Within a School (SWS) tutoring and the proposed linguistic immersion opportunities for families in the next charter term (see Section III) promote the engagement and support that is necessary to meet the needs of the community. Flexibility to tailor curriculum and instructional strategies to specific students and recruit staff with consideration of their cultural diversity and experience with vulnerable student groups is crucial to the continued success and growth of ICS. As of the 2016-2017 school year, ICS was the highest performing DCSD school serving such a large refugee and EL community (see page 15). With annual waiting lists of more than 220 families and the engagement of hundreds of volunteers annually, ICS addresses a critical need in DCSD and Georgia.

II. PAST PERFORMANCE

1. Provide a narrative describing how the charter school performed in meeting the academic and organizational goals outlined in its current charter contract. In your narrative:

- *Address the school's performance in each year of your current charter term.*
- *Address the school's performance in comparison to traditional schools.*
- *Address the school's performance in comparison to state expectations.*
- *You are urged to use the DCSD Charter School Annual Report Poverty Regression Analysis.*
- *You are urged to include any supporting charts, tables, or graphs that provide quantitative data.*
- *If your charter school did not meet all of the goals in its charter contract, explain any mitigating factors to which this can be attributed, and explain how the school plans to address them in the upcoming charter renewal term requested.*

Summary of the Program

ICS was founded in 2002 by a committed group of educators, community members, and parents who sought to build an inclusive and diverse school community for students in DeKalb County that would be a model of local innovation. From the beginning, the educational approach has taken a trifold approach that has included expectations that students



International Community School

from diverse backgrounds are all able to make educational gains, systematic yet individualized instruction, and culturally responsive curricula and pedagogy. Throughout the history of ICS, staff, parents, and community members have understood that all students have knowledge that they bring to the classroom and recognized the benefits of multilingualism. The school has excelled at providing a culturally responsive approach that has included positioning each student's culture and language as assets. ICS has consistently welcomed parent engagement and community support. Finally, instruction has been organized around the IB framework and state standards.

More recently ICS has increased the use of data to inform systematic yet individualized instruction and support. As a result, ICS is attaining high annual student growth and stakeholder satisfaction, as validated in the 2016-17 CCRPI. In addition to earning 27.7 achievement points and 39.4 progress points for a total CCRPI of 76.9 (which is 9.9 points higher than the DCSD average and 4 points higher than the state average), ICS earned a school climate rating of four stars. These data demonstrate how the school is positioned to make significant and rapid gains that will continue as teachers persist in their efforts to maintain high educational standards, engage in systematic yet individualized instruction, and adapt curriculum and pedagogy to be culturally responsive and benefit the unique population at ICS.

The special programs and services that are available at ICS but not in traditional public schools include: diversity of staff that reflects that of the student body, the SWS tutoring program for students who are not meeting academic goals, daily second language and specials instruction for every student, and an approach to curricula and school culture that celebrates the diversity of each family in the school community. Some of these model elements, like the SWS tutoring program and daily second language instruction for every student, were previously codified as ICS innovations. Others, like intentional communication



International Community School

strategies and the integration of multicultural celebration into curricula and school-wide structures, have been operationalized without clearly naming them as model elements. In the next charter term, they will be named as ICS innovations to continue to build on the elements of the school program that have consistently facilitated atypically high parent engagement and promoted students' socio-emotional health and academic growth.

The ICS curriculum, distinctive instructional methods, and educational programs are based on one crucial concept and unifying principle: ICS is a school where a community is built upon the development of cultural intelligence for all school community members under the powerful pedagogical idea that native-born and foreign-born students learn best when they learn together. The trifold commitments to high educational expectations, systematic yet individualized instruction, and culturally responsive curricula and pedagogy provide a framework for understanding this concept. Throughout this charter term, ICS has demonstrated the impact of this approach through significantly higher growth and academic performance, lower than average disciplinary referrals, higher than average student retention, and increased school climate ratings and stakeholder satisfaction.

The following section provides details on ICS' performance against its charter goals for the current charter term, as outlined in the Georgia State Department of Education Annual report, included in [Exhibit 30a](#), and the accountability report, which is included as [Exhibit 30b](#).

Performance in Innovations/Essential Features

International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP)

This innovation was implemented in all years of the charter term and has provided a framework for instruction at ICS since inception. The school's IB renewal authorization was completed in January of 2017 (see [Exhibit 31b](#)). All new teachers at ICS participate in an IB orientation on-site, led by the IB Coordinator. This provides guidelines on IB planning, the Learner Profile, and information necessary for teachers to plan using the IB framework. In the summer after a teacher's first year at ICS, they are sent to



International Community School

local IB training through CASIE (The Center for the Advancement and Study of International Education) to obtain their Level 1 certification. All current teachers have completed Level 1 IB training. If the teacher has already obtained IB certification, they may take upper-level training. Funding for up to ten teachers is earmarked annually for continuing IB certification. Teachers may apply to participate or are nominated if they have not attended training in previous years. In this way, staff is provided with opportunities to increase their IB proficiency.

In addition to the provision of teacher training to implement the IB approach, ICS uses six units of inquiry annually to plan themes across each grade level and within content areas. This provides horizontal and vertical alignment within units of inquiry to provide a holistic, interdisciplinary connection that is driven by content standards (see [Exhibit 10](#)). Instructional staff convenes six times annually to collaboratively plan these units of inquiry and create alignment while still being flexible enough to respond to topical issues and the unique composition of students. Other school-wide IB strategies include monthly recognition of one student from each class as a Global Citizen (because of their demonstration of the IB learner attribute for that month), monthly learner attribute foci for the whole school, service learning projects and community events that are connected to learner attributes, cumulative projects, and UN Day (See Exhibits [35](#) and [41](#)).

School Within the School (SWS) Tutoring Program

This innovation was successfully implemented in all years of the charter term and will not be revised for the next charter term; however, it will be owned by a member of the academic leadership team to ensure student data accurately informs student supports. The SWS program uses MAP and Milestones data to identify students in the lowest quartile for ELA and math in each grade level and partners them with community volunteers for individualized supplementary tutoring. The program was initially conceived by Sister Patty Caraher, a retired educator and one of the school's founders, to provide intensive academic support to students who would need individualized supplementary support to connect



International Community School

their prior knowledge with the content in the general education classrooms. The program continues to operate on this premise, and it has shifted from informal identification of participants to the use of MAP and Milestones to determine participants each semester. In the 2017-2018 school year, 93% of students in the program made high/average progress or met/exceeded expected growth on their MAP assessments (see [Exhibit 34](#)). The original volunteer base, recruited by school founders, continues to provide the majority of the volunteers, and the school maintains an average of 50 tutors annually, some of whom have been tutoring in the program since the school's opening in 2002. With 14% of the 44 tutors in 2018-2019 school year serving since 2002 and 34% of the same group of tutors serving 5-10 years, retention rates are high.

For the approximately 50 students who participate in the program each semester, the focus of the weekly, 45-minute session is English acquisition and content from the student's general education classes. Tutoring sessions may include from one to six children and are delivered at the same time by the same tutor for the year (or semester if students are moved in or out of the program based on mid-year MAP performance). This consistency facilitates strong relationships that promote school connectedness and provide an additional touchpoint for each family. Many tutors become mentors to students and their families, taking students on outings and visiting with families outside of the weekly tutoring sessions held on campus during the regular school day. Materials and content to be addressed in each session are compiled by the student's teacher, and tutors and teachers check in regularly to collaborate on student progress and needs. This program has supported connectedness, confidence, and engagement and provides an additional means of safely exploring a new language and culture for those students who recently arrived in the country, have Limited English Proficiency, or who struggle with academic content. (See [Exhibit 34](#) for a full report on SWS.)

Before- and After-school Programming

During this charter term, the before- and after-school programming has continued to offer



International Community School

families access to childcare and support outside of the regular school day. Students may arrive at the school up to 50 minutes before the start of the school day and are provided a flexible time for reading and library visits, homework help, and breakfast. The after-school program is available to all families until 6:00 pm every day and is managed by a member of the school staff. Families may opt into the before- or after-school programming at any time and programs are offered at low to no cost. Staff members are recruited from the communities of the students to ensure programming is culturally reflective and provide access to interaction in students' native languages. Approximately 100 students per day participate in before- and after-school programming. Provision of instruction and sports from vendors and volunteer-staffed programs like Kilometer Kids (distance running), soccer, and tennis enable any interested student to participate in regular instruction and competition

In the next charter term, the after-school program may be supplemented to provide greater support to families and expanded access to cultural programming designed to engage students and their families. The addition of this innovation in the next charter term will be developed by the new leader and implemented beginning in year one of the next term. A summary of the innovations is in Section III.

Provision of Electives and Second Language for All Students

This innovation was successfully implemented throughout the current charter term and will be continued without revision in the next. The availability of second language instruction and specials for all students each day is innovative because all interventions and supplementary supports for students take place outside of this protected time. Rather than pulling students with needs for additional support from the arts, physical education, and instruction in an additional language, this time is protected for all students in recognition of its value in building cultural intelligence and academic success. It was the intention of ICS founders that all students perceive themselves as language learners, positioning every student to, regardless of English proficiency, work toward the acquisition of another language and support one another in the importance of second language development.



International Community School

In addition to the robust body of evidence that describes the social, cognitive, emotional, academic, and personal benefits to students who learn a second language, there is a significant body of research to support the provision of arts and electives programming to refugee and immigrant students. A 2016 study⁹ found that refugee children were less likely to participate in any voluntary educational programs outside of extracurricular programs, but the benefit of such programming aided in school attachment, academic outcomes, and engagement. Another 2016 study¹⁰ found the benefits of participation in programming like athletics and arts education had a more significantly positive impact on students from refugee backgrounds than their immigrant and native-born peers, and their participation is less likely when not offered as a part of the regular school program. The same study determined that refugee students were more likely to seek and leverage emotional and academic supports through involvement in arts and athletics programming during the school day. A 2015 study¹¹ found a correlation between immigrant students who participated in arts and electives programming and overall academic achievement, suggesting the additional social and linguistic interaction bolstered their language and culture acquisition. ICS' use of a broad flexibility waiver to afford protected electives instruction and second language instruction for all students provides a research-based element of the school model that is critical to the academic, social, personal, and linguistic development of the population served. Because ICS also values the preservation and celebration of each student's home language and culture, this element of the model will be codified in the next charter term as a new school innovation. The daily, 45-minute elective period for each student utilizes a four-course rotation for K-2 students and a three-course rotation for 3-5 students, providing access to each elective at least once each week. K-2 students take physical education, music, visual art, and library skills (wherein students participate in read-alouds,

⁹ Spie, C. (2016). Children and adolescents with refugee background less likely to participate in voluntary educational programs-with exception of extracurricular school activities. *DIW Economic Bulletin*, 6(34/35), 422.

¹⁰ Eisnecker, P., Giesecke, J., Kroh, M., Liebau, E., Marcus, J., Salikutluk, Z., ... & Westermaier, F. (2016). Integrating refugees: Insights from the past. *DIW Economic Bulletin*, 6(34/35), 387-390.

¹¹ Camacho, D. E., & Fuligni, A. J. (2015). Extracurricular participation among adolescents from immigrant families. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 44(6), 1251-1262



learn how to choose high-interest books on their level and how to conduct research). English (for students eligible for ELL services), French, or Spanish curriculum for second language classes comes from a range of resources compiled by teachers and organized into curriculum maps. In the next charter term, the language departments will collaborate to create interim assessments aligned with the state second language standards (see Section III). The ESOL coordinator, who is also an ESOL teacher, tracks Fountas and Pinnell data to group students according to their reading levels. In the 2016-17 CCRPI report, ICS earned 9.253 points on the percent of ELs with positive movement from one Performance Band to a higher Performance band as measured by ACCESS. Positioning all students at ICS as language learners enables all students to have a common perspective around bilingualism/multilingualism and language acquisition.

Academic Performance

The current staff, leadership team, and the Board possess the foundational skills necessary to move students at the rapid pace necessary to exceed the charter goals. Although the school has weathered significant leadership transitions that resulted in inconsistency and a lack of focus on school-wide strategies, the current leadership and staff are being developed through an intentional, multi-year plan that leverages greater consistency and collaboration, a focus on student data, and high expectations for every student's growth and attainment. Revisions to the organizational structure to provide greater instructional and planning support to each teacher, leadership capacity, frequent school-wide data analysis, and accountability for specific growth metrics implemented in the 2016-17 school year demonstrated ICS's plan to improve performance will effect improved outcomes and the significant gains necessary to meet and exceed goals. As such, although the school did not outperform the state CCRPI in its first two years of the charter term, it exceeded its goals in year three and is poised to grow even more dramatically.

Performance

Academic Goal 1: During each year of the charter term, ICS will earn a Beating the Odds

Designation. Although ICS did not earn a Beating the Odds designation, its performance in the charter term shows significant annual growth that positions it to do so in 2017-18.

Academic Goal 2: ICS will demonstrate proficiency and improvement on the CCRP. ICS’

CCRPI was higher than that of DCSD and similar schools in DCSD all three years of the charter and outperformed the state in 2016-17 (Figure II.1.1). The school’s improvement from 2015-16 to 2016-17 (Figure II.2.2) meets the goal of annual improvement on the CCRPI.

Figure II.1.1. ICS, DCSD, and GA CCRPI from 2014-15 to 2016-17

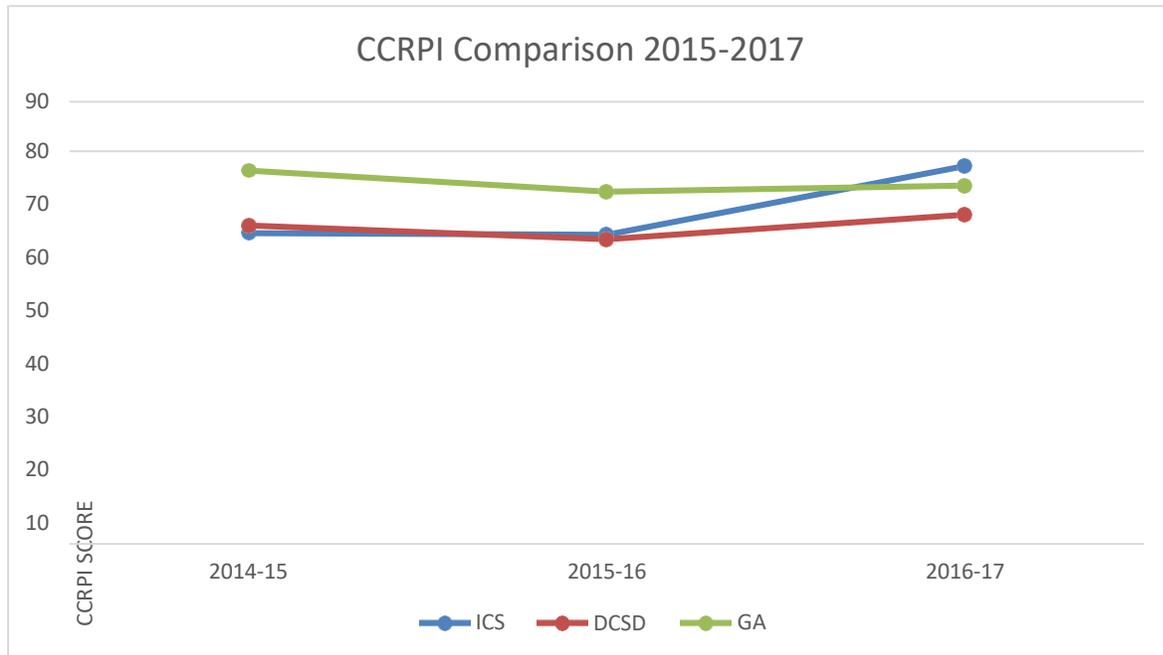
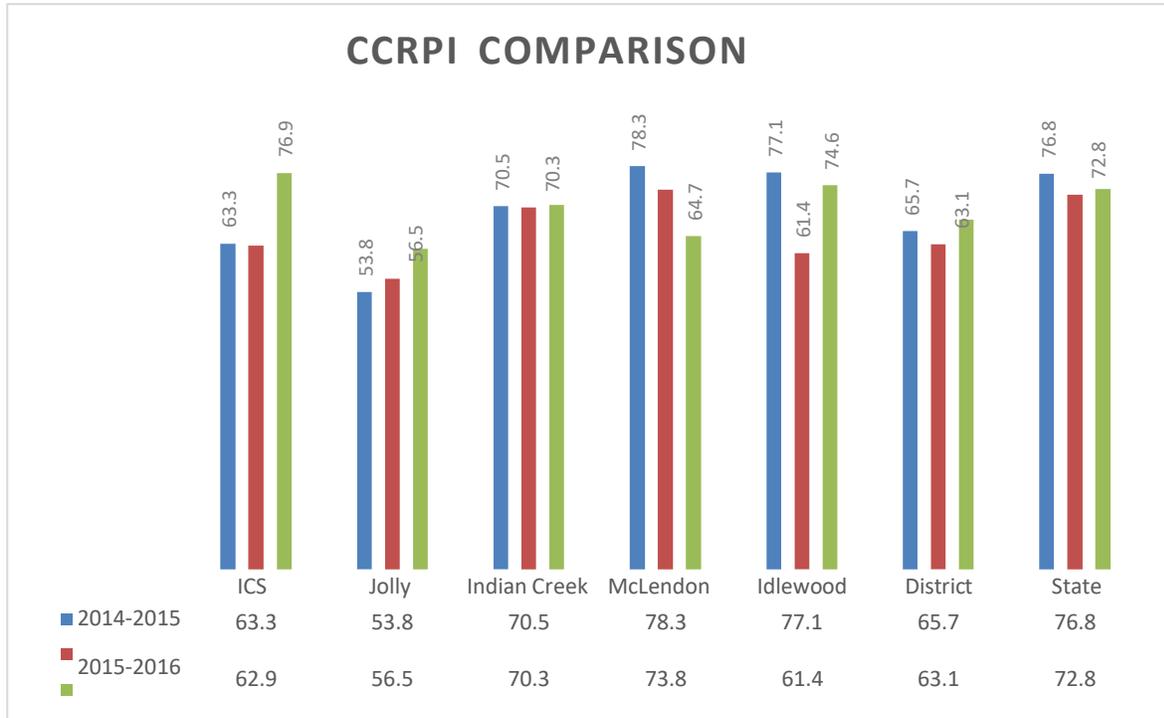


Figure II.1.2. ICS CCRPI Performance Compared to DCSD Schools With Similar ELL and Free and Reduced Lunch Population

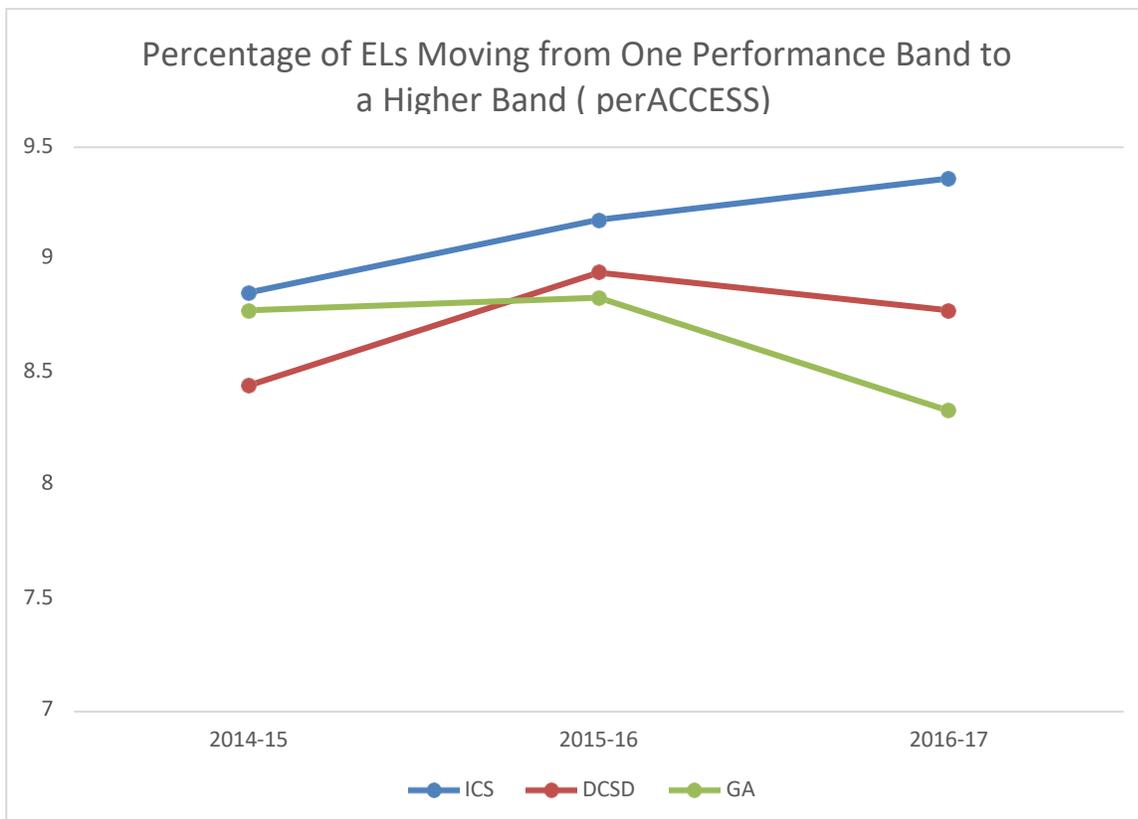




International Community School

ICS has consistently demonstrated atypically high growth in English proficiency and cultural development, achieved through staffing that prioritizes diversity and programming that provides students with individualized linguistic and cultural supports. The impact of these model elements is demonstrated by academic performance on the CCRPI indicator of the percentage of ELs with positive movement from one Performance Band to a higher Performance Band as measured by ACCESS. Out of ten possible points, the score was 8.34 in 2014-15, 8.92 in 2015-16, and 9.25 in 2016-17, demonstrating annual growth that was not matched by similar district schools, the district, or the state. Figure II.1.3 shows ICS' growth in English acquisition (as measured by points in the CCRPI with ten points possible) compared to that of DCSD and the state.

Figure II.1.3. Percentage of ELs Making Positive Performance Band Movement on the ACCESS for Els





The school earned 22.0 achievement points, 33.7 progress points, and 6.7 achievement gap points, in the 2015-16 school year, demonstrating its potential to effect strong student growth, but not enough to earn a Beating The Odds (BTO) designation or outperform the state. In 2016-17, ICS earned 27.7 achievement points, 39.4 progress points, and 8.3 achievement gap points, rapidly outpacing the performance and growth of the prior year. Based on interim data from MAP in the 2017-18 school year, ICS is on-track to earn even greater gains on the CCRPI and a BTO designation moving forward.

Figure II.1.4 shows the average growth by grade level in math and reading on MAP. As demonstrated in the graph, student performance in the 2017-18 school year not only significantly exceeded that of the 2016-17 school year (when the school earned the highest achievement and progress points in its history), but is positioned for greater attainment because of the higher levels at which the lowest grades are currently growing.

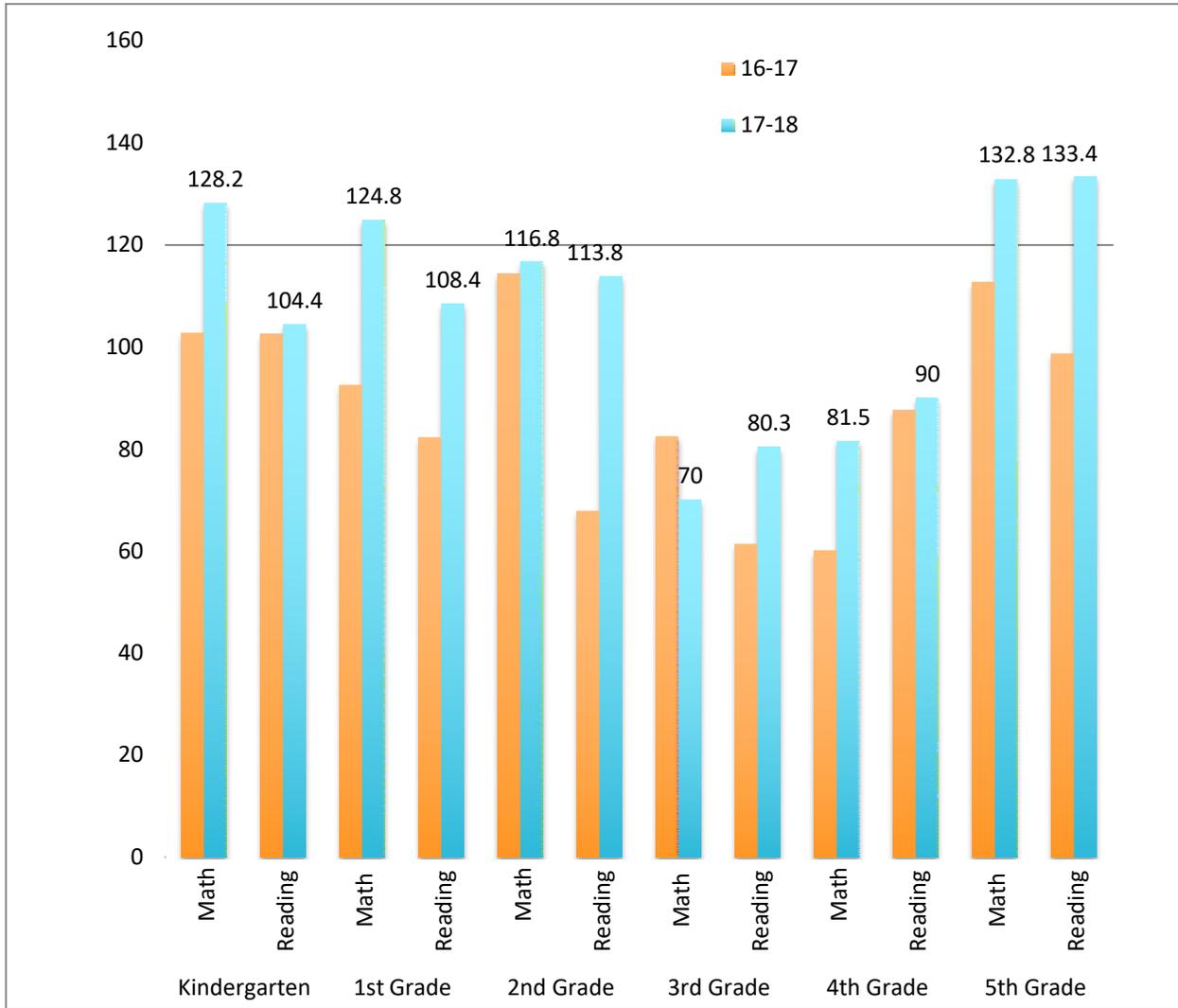
Challenges

ICS' performance was impeded by leadership turnover and a lack of systems and structures to implement best practices with consistency throughout the school and across turnover, which resulted in flat performance across the first two years of the charter. However, in the third year of the charter term, the Board and the principal worked together to implement systematic changes to address these challenges. These included a school-wide approach to using data to more effectively inform instruction and a system by which the school leader regularly shares data with the board. Also, the school leader provided teachers and staff with additional instructional coaching and support by meeting one-on-one with each homeroom teacher to look at classroom MAP data and make instructional goals to differentiate for individual students and groups of students based on needs.

In July of 2018, the first dedicated academic coach was hired whose full-time role is to strategically coach teachers. The coach co-facilitates Professional Learning Communities with the school



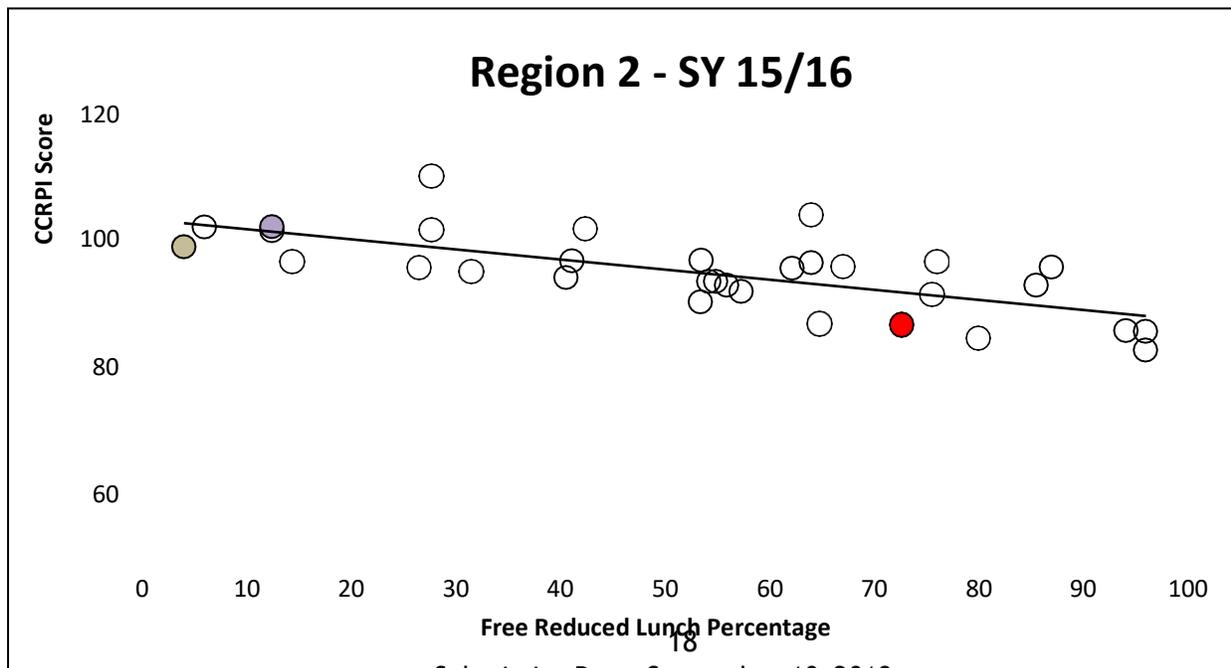
Figure II.1.4. Average MAP Growth By Grade Level in 2016-17 and 2017-18



leader, joins in grade level meetings, organizes and supports IB planning days, supports the work of the mentoring committee for new teachers (see [Exhibit 36b](#)), and focuses on one-on-one coaching through components such as clear goal setting, modeling, co-teaching, and observation and feedback. Because the coach is also responsible for IB coordination, all academic strategy is looked at through the framework of IB’s programme of inquiry. Based on student performance the previous year for students who are in 3rd and 4th grade during the 2018-2019 school year and the number of new teachers in these grade levels, the academic coach is currently intensifying coaching efforts in 3rd and 4th grade while the assistant principal partners to provide additional support to K-2 and 5.

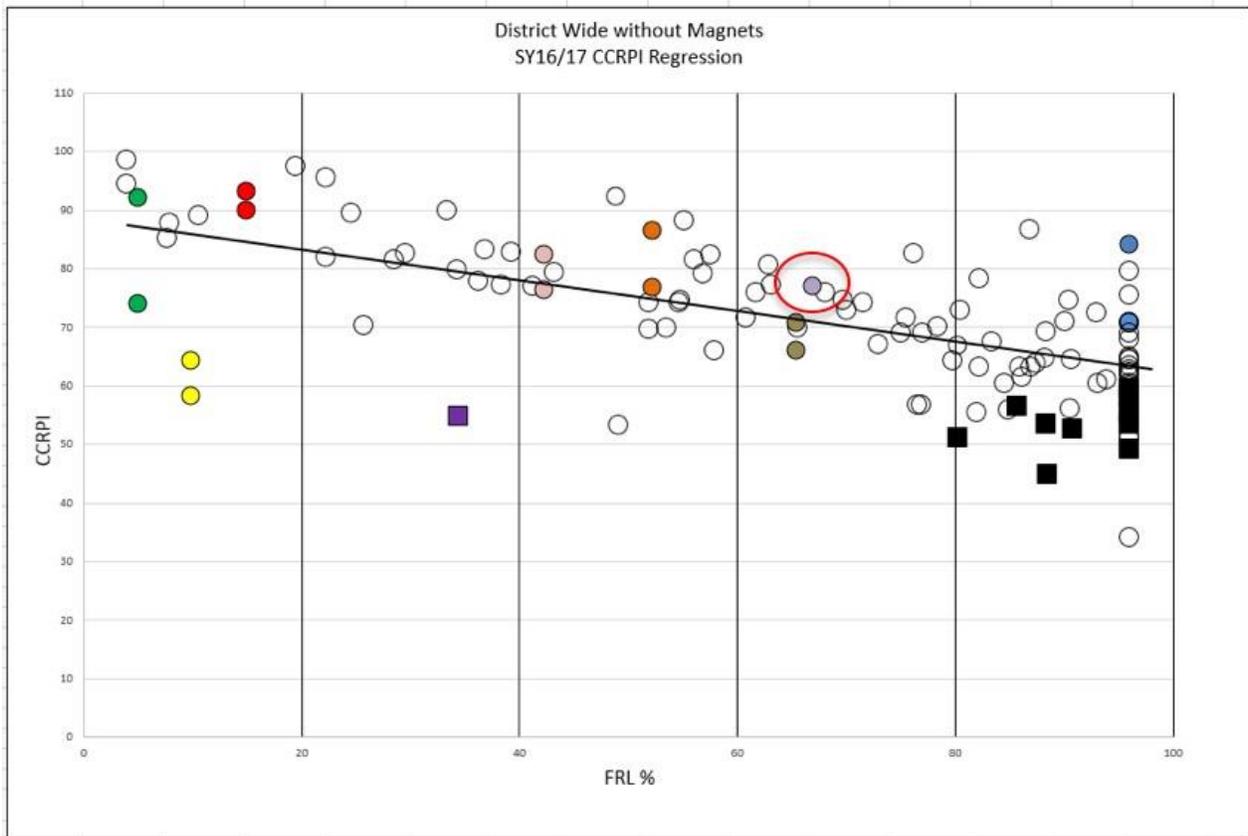
The Spring 2018 AdvancED Engagement Review Report for Performance Accreditation declares “an environment of trust and collaboration was pervasive throughout the school” and that “the school could best be described by three phrases: a joyful place to learn, a focus on mission and vision, and leadership that uses data for continuous improvement” ([Exhibit 31c](#)). The work of the academic coach, with support from the entire administrative team, is to move these three tenets forward for continued academic growth. The implementation of a multi-year strategy for improvement that focused on the use of data and coaching in the 2016-17 school year brought additional and significant improvements in ICS’ performance. The Board maintains a commitment to sustaining these changes over the course of the next charter term. The capacity for improvement and impact of this multi-year strategy are demonstrated not just in the increase in CCRPI and annual goal attainment on MAP, but in the DCSD Poverty Regression Analyses from 2015-16 and 2016-17. Figure II.1.5 shows ICS as the red circle below the regression line, demonstrating that the school’s performance did not meet the projection for its population based on student poverty percentages.

Figure II.1.5. DCSD Poverty Regression Analysis SY 2015-16



However, the 2016-17 DCSD Poverty Regression Analysis (Figure II.1.6) shows ICS having moved from below to well above the regression line. In the figure, ICS is illustrated by the grey bubble circled in red above the regression line in the column of 60%-80% FRL. This scatterplot demonstrates that ICS both serves a higher percentage of low-income students than most of its DCSD charter peers, yet outperforms several of its charter peers with similar free and reduced-price lunch percentages. This suggests that the practices being adopted by the school are better positioning staff to close gaps in performance for low-income students.

Figure II.1.6. DCSD Poverty Regression Analysis SY 2016-17



The shifts in 2016-17 yielded significant increases in academic performance, positioning the school to leverage its strong school culture, high student (93% in 2017) and staff retention (84% in 2017) and strong English



International Community School

acquisition to achieve significant gains on the Milestones that translated to the greatest increase in CCRPI across similar schools or the district. In 2017-18, ICS is continuing to build on these successes to drive predictable and significant increases that build on the prior year's success. New instructional initiatives piloted in 2016-17 have now been rolled out school-wide, and every teacher is now consistently using the math and ELA strategies in concert with dedicated one-on-one coaching and guided data analysis and planning, which is projected to further grow the impact of these changes across the school. Finally, a culturally responsive balanced literacy model and implementation of guided reading in each ELA block, piloted in 2016-17 by six volunteer teachers, has now been fully adopted by the entire staff, providing a clear vision and model of literacy instruction across all grade levels.

This performance and the changes from 2016-17 are being further leveraged in the current year with a greater focus on differentiation in math, implementation of a common writing curriculum, Writer's workshop, across the school, and the development of scopes and sequences at each grade level to establish common approaches and resources. Teachers are shifting to a collaboration approach that relies more heavily on student data to inform grade-level instructional planning at the lesson level, rather than just the unit level. An ongoing focus on data and better school-wide understanding of how to use Fountas and Pinnell and MAP are enabling teams and individual teachers to more effectively respond to student needs with the support of dedicated coaches. Although the rapid growth achieved in 2016-17 did not earn the school a BTO designation, it did demonstrate the capacity of the school to implement the right strategies to achieve necessary growth and has built the skills of the staff to continue to improve student outcomes. Moving forward, the same approach used to grow literacy attainment will be used to grow math attainment, and interim assessments and a school-wide approach to teaching math will be the foci for the 2018-19 school year.

1. *Describe the school's current financial situation. In your description:*

- *Include an explanation of financial results*
- *Detail any financial successes or struggles the school experienced during the current charter term. Include any instances of fraudulent behavior or accusations of fraudulent behavior by school staff, governing board members, or anyone else associated with the school. Merely meeting the minimum expectations of an audit is not an acceptable success.*



International Community School

- *Explain how the school will address any struggles discussed above as well as any outstanding debts. Explain how the school will allocate any surplus funds.*

ICS has met most of its organizational goals over the charter term. It has operated in a financially sound manner, maintained waiting lists to ensure meeting enrollment targets, and has strong stakeholder satisfaction demonstrated through surveys and annual student and staff retention.

Organizational Goal 1: The fulfillment of the following organizational goals as reported in the annual report. ICS met all measures of Organizational Goal 1. The school has operated in a fiscally sound manner and has earned clean annual audits with no material findings in each year. ICS demonstrated the effective allocation of resources in actual and proposed budgets by working within the approved budget annually, despite funding decreases and increases in contributions to the Georgia Teacher Retirement System over the charter term. The move to a district building, the former Medlock Elementary campus, reduced ICS's facilities expenses and further improved the school's financial health. ICS exceeded the annual fundraising goal of \$75,000 in this charter term, having raised \$111,000 in 2015; \$105,000 in 2016; \$165,000 in 2017; and \$100,000 in 2018, which includes grants won for the first time. A full-time development position being added for the 2018-19 school year will provide additional capacity for fundraising and the potential for increased revenue.

ICS has no outstanding debt. The school maintains a cash reserve sufficient to cover two months of operating expenses, as well as a capital reserve fund of approximately \$400,000, which is based on annual projections for facility needs. During this charter term, ICS has also reduced administrative costs annually to get this percentage down to 18%, through collaboration between the CFO, Board, and principal (see [Exhibit 31d](#) for organizational chart), a re-examination of some vendor contracts, and outsourcing of financial management. The annual balance sheet cash reserves in each year of the current charter term were equal or exceeded the



International Community School

general operating costs of the school for at least two months. ICS has met all Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS) as demonstrated by each external annual report and had no findings. ICS has also complied with all recommendations made in each annual audit, including an operational audit by GCSA in the winter of 2018. ICS has met all financial reporting deadlines set by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). There have been no allegations of fraudulent behavior during the charter term, and the development and implementation of comprehensive financial controls have eliminated any gaps in oversight that would allow for fraudulent behavior.

ICS adopted an external partner (On-Call Accounting Services) to oversee the financial management of the school in close partnership with the Board finance chair and principal in 2014-15. This ushered in a new era of stability and financial health through the use of a third-party to drive financial management, thus circumventing the disruption caused by leadership turnover. This also facilitates a means by which consistency and strategy for financial health are driven by the Board through the vendor, providing a resource for school leaders. The same individuals from this vendor have worked with ICS for the duration of the charter term. Financial integrity has been maintained through clean audits, clear contractual terms, detailed invoices for services rendered provided twice monthly, a staff bookkeeper who handles record keeping, paying bills, and payroll, and the interaction between the vendor, school leader, bookkeeper, and board chair and treasurer at monthly finance meetings.

A revision to the salary scale provided an increase of approximately 2% to all salaries and greater consistency on salaries according to their position, experience, and education, which enables the school to be more competitive with its recruitment/retention. The board is currently working with staff on a teacher retention plan (see [Exhibit 36a](#)) that includes considering a stipend policy aligned with charter priorities such as a stipend for receiving ESOL endorsement. Moving forward, ICS is prioritizing increased compensation for all staff positions as the budget allows.



International Community School

Although ICS has strong fiscal health, raising significant money and maintaining a balanced budget annually, transitions in leadership and operations staffing at ICS during the first two years of the charter term challenged the school's financial model. To retain current leadership and enjoy the benefits that come from leader consistency, the school has developed a leader retention plan. [See Exhibit 37.](#)

Going into the 2015-16 school year, the administrative staff grew to better support the principal and had decreased through natural attrition since then. The Deputy Financial Officer was replaced with an outside contractor, and the development coordinator was reduced to part-time. The 2014 independent audit noted that deficiencies in internal controls from the prior year had been addressed through implementation of new procedures and "significant improvement in many areas of financial controls and oversight over the past few years" had been made. Recommendations to provide the Board finance committee with more timely and frequent records, implement a whistleblower policy, and maintain detailed finance committee minutes were all implemented. The 2015 independent audit notes identified gaps in policy for school leader cash disbursement approval, which was addressed through the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive financial controls manual ([Exhibit 31h](#)). 2016 and 2017 audits continued to identify the ongoing implementation of best practices that provided increased financial control, and recommendations were made to address specific and minor revisions to practice (like a second signature for credit card purchases of any amount and general ledger coding on all invoices). The findings of the annual external audit verify the ongoing annual improvement of fiscal operation and management at ICS over the charter term and a significant positive change in the school's financial management from the prior charter term.

Another challenge to the school's financial operation in the current charter term is the result of decreases in funding. In FY 2013-2014, ICS faced a 20% decrease in funding. In response to this decrease, several employees had to be terminated, others periodically furloughed, and all non-essential expenses were suspended. However, because of this aggressive response, the school was able to pay down



International Community School

its debt over the first three years of the charter term, allocate adequate cash reserves, and build a capital account.

2. *Provide a brief overview of the school's current governance structure. In your description, you must include:*
 - *Specific examples of decisions the governing board has made on behalf of the school, within the following areas of authority; financial, resource allocation, personnel, curriculum and instruction, school improvement, and school operations.*
 - *Specific examples of decisions the school leader has made on behalf of the school;*
 - *How the governing board holds the school leader, any charter partners (ESP/CMO/EMO), and any independent contractors accountable; and*
 - *The governing board's training program for the current and proposed charter term. Attach as Exhibit 6 ([Exhibit 5](#)) a copy of the board's Governance Training Plan.*
 - *Full responses to the Governing Board Observations conducted by the DCSD Charter Office as Exhibit 30 ([Exhibit 29](#)).*

ICS Governance Structure

The ICS Board of Directors is currently comprised of nine Board members, not including the principal who is an ex-officio member. The role of the Board is to govern the school and hold the principal accountable for the effective management of the school. The Board does this through regular, formal collaboration with the principal to examine data and strategies, problem-solve, and recruit resources for the school leader, and advocate for the school throughout the community. The Board has been consistently diverse regarding skill set, network, and experience. The current Board includes a former ICS teacher, two parents of ICS students, one previous parent, and several local community leaders. Areas of expertise include law, finance, non-profit management, education, and human resources. The Board is committed to the mission and model of the school, and as such, several Board members have adjusted their terms to promote consistency and reduce the instability of turnover. Many former Board members continue to be engaged in the school through advisory councils, volunteer roles, and advocacy for the school.

Changes Made to Bylaws in the Current Charter Term

Over the course of the current charter term, several changes were made to the bylaws. First, the address of the executive office was changed to reflect the move to the current facility. The Board also added the right to create



International Community School

advisory councils (with non-voting members) and appoint council members to support the school's operation. This new structure has enabled the Board to continue to engage former Board members and provide means of recruiting and leveraging expertise from volunteers who are not able to serve on the Board. In addition to the appointment of council members as approved by at least two Board members, the Board also created an Advisory Council Emeritus, which is specifically designed to formalize the support of prior Board members and founders in service of philanthropic and programmatic expertise.

The other revision to bylaws, approved in January of 2015 and updated in May of 2016, is the term length of three years for each director, which includes the year in which the director was elected for those who were elected at a time other than the annual meeting. This amendment was made to clarify the length of term for those directors who are elected on a date outside of the annual meeting and mitigate the harm of having too many Board members end their terms simultaneously.

Decision-Making

The ICS Board collaborates with the principal to provide the guidance and accountability appropriate for the effective governance of the school. As such, management decisions such as purchases under \$15,000, hiring and firing of staff (and disciplinary action), professional development and coaching planning and implementation models, school improvement planning through Title I, and all other day-to-day decisions are relegated to the principal. Although the Board is available to collaborate on these decisions as necessary, they ultimately allocate this decision-making purview to the principal with the expectation the principal delivers on annual goals. The Board makes decisions such as approval of the annual budget and any subsequent amendments, approval of school-wide policies and innovations, review and approval of any purchases over \$15,000, development of multi-year organizational strategic plans that set the direction of the school, final say in any grievances that have been appealed to the Board level (see the ICS grievance policy in [Exhibit 13](#)), ratification of all hires and terminations, and annual evaluation of the principal. Two Board members, including the Board chair, maintain LKES certification and complete the annual evaluation for the principal, including formative evaluations in September and January. Board



International Community School

members who maintain LKES certification are professional educators. Over the charter term, this has included a Georgia State Clinical Associate Professor of Critical and Multicultural Education, a Georgia State Ph.D. student in educational psychology, a teacher-coach with a Master's Degree in Teaching Early Childhood, and the director of Southern Regional Education Board's Learning-Centered Leadership Program (done LKES process for 3 years). While all Board members have input into both formative and summative evaluations of the principal, the professional educators credentialed in LKES conduct the formal pre, formative, and summative conferences of the LKES process.

Consultant evaluation and accountability vary by the role for which a consultant is hired. All consultants maintain a contract that outlines their responsibilities, access, and terms of the engagement, which is developed by the principal and approved by the Board if the engagement exceeds \$15,000. The Board chair participates in consultant review and vetting as appropriate, and consultants who engage in services that may be influenced or guided by the Board partner with the appropriate committees. The current CFO, for example, participates in monthly finance committee meetings and prepares financial reports for the Board. The contract with the firm that affords this consultancy includes target outcomes and allows for the school to terminate the contract without repercussion if the consultant does not perform the services as outlined in the contract.

Governing Board Onboarding and Training Plan

Organizational Goal 2: ICS shall ensure all Governing Board Members receive effective training. The health of the Board at ICS has also been strong over the charter term. The school met all training goals, contracting with Georgia Charter Schools Association to provide the requisite training and support to ensure effective governance. Over the course of the charter term, several Board terms expired and were promptly filled with high-capacity and highly-engaged members of the community including local leaders in fundraising, finance, human resources, education, and law. An amendment to the bylaws in 2016 ensured that Board term expirations are staggered, ensuring more gradual transitions of Board membership to reduce the impact of those transitions.

Also, the Board has clarified expectations and roles for the nine Board members, seven of whom are new to the



International Community School

Board as of 2016-17. This clarification includes a Board candidate process that includes participation in a Board committee meeting and two Board meetings, a meeting with the principal and 2-4 members of the Board, and a tour of the school before eligibility for participation. Once voted on by the Board, the onboarding process includes meetings with the principal and chair and participation in training about the school and the role of the Board. The Board chair now conducts weekly check-ins with the principal to keep the Board abreast of school happenings and progress against goals. Also, processes to record and post meeting minutes and engage community members in attendance at Board meetings have been revised in response to feedback from DCSD, positioning the Board to function more efficiently and effectively.

The ICS Board of Directors maintains a thorough selection and onboarding process for new members in alignment with governance best practices. In the selection/interview process, the prospective candidate meets with 2-3 members of the Board to discuss Board service, and they are then expected to participate on a committee and attend at least two Board meetings before being voted on. Moving forward, Board members will have a mentor from the Board to assist them in navigating their service and participate in the new Board training through GCSA, as outlined in [Exhibit 5](#). The onboarding plan for new Board members at ICS is outlined as [Exhibit 31a](#). The onboarding process for each new Board member includes both a tour of the school and meeting with the principal, as well as completion of the state-mandated training for new charter Board members.

The governing Board complies with mandated annual training guidelines and contracts with the Georgia Charter Schools Association to provide these services. Each Board member participates in at least the minimum number of mandated annual training hours in the areas of financial governance, whole Board governance, and topics within the standards for effective governance through GCSA. The complete annual training plan is included as [Exhibit 5](#).

Responses to Governing Board Observations

ICS has participated in annual Board observations by the DCSD Charter Office in each year required of the current charter term (see [Exhibit 29](#)). In 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, the Board



International Community School

was advised to clarify and adhere to policies regarding the participation of observers in Board meetings. Based on this feedback, the Board has reiterated its policy guiding public participation and has limited public comment to a designated period at the beginning of the meeting. As a result of this, the Board chair has effectively changed the culture of Board meetings by adhering to a more formal approach to public comment and participation in the agenda. To balance a more formal approach to Board meetings with the need for community access, the Board began hosting listening sessions before Board meetings. For example, the Board held listening sessions for both the charter renewal and the new principal search. Beginning in 2017-18 the Board has scheduled open forums (“Town Hall Meetings”) twice a year, and it will continue this practice in the next charter term. The Board was also advised to codify a structure to make draft meeting minutes available within two days of a meeting, the responsibility of the secretary, which is affirmed by the Board chair after each meeting.

In response to an audit by DCSD, the website has been updated to include links to all of the required Board and committee meeting agendas, action points, and minutes. Committee meetings are included on the school calendar on the website and links to the monthly financial statements, Governor's Office of Student Achievement Financial Efficiency Star Rating, and the District's financial information have also been posted on the website.

Engagement and Retention

Organizational Goal 3: ICS shall promote a positive school experience that engages students, parents, and teachers. ICS has consistently promoted a positive school experience that facilitates high levels of satisfaction and engagement from all stakeholder groups. Despite leadership turnover in the charter term, overall student and staff retention have been high. Staff retention rates were 84.4% in 2014-15, 88.7% in 2015-16, 84% in 2016-17. Student retention has also been high, with an annual student retention rate of 80% in 2014-15, 92% in 2015-16, and 93% in 2016-17. The school earned a three-star school climate rating in 2015-16 and a four-star climate rating in 2016-17,



International Community School

and survey data from parents and staff demonstrate high levels of satisfaction as well as the highest rates of participation on record for the school or in schools serving a similarly diverse population.

In the 2016-17 school year, the Board and principal developed and implemented surveys for students, staff, and parents to adhere to the charter requirements and determine key strengths and areas of growth to be considered in the new leadership plan. In the 2017 ICS stakeholder surveys, 100% of personnel agreed or strongly agreed they felt supported by other teachers at the school, get along with other staff members, and felt students get along well with teachers and staff at the school. Of the 62% of parents who participated in the survey, 98% reported that teachers work hard to make sure students do well, frequently recognize students for good behavior, and have high standards for achievement. 100% of parents surveyed agreed their student likes school and feels successful at ICS. Student feedback on this survey echoed these same high marks: 100% of students in grades 3-5 participated in the survey (195 total students), and 96% reported they get along with other students at school, 94% feel their teachers treat them with respect, 91% feel safe at school, and 86% believe there is an adult from whom they can get help at school. Given the diversity of experiences and cultures represented in this student population, the consistency in satisfaction with the school and staff speaks to the positive experience being facilitated at ICS (See [Exhibits 33b](#) and [33c](#)).

Through the increased availability of translated surveys and support from school staff to ensure a higher percentage of parents would participate, the 2017-18 school year had the highest rate of parent survey participation to date, with 95%. Over 90% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the child's homeroom teacher and the specials (Music, Art, PE, and Library), that their child likes going to ICS, and that they felt that ICS was a good place for their child to grow. Finally, 90.97% indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of their child's education, indicating the fulfillment of a goal for the previous charter term (see [Exhibit 33c](#)).

Engagement of stakeholders has also been consistently very high. The SWS tutoring program is



International Community School

wholly staffed by community volunteers and boasts more than 50 volunteers annually, with many of these volunteers returning year after year since the school's founding. In 2017-18, the school utilized the services of nearly 300 parents, family members, and friends as volunteers in classroom activities, field trips, and work days. This does not include the 113 volunteers from affiliated organizations like Georgia Tech and Emory who partner with the school throughout the year, and the 17 different groups, like UPS and The Galloway School, who brought in teams of volunteers for specific service projects.

There are many initiatives at ICS that offer family support and engagement opportunities, often drawing in the wider community. The Food Co-Op provides a monthly pantry from which ICS families can obtain fresh food, and this is stocked and staffed by community volunteers and parents. Other initiatives include several soccer programs, which have been developed because of their popularity in the home countries of many students born abroad. The Saturday Soccer program, which practices after school during the week and provides competition with other teams in a league is open to students in upper grades and has the participation of more than 100 students annually. Coordination of the weekend games relies on many volunteers for coaching and providing rides and snacks for players. Soccer School currently serves more than 100 students and is for K-2 students, with 3rd through 5th graders learning to referee soccer games and providing peer mentoring using the IB Learner Profile. This program was organized by staff and parent volunteers who participate in the program after school. United Nations (UN) Day is an annual celebration wherein students, and their families, share information about their cultures and identities. UN Day draws more than 350 students, parents, and community members, and is one of the school's largest events. ([see Exhibit 35](#)) Emory Reads partners Emory students with ICS students after school to encourage a love of reading and development of reading skills. Paideia and The Lovett School have both partnered with ICS to provide campus improvement and beautification and volunteers to work in classrooms completing tasks like leveling libraries and supporting teachers with tasks ([see Exhibit 18h](#) and [18i](#)). Engagement from the community as partners in the provision of a strong and high-interest



International Community School

student support program is one strength of the school that has continued to thrive over the life of the current charter term.

Attendance

Attendance is one area in which ICS has not met its goal each year of the charter term, and new strategies intended to address absences are being implemented. American schooling is a new setting for many families who attend ICS, and transitions at the leadership level have prevented the school from delivering a consistent message about the importance of daily attendance for all students. In the 2016-17 school year, the percentage of students who were absent 15 days or more decreased from 11.4% to 9.6%, which fell just .2% below the school's goal. In 2017-18 the principal adopted several new strategies to address this challenge and to attain the more aggressive goal of reducing the percentage of students absent ten days or more by another two percentile points. An incentive-based approach to reinforcing behavior was expanded to reward consistent student attendance. Monthly attendance celebrations for students with perfect attendance were well-received by students and staff and led to immediate improvements in attendance. Official attendance data for the 2017-18 school year have not yet been released.

The initiative to improve attendance was implemented with clear messaging to parents and staff about the importance of students' consistent attendance. Staff is making home visits to students' families at the start of each year, and the budget now includes stipends for each staff member to make at least 12 visits. These visits not only build home-school connectedness but provide a means for the teachers and related staff who will work with students to directly discuss the expectations for success as well as better understand the student and how to leverage the assets of the child and family. School-wide assemblies at the start of each semester also provide a means for the school's staff and leadership to formally communicate the importance of attendance to students. Holding these assemblies at the start of each semester ensures new students enrolled throughout the year know about the incentives and understand the importance of attendance.

A clear system for owning, tracking, and communicating absences and tardies has also been established, facilitating immediate communication with parents in the case of repeated lateness or absence. Attendance and tardy data are regularly collected from the student management system, and the attendance team (registrar, school counselor, and assistant principal) identifies students demonstrating negative attendance trends. Attendance meetings are scheduled with the parents and conducted by at least one member of the team (and translator if applicable) to identify possible causes and discuss solutions. Any students with five or more excused absences, three or more consecutive absences unexcused or unfounded (not founded by suspensions, school transportation, religious holidays, long-term sickness, or other), or who are late five or more times are referred to the attendance team for a parent conference.

Stakeholder Survey Participation

Another area in which ICS did not achieve its goals in the first two years of the charter term is stakeholder participation in surveys. Neither of the principals from the first two years of the charter term administered school-based surveys to assess stakeholder satisfaction, nor did they encourage participation in the state surveys for stakeholders. This left the school without stakeholder survey data required for the charter and with a gap in understanding the stakeholder's needs. In the 2016-2017 year, the Board and principal developed and implemented a stakeholder survey to assess satisfaction and areas for growth. The first internal survey implemented at ICS achieved 100% participation from teachers and 3rd-5th-grade students, and 62% participation from parents. Barriers to participation included the timing of the survey, which was administered in May and impeded follow-up from staff, as well as gaps in access based on language, culture, and literacy skills of some parents (see [Exhibits 33b](#) and [33c](#)).

These barriers to participation were taken into consideration, and changes were made in 2017-18 to increase participation. In the 2017-18 school year and into the next charter term, this school-based survey is translated into Burmese, Arabic, Hindi, and Somali, the four languages most prevalent for those



families who do not speak English at home (in 2016-17 it was only provided in English and Burmese). The survey is administered earlier in the year to allow for follow-up (it was previously administered in May), and the Community Liaison tracks participation and follow-up with families by phone who do not complete the survey to address gaps in written language skills that may be a barrier to participation for some. Family participation is also incentivized for students by providing class parties for those classrooms that return 100% of family surveys. This integrates both students and homeroom teachers into the effort of getting parent participation. As a result of this initiative, the 2017-18 school year saw the highest percentage of parent participation to date with 95% (up from 62% the year prior). This demonstrates the school's improved capacity to engage and reach its families, which are comprised of 28 different countries and 27 different languages (see [Exhibits 33c](#)).

During the 2016-2017 school year, teacher survey participation exceeded the 80% goal, but the questions did not adhere exactly to the charter goals. Because the focus of the stakeholder surveys was to better understand the needs and context for all stakeholders for a new leader, the questions addressed satisfaction in less direct ways, like questions about rapport with students and families, access to support from colleagues, and perceptions of safety. Although this feedback was largely positive, with $\geq 90\%$ of staff responding with affirmations of the school's safety and support under new leadership, specific questions to address overall job satisfaction were added to surveys starting in 2017-18 (see [Exhibit 33b](#)).

Moving forward, the school will add teacher and student retention to the existing stakeholder satisfaction goals to ensure engagement and satisfaction for stakeholders is measured in a range of reliable and relevant ways (see [Exhibit 31e](#) for proposed goals for next term). The addition of two innovations designed to promote school-home connection and family engagement for the next charter term (see Section III) are intended to enrich the experience for students and their families at ICS and build



understanding of every student's cultural and linguistic background, thus increasing parent participation, student attendance, and all students' multicultural and multilingual understanding.

*4. Describe how the school provides state- and federally-mandated services to **students with disabilities**. Reciting the requirements of law and rule is insufficient. You must include the school's practices and procedures to:*

- *Evaluate and identify students with disabilities;*
- *Develop, review, and revise Individualized Education Programs (IEPs);*
- *Integrate special education into the general education program;*
- *Ensure that the school facility meets the requirements of other related laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504;*
- *Address student discipline;*
- *Handle programming disputes involving parents;*
- *Ensure confidentiality of special education records;*
- *Purchase services from special education vendors or to contract with your local district to provide a continuum of special education services and how this arrangement will work; and*
- *Secure technical assistance and training.*
- *Ensure the adequate number and qualifications of SPED staff.*

ICS is committed to meeting the needs of a diverse student body, which includes students with disabilities. The school maintains a Special Education Unit, comprised of a member of the administrative team, a Lead Teacher Special Education (LTSE), the certified Special Education staff who provide instruction, and paraprofessionals. This team meets regularly to review the progress and needs of students both in the referral process and with IEPs to ensure adequate supports and staffing are in place and to review each student's progress throughout the program. Oversight of this unit by the Principal creates clear accountability for implementation of services and student growth.

Evaluation and Identification

The identification and evaluation of students with disabilities follow state and federal mandates. ICS uses the Response to Intervention approach to providing tiered services to students who require additional behavioral and academic supports. Use of formative assessments, especially MAP and F&P,



International Community School

combined with semi-monthly teacher-coach check-ins on student progress, provide frequent, formal means of academic and social-emotional progress review for each student. Students at the tier 3 level of intervention receive individualized supports guided by a Student Study Team (SST), and those students whose needs are not met at the third tier of support may be referred by the SST for evaluation for special education DCSD provides evaluation services to ICS. If a student is deemed eligible for an IEP or 504 Plan, the IEP committee convenes to establish the IEP (pending parent consent), according to the guidelines set forth by the district and state. The assistant principal leads the charge to ensure that parents are included in the RTI process. Recognizing the linguistic diversity of ICS families, a careful effort is made to identify the language spoken by the family of each child in the RTI process and translation and interpretation secured to ensure equitable access for all parents in the RTI process. Many ICS staff members, including many teaching assistants, speak the languages spoken by some of the students. If there is not a staff member able to translate necessary documents or interpret during meetings where English is not the first language, ICS will work with DeKalb to set up translation or interpretation services.

Development, Review, and Revision of IEPs

The IEP committee convenes to establish each student's IEP once the student has been deemed eligible for services and once parent consent has been acquired. The committee includes all members of the Special Education team, as well as the student's parent/guardian and the student's homeroom teacher. Any other teacher whose delivery of services is informed by the IEP also attends. All procedural safeguards, including parental consent and written notice of meetings and confidentiality of records, are a regular part of each meeting protocol. Educational goals, accommodations, and discipline procedures are clearly stated in each IEP, and they are reviewed and revised semi-yearly. The DCSD LTSE provides oversight of the process, and qualified and appropriately certified school-site personnel or DCSD service providers provide all special education services and develop, review, and revise IEPs for special needs students. All identified Special Education students have a current eligibility report developed according to state and federal regulations.

Integration of Special Education Into the General Education Program



International Community School

The inclusion model is employed at ICS to the extent appropriate for a student's Least Restrictive Environment. The school-wide focus on fostering success in a diverse environment means that each classroom employs strategies that facilitate individualized supports, intentional scaffolds to meet a wide range of skills, and the use of individual student data to inform instruction. These strategies benefit students who qualify for special education by equipping classrooms to seamlessly accommodate an inclusion classroom. Students with special needs that are better served in the Resource Garden (SPED Resource Room) receive individualized supports that promote their successful inclusion in other elements of the school program.

ADA and Section 504

The school facility is equipped to accommodate students with special needs and provide access to all parts of the school. The principal and Operations /Facilities Manager conduct an annual review of the facility to identify and address access challenges and ensure continued ADA compliance. A 504 Section team is in place by state guidelines and local Board policies, and ICS uses DCSD forms for Section 504. ICS complies with Section 504 by providing appropriate accommodations, services, and equipment. Appropriate ICS personnel participate in workshops, in-service and training offered by DCSD for persons serving as SST and/or Section 504 chairpersons.

Student Discipline

Students with disabilities will not receive disciplinary action for any infraction that is a result of the student's disability or is related to services provided by the IEP. In the case of student referrals for discipline, the lead special education teacher will review the student's IEP to determine if the disciplinary issue is related to or addressed by the student's IEP. In the case of recurring issues that violate the Code of Conduct and are related to the disability, the SST may reconvene to revise the supports to ensure students have the accommodations they need. It is the goal at ICS to keep students in class learning as much as possible. This is especially true of our students with disabilities. When inappropriate behavior occurs, alternatives to suspension are utilized such as counselor referrals, reflection spaces, parent conferences,



repairing the harm done and apologizing, loss of privileges, and other strategies listed in students' IEPs or Behavior Intervention Plans. Students with disabilities may be suspended for behaviors that threaten the safety of themselves or other students/staff. To determine the type of consequence that a student with disabilities should receive, the assistant principal investigates the incident fully. Often the AP will confer with the student's case manager to determine the context of the day and which interventions or strategies were used with the student to redirect the behavior. If the behavior threatens the safety of students/staff, a suspension may be considered. Progressive discipline, including days of ISS/OSS, is used in cases where the safety of students/staff is threatened, and the code of conduct is followed in these cases.

Parent Disputes

ICS has a grievance policy (see [Exhibit 13](#)), which provides a clear sequence of steps to file a grievance. In the case of disputes regarding a student's IEP implementation or 504 Plan services, the dispute is immediately forwarded to the 504 Lead (counselor) or special education teacher, who forwards the dispute to the principal and reconvenes the 504 or IEP committee to revisit the plan and services. Appropriate amendments to the 504 Plan or IEP are made accordingly. In the event this process does not resolve a parent's dispute, the principal will immediately notify the Lead Teacher in Special Education to resolve the issue.

Confidentiality of Student Records

Student information is kept confidential. Those in direct contact with or tasked with the administration of content to students are given a copy of students' IEPs. The special education teacher, homeroom teacher, counselor, administrator (when necessary), and parent(s) will attend meetings and check points on students' progress. All hard copies of student records are maintained in a locked file, and soft copies are maintained in a password-protected file.



Special Education Vendors

The Dekalb County School District provides support as a full in-kind department in regards to compliance, oversight, and review to the school's Special Education program implementation. Vendors for services that are not provided on-site are accessed through DCSD. Per district policy, DCSD maintains an LTSE who serves ICS and its student population.

Technical Assistance and Training

ICS benefits from a close and collaborative working relationship with DCSD, and as such, participates in all technical assistance and training applicable from the district. All special education staff at ICS are required to participate in mandatory DCSD training and the lead RTI and 504 Counselor attend DCSD's RTI/MTSS and 504 training days.

Staffing

The ICS Special Education Unit evaluates the number of students eligible for services annually to project the number of students who may be referred in the subsequent year to maintain appropriate staffing. The school currently maintains a ten to one ratio, which has remained consistent over the charter term, and ICS does not anticipate the need to grow this team.

- 5. Describe how the charter school provides state- and federally-mandated services for English Learners (ELs). Reciting the requirements of law and rule is insufficient. Your description must include the diagnostic methods or instruments that are used to identify and assess those students, as well as the instructional program that is provided to ELs. Describe how student progress is monitored post-exit from the ESOL program, including staff roles, frequency, and types of data/documents reviewed. Identify the thresholds for exiting a student from the ESOL program. Indicate what if any supports and services are provided to students in the post-exit phase.*

ICS is prioritizing enrollment of EL students in the next charter term through the use of the weighted lottery priority. However, the school has maintained a significant enrollment of refugee and immigrant students throughout the charter term through active recruitment, partnerships with refugee service agencies, and word of mouth within the community. The school's annual performance in the percentage



International Community School

of ELs who move from one band to the next on the ACCESS has been consistently higher than that of the district and state, demonstrating ICS' capacity to serve this population effectively. ICS has organized its programming to uniquely serve EL students in an environment that positions *all* students to be language learners whose cultural and linguistic diversity is leveraged and celebrated. EL students at ICS are provided with services that align to governing regulations from the district, state, and federal levels, in addition to structures that are unique to ICS.

Identification of English Learners

All students' families complete a home language survey upon enrollment at ICS. Many families utilize staff member support to complete application and enrollment paperwork on-site, which enables school staff to help families accurately complete this paperwork. All students whose parents have indicated that a language other than English is spoken at home or by the student take an English language proficiency test to determine eligibility for the ESOL program. These students are given the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT), which assesses language proficiency in four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students scoring below a 5.0 are entitled to receive English language assistance without further assessment. Notification of ESOL services is sent home for parental approval (which is translated into the languages spoken by parents or explained through a staff translator on-site), and the student is identified as an English Learner (EL) and is placed in the ESOL program.

The ESOL program at ICS is comprised of two components: a general education classroom that integrates strategies for ELs using the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction and Observation Protocol) Model and a designated daily English class with a certified ESOL teacher to learn English (during the time English speakers not eligible for ESOL participate in a second language course). All teachers collaborate in planning during six early release days each year to align units of inquiry and share strategies for instruction of linguistically diverse students. Because every teacher at ICS is leading a classroom with a significant percentage of ELs, SIOP training and strategy implementation is expected of all instructional



International Community School

staff. A major component of the SIOP model is the crafting of a language objective to complement each content objective in a lesson plan. Common strategies incorporated across classrooms include lower teacher talk ratios, use of visual anchors demonstrations, and props to illustrate concepts, the use of modeling and role plays, and frequent opportunities for student-led engagement in concepts. With the emphasis on guided reading and the use of the Fountas and Pinnell tool to find each student's reading level, EL students continue to receive differentiated instruction at the level most appropriate for them during their homeroom instruction. Language learners benefit when new vocabulary is repeated in multiple, meaningful contexts and content is explored in different ways over time. The IB Units of Inquiry that last about six weeks and are organized around a particular essential question allow lots of opportunities to make connections and solidify concepts for all learners and are particularly helpful for EL students (see [Exhibit 38](#)).

Most ICS students score higher on the ACCESS in the domains of speaking and listening than in reading and writing, so ESOL teachers focus their time with their small classes of EL students on reading and writing as well as providing support in academic content and vocabulary that aligns with the focus in homeroom classrooms. ICS's emphasis on the Beloved Community is active in the ESOL classrooms where small groups of learners build a connection by practicing elements of the IB learner profile like being caring, open-minded, and reflective which creates an environment where students can take more language risks and grow in their English language acquisition. Most EL students are also assigned to the School Within a School (SWS) program, which provides students with one-on-one or small group tutoring and language practice with a volunteer mentor. Because SWS volunteers provide language acquisition and homework support, as well as opportunities to engage in the community, students can build English skills in a more holistic and readily applicable way. Furthermore, the linguistic and cultural diversity of the staff and volunteers provide most students with access to an adult on campus who can provide informal support and clarification for students and families in their home language. This approach



International Community School

to supporting ELs provides them with integrated supports in an English-led classroom wherein they practice English development with peers, a dedicated English acquisition class with other ELs, connections with staff and volunteers that speak students' home languages, and for many ELs, a one-on-one relationship with a dedicated mentor and tutor.

To measure progress, English learners are assessed annually in January/February using the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) test. ACCESS for English Language Learners assesses students' English language proficiency in the four domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. When students have achieved the necessary score on the ACCESS (5.0 or above) as well as the state assessment of reading comprehension, they are ready to exit language support services. The criteria is slightly different for Kindergarten: They may exit if they have a 5.0 in listening, reading, and speaking domains and at least a 4.5 in the writing domain. Students who meet the exit criteria become English Learner Monitored (EL-M). They are monitored in their regular classroom for two years to ensure that students are receiving ongoing support as they continue to work toward grade-level academic language performance and that they are adapting academically, socially, and psychologically in the regular classroom. The data-driven flexible groupings, such as guided reading groups and SIOP strategies, integrated into every core content and elective classroom further support this population who no longer participate in the ESOL class every day. ESOL teachers collaborate with general classroom teachers to build capacity across the school through trainings such as one during pre-planning in July of 2018 entitled "Understanding ICS's International Population: A Look at the Refugee Process, ELs, ESOL Services, and Access Scores" (see [Exhibit 38](#)) and another during Professional Learning Communities with individual grade levels where ESOL teachers went over individual ACCESS scores as well as how to use them to inform instruction and what accommodations can be put in place.

Services for English Learners



International Community School

In the general education classroom and specials, students who qualify for ESOL participate in English immersive classrooms where the certified ESOL teacher co-plans to integrate strategies critical for English acquisition. Strategies like Sheltered Instruction, use of models and illustrations to communicate concepts, picture dictionaries, graphic organizers, role plays, and small group instruction all provide ELs with access to grade level content at any level of English proficiency. These strategies are also critical for former ELs, who can continue to benefit from such strategies even after they have exited eligibility for ESOL. The academic coach, beginning in year five of the current charter term, will be responsible for identifying key SIOP Model practices that can be integrated into all classrooms. Also, all new teachers participate in the SIOP training before the start of the school year to inform their planning and instruction.

EL students are also assigned to an English class with a certified ESOL teacher for 45 minutes each day. The second language period provides every student in the school with instruction in a second language: English, French, or Spanish. In this way, all students at ICS are learning a new language and can partner with native speaking peers to practice their skills.

In addition to a general education classroom organized around best practices for ELs and designated English instruction with an ESOL-certified teacher each day, students who qualify as ELs or have recently exited the program may also participate in the SWS tutoring and mentorship program. This unique aspect of the ICS model partners students with a community volunteer to receive dedicated academic support and mentorship. SWS volunteers come to the school to meet with their mentee weekly, providing at least one hour of one-on-one support for English acquisition and content practice. SWS volunteers also engage with students' families to provide an additional resource and home-school connection and provide students and their families with access to local events and means to practice English development. Students who have exited the ESOL program may continue to participate in the SWS program throughout their tenure at ICS to ensure ongoing support, monitoring for additional needs, and individualized practice in English.



International Community School

EL students are at the heart of the school's mission and, as such, are not excluded from any curricular and extracurricular activities because of the inability to speak and understand the language of instruction. Participation of EL students in all specials and after-school activities is especially crucial to their increased command of the English language, as well as their social and emotional growth and connection with the school community, and many of these activities are sponsored by multilingual teachers and volunteers to promote language development. In 2018-2018, 20% of the after-school staff speak a language spoken by many ICS students such as Kurdish, Nepali, and Arabic. One year during the charter term, Arabic was offered as an elective during after-school. When children are engaged, they are more motivated to learn new vocabulary and practice it with others. After-school's focus on team sports and artistic activities allow children to engage with their interests and build and practice vocabulary through frequent peer-interaction.

- 6. Explain how the charter school determines which students need remediation in each core content area and the frequency in which this is monitored. Describe the methods, strategies, and instructional programs the charter school uses to provide remediation for students at risk for academic failure. Include how the structure of the day is impacted to provide intentional remediation. Describe your multi-tiered support system (such as RTI), including gifted and talented. The description of the multi-tiered support system should include the specific academic and behavior interventions used for different tiers, who is responsible for such interventions, and for how long and with what frequency certain interventions are tracked before referral for special education.*

A significant change ICS made in the 2016-17 year was beginning the use of MAP data to inform instruction, student groupings within classes, and interventions. The school has also adopted F&P to provide more frequent literacy data, which informs small groups and ELA instruction. Starting in year five of the current charter term, an interim math assessment will provide similar data and access to intervention for those students who need additional supports in math. All teachers participate in one-on-one data analysis sessions with the principal each semester to identify student needs, foundational skills that need to be revisited, appropriate differentiation strategies, and the group of students who will require



International Community School

more intensive support. Starting in year five of the current charter term, these semi-annual data meetings with the principal will be supplemented with semi-monthly coaching sessions with the academic coach, who will lead student data analysis and data-informed instruction for each teacher. The addition of this role will provide more robust support for those teachers who need it, as well as more frequent formal review of data to determine appropriate student interventions earlier each semester.

At the first tier of intervention, all teachers are guided in differentiating instruction within each lesson plan to provide students with access to the supports and standards they need (based on MAP and F&P). Teacher coaches observe classrooms weekly and debrief with teachers on how to differentiate for their specific students and ensure students receive additional supports as necessary. Every ELA block includes designated time for teachers to pull small groups of students to work on specific standards.

Because the ICS schedule uses a double ELA block, the second reading period is organized by F&P data to drive reading instruction tailored to students' unique needs. Through the provision of flexible groupings in this second reading period, students have access to more targeted instruction. A designated EIP teacher also pulls students who need support (according to F&P, MAP, and unit math assessments). The EIP teacher monitors student growth and recommends students to the Student Support Team when progress is not meeting expectations, and additional supports are necessary. EIP teachers and classroom teachers can collaborate during the planning period before students arrive in the morning and all staff overlap in the lunch schedule. There are plenty of times for teachers to connect, but there will be a focus by school leadership in the 2019-2020 year to be more systematic with the school-wide schedule to provide specific windows for EIP teachers and classroom teachers to connect.

From January through March, those students who are performing in the lowest quartile on MAP or did not pass the Milestones in the previous year are assigned to afterschool tutoring two days per week per content area. This provides test preparation support for those students who most need remediation



International Community School

leading up to Milestones participation. Grade level teams meet weekly to review each student's data and progress. These RTI meetings are guided by coaches to ensure each student's data is reviewed, and the right intervention is administered. Programs like the SWS, the after-school tutoring program, and small group pull-outs in general education classrooms provide students with different means of getting support as the data demonstrates is necessary. When a student's data does not demonstrate s/he is positioned to meet annual goals, referral to SWS, afterschool tutoring, EIP, and different intensives within the class period are implemented. Gifted and Talented students receive one day a week of specialized instruction where they learn the Georgia Standards of Excellence in a differentiated setting which allows for creative exploration and extended project work. Each grade level, first-fifth, has an assigned day of the week to promote consistency. The gifted instructor makes connections to IB units taking place in homeroom classrooms. As the board and school leadership consider an enhanced compensation strategy, a stipend for particular endorsements, including a Gifted endorsement, is being considered so that more homeroom teachers are better equipped to offer daily enrichment to students in the gifted and talented program. Looking forward to the 2019-2020 year, the master schedule will be revised to more strategically provide opportunities for various levels of support and more collaborative planning time for homeroom and EIP and Special Education teachers.

- 7. Provide the number and percentage of students receiving In-School Suspensions, Out-of-School Suspensions, or Expulsions during the current charter term (e.g., the past five years). How does this discipline and dismissal data compare to the Office of Civil Rights data?*

Through the charter term, ICS has had significantly fewer in-school and out-of-school suspensions than the district and state average, and no expulsions (Figure II.7.1 to Figure II.7.3). These numbers are also significantly lower than that outlined by the Office of Civil Rights at other district schools and demographically similar schools. Historically small student to adult ratios and focus on engaging, student-centered lessons have minimized the number of behavioral challenges for the school and facilitated lower than average disciplinary referrals. The IBPYP curriculum has also played a role in encouraging positive



International Community School

behaviors and global citizen skills. The focus on supportive, nurturing student support in service of a Beloved Community, rather than punitive discipline, has largely yielded small numbers of formal disciplinary action and will continue to be reinforced through ongoing staff training in the use of restorative practices.

Figure II.7.1. In-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions in SY 2014-2015

2014-2015 Enrollment: 412	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic	0	0%	0	%	0	
American Indian	0	0%	0	%	0	
Asian / Pacific Islander	1	0.24%	0	%	0	
Black	10	2.42	9	2.18%	0	
White	4	1.21%	1	.24%	0	
Two or More Races	2	.48%	1	.24%	0	
Total	17		11		0	



Figure II.7.2. In-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions in SY 2015-2016

2015-2016 Enrollment: 410	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic	0	0	1	0.24%	0	%
American Indian	0	%	0	%	0	%
Asian / Pacific Islander	0	%	0	%	0	%
Black	0	%	5	1.22%	0	%
White	1	0.24%	0	%	0	%
Two or More Races	1	0.24%	0	%	0	%
Total	2		6		0	

Figure II.7.3. In-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions in SY 2016-2017

2016-2017 Enrollment 397	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic	0	%	0	%	0	%
American Indian	0	%	0	%	0	%
Asian / Pacific Islander	2	0.50%	0	%	0	%
Black	3	0.75%	2	0.50%	0	%
White	0	%	0	%	0	%
Two or More Races	0	%	1	0.25%	0	%
Total	5		3		0	

Figure II.7.4. In-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions in SY 2017-2018

2017-2018 Enrollment: 437	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race/% of total population	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic/3.8%	2	%	0	0%	0	0%
American Indian/.7%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asian / Pacific Islander/35.6%	1	.23%	0	0%	0	0%
Black/35.1%	16	3.76%	8	1.83%	0	0%
White/21.1%	8	1.83%	0	0%	0	0%
Two or More Races/3.5%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	27		8		0	

The 2017-18 school year (Figure II.7.4) had the highest number of suspensions (in and out of school) on record, and suspensions were disproportionately administered to those students who identify as Black (given the unique demographics at ICS, racial categories are ambiguous—both native-born and foreign-born students identify as both Black and African American). There are six students with more than one ISS/OSS record in the 2017-18 school year. There is one student with more than two incidents of ISS/OSS. This student accounts for 13 of the ISS/OSS consequences issued at ICS last year.

This year, the administrative team is working closely with the family as well as leveraging district-level supports to provide additional strategies and to decrease the suspensions for this student. Given the turnover over the charter term and lack of clarity on accountability for behavior before the current leadership, it is possible that some of the increase in referrals for suspension reflects more accurate record-keeping in the 2017-18 year rather than an increase in suspensions. Current data shows the majority of suspendable offenses committed in the 2017-18 school year were the result of infractions of the DCSD Student Code of Conduct for which suspension is warranted. 2016-17 had the lowest number of out-of-school suspensions, but still had a disproportionate number of formal discipline referrals for Black students. In response to these data, the ICS Stars program was initiated to recognize and reward positive behavior, and the assistant principal role for 2017-18 was charged primarily with the reduction in disciplinary referrals and provision of support for students and staff in setting behavioral



expectations. Although these approaches were devised to build on previously existing restorative approaches that would reduce missed instructional time for discipline, the discipline data in 2017-18 demonstrates the need for additional research into the sources of socio-emotional challenges and strategically restorative interventions. Over the next year, ICS will implement several short- and long-term strategies to provide social-emotional support to our black students. While these strategies will provide social-emotional support to all students, reflection questions will be provided throughout all learning opportunities that ask teachers to think specifically about this group of students who have been suspended disproportionately. Many of these strategies are around training and supporting teachers to react and respond appropriately to their students' social-emotional needs. These strategies include:

- Daily morning meeting in every classroom supported by our academic coach and by a Professional Learning Community session with the Morning Meeting book in August.
- A three-part Professional Learning Series led by our counselor who is a licensed mental health practitioner and has a background in restorative practices. This three-part series will be conducted in October, December, and February. The first session will be aimed at classroom-level strategies to help students calm down, reflect, and regulate their own emotions. Teachers will receive funds to create their own safe spaces in each classroom at ICS following this training. The second session will focus on restorative practices that teachers can use to rebuild relationships between students when poor behavioral choices are made. The third session will focus on our triggers as adults and implicit biases so that we can be more aware of the judgments we make as educators about students' behavior, especially when dealing with our students of color.
- A select cohort of teachers will receive additional training using Teaching with Love and Logic based on administrator observations. These teachers will have support in implementing the strategies in the text throughout the year.



- A Social-Emotional Learning committee has been formed. This committee is comprised of teachers, the counselor, administrators, and will seek input from our 5th-grade student council. This committee's task for the year is to research and pilot an SEL curriculum to prepare for a full roll-out in the next school year. In the short-term, this committee will compile a list of alternatives to a suspension which will be added as an addendum to the code of conduct.

Moving forward, the school anticipates the number of suspensions will be reduced by the continued integration of restorative practices and codified approaches to behavioral intervention across the school that minimize loss of instructional time (see Section III for more details). The Board, along with the principal, is committed to delivering improved structures and systems for proactive support of student behavior.

8. *Describe in detail any difficulties faced during the charter term that were not already addressed above, how the school dealt with such difficulties, and if they remain an issue for the school. Also, explain how the school plans to avoid these difficulties during the upcoming charter renewal term.*

In the current charter term, consistency in teacher development initiatives and capacity-building strategy was impeded by leadership and Board turnover. ICS experienced a quick succession of three principals across three years and a high level of turnover at the Board (when a large percentage of Board members' terms ended concurrently). This simultaneous turnover in leadership left the school without a multi-year strategy for growth nor clearly defined goals for teachers. The high levels of autonomy in planning that are critical to the school's capacity to engage a diverse student population left teachers without any formal common means of assessing student performance. Although teachers collaborated and used the IB unit planners to coordinate on themes, the school lacked a common means of looking at student performance across classrooms and determining school-wide foci in response to data. Likewise, the school-wide foci changed with each leader's new vision, resulting in a lack of year-over-year consistent growth toward a singular theory of action. The



current board is very aware of these issues and has clear plans to support retention for both leader and teachers and is working alongside school leadership to bring these plans to life. With a focus on retention, there is greater opportunity for consistency (see [Exhibits 36a and 37](#)). Since the Fall of 2016, there has been a consistent focus on balanced literacy and the use of MAP and Fountas and Pinnell data to inform instruction. Clear goals were set to promote academic gains, and significant academic gains were made. When hiring the new principal in the summer of 2018, the board focused on selecting a principal that had the capacity and vision to carry out this trajectory of best practices rather than come in with a completely new set of plans. The board has increased in stability, with a consistent board chair for the 2017-2018 school year who stayed on the board as a past chair, voted on for an additional year beyond his three-year term. The vice chair stepped up as board chair. Clear board goals were crafted in 2018 so that, despite any unforeseen changes, a clear trajectory is set for the board (see [Exhibit 39](#)). The teacher and leader retention plans ([Exhibit 36a and 37](#)), a robust mentoring program ([Exhibit 36b](#)), clearly defined board goals with a focus on data, a clear focus on academic best practices such as using the workshop model across content areas, the support of a dedicated academic coach, the selection and implementation of a social-emotional learning curriculum to foster positive learning spaces for these best practices, and systems like weekly professional learning communities will ensure the a sustainability of academic consistency over the next 5 years of the charter term. Input from the initial memo of the Charter Renewal petition has already been brought by the principal to the leadership team, comprised of grade-level coordinators and specials and languages coordinators, and committees have already been formed around key areas of growth that have surfaced through this petition process (example: Social-Emotional Learning Committee).

The adoption of a multi-year strategy in 2016-17 to improve student outcomes and teacher capacity has created a blue print for future success. (See [Exhibit 36a](#))



on teacher retention and [Exhibit 37](#) on leader retention). The multi-year strategy for ICS improvement positions a school leader to operate within a defined focus (like a strategic plan) to continue to build on the skills that have been the focus of previous years. This multi-year strategy began with the establishment of common interim assessments, literacy strategy, and math strategy in the current charter term, and will continue to build on these common approaches through individualized coaching to continue to build teacher capacity around the use of data and the establishment of common science, social studies, and language strategy. Through a school-wide focus on codifying best practices used informally, collaboration to promote consistency and alignment, and frequent use of reliable data to drive decision-making and instruction, the staff culture of the school has become more focused. Additional innovations in the next charter term will protect the culturally relevant approaches to building a Beloved Community and ELs, formalizing best practices across the school. These innovations, Multicultural Family Based Programming and Linguistically and Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy, are outlined in Section III.

Partnership with a high-capacity vendor to work in collaboration with the Board positions the school to maintain a consistent approach to financial management and fiscal health. Moving forward, the Board is focused on collaboration with the financial management vendor to drive financial health and planning. The addition in 2017-18 of a Board member who is a certified public accountant has also helped to meet a long-standing need for financial expertise on the Board.

Through the adoption of a multi-year plan for growth and implementation of strategies and structures that promote consistency, ICS is positioned to mitigate the inconsistency that has been the result of leadership and Board turnover in this charter term. The focus on the use of common data in literacy improved student outcomes and invested the staff in the power of consistency moving forward. Continued development of



assessment measures, the codification of informal best practices, and a school-wide focus on building consistency across classrooms in the next charter term will continue to build on this success.

Another significant challenge early in the current charter term was the absence of structures for data-driven decision-making. The approach to student support, before 2016-17, was predicated on individualized support guided by formative, informal assessment of students by their teachers. Prior school leaders did not consistently provide the Board with data that enabled it to monitor academic progress, and data collection was limited to the requisite annual summative assessments. Use of one-to-one tutors, paraprofessionals, and small teacher-to-student ratios enabled teachers to provide instruction based on their interaction with students. However, there were no systematic means of collecting or reviewing formal student data, nor was there a structure or culture to promote the use of formal data to drive instruction. There was insufficient training or leadership on the use of data to drive instruction, and formal student data was not integrated into decisions about supports or the direction of instruction for specific students or groups of students.

NWEA MAP, which is used to flexibly group students for interventions and drive the concepts that are retaught in these groups, is the current focus of staff data analysis training. One-on-one conferences with the principal and each teacher take place after each of the three MAP administrations to provide individualized support in analyzing and using MAP data, and school-wide PD has also incorporated examinations of MAP and Milestones data as a means of determining specific strategies and content to be taught. ICS also began implementing F&P in the 2017-18 school year as part of its focus on revising how literacy is taught. An extended literacy block uses MAP and F&P data to group students and determine the specific reading skills on which students need to focus. Teachers are invested in the use of these data and have



been receptive to incorporating it into their practice because of the strong outcomes attained.

While MAP is administered only three times a year, teacher created interim assessments can be used between these times to continually inform instruction and promote differentiation. During the Summer of 2018, a team of ICS teachers came together alongside school leadership to create interim math assessments. As teachers continue to receive professional development around Guided Reading, they are growing in their capacity for conducting running records (a system of quickly noting the words children read correctly and incorrectly and the type of mistakes they make) during their guided reading groups which offer frequent formative assessment data to inform daily plans. The addition of assessment measures, structures to analyze and utilize the data, and training for teachers on each of the data systems has enabled the entire school to shift to a formal approach to data-informed instruction and decision-making.

III. PROPOSED CHANGES

If the answers given above to questions 1 - 8 reflect a change to any of the following, please provide the rationale for the change:

A. ACADEMIC CHANGES:

- *The academic program and curriculum.*
- *The use of waivers/innovations.*
- *School programs – this includes Students with Disabilities, Gifted and Talented, English Learners, etc.*
- *Any assessments being used.*
- *Any administrative positions.*

The Board will continue to partner with the principal on the collection and analysis of student performance and organizational data, positioning the Board to monitor progress throughout the year. By the start of the next charter term, this reporting will include the use of a school-wide data dashboard to make the information readily available and provide visibility



to leading indicators to show if the school is on-track to meet its goals before the formal assessments are administered.

Common Expectations and Teaching Strategies Across Classrooms and Grade Levels

An element of the multi-year strategy for growth being implemented is a graduated approach to integrating common expectations and strategies across the school. This has included the use of data to inform instructional decisions and groupings, key strategies from Teach Like a Champion to empower teachers with common tools, consistent practices across classrooms to facilitate clear expectations, and common curricular resources and collaborative planning to drive alignment. As this charter term closes and the next begins, ICS will build on the initial progress made by continuing to identify key strategies and resources to be adopted across the school, with professional development and coaching aligned to build staff-wide capacity in these strategies and resources. Moving forward, the creation of a new role of Academic Coach will increase the capacity of the leadership team to ensure that best practices are shared and that teachers receive support that will enable them to improve their instruction.

Strengthening Professional Learning

Through a cohesive annual professional development calendar that operationalizes the multi-year strategy for growth, ICS will have a predictable and consistent pathway to common practices and expectations across classrooms. The organizational structure for year five of this charter term provides each teacher with an academic coach who conducts semi-monthly observations and debriefs, providing more intensive supports to those teachers struggling most. This coaching from a non-evaluative leadership team member and the assignment of departments of teachers to either the principal or assistant principal will provide each teacher with more robust support tailored to the school-wide focus for the year. The addition of math



interims in year five of this charter term provide another means of frequent and reliable assessment data that can be used in these coaching and collaborative planning sessions, providing the whole staff with a school-wide process to the use of data. Aligned, individualized coaching for each teacher will enable the entire staff to move together to build capacity in a common area. This approach will continue to be the foundation of a multi-year school improvement plan

Expectations for Student Performance

One of the most significant shifts that took place in this charter term is in expectations for student performance on standardized assessments. Because ICS serves a population wherein at least half of the students are learning English and are likely to have other challenges to learning, priority was not given to the importance of high performance on standardized assessments. ICS has always had an extremely strong culture of care for the students it serves. That culture of care is necessary given the traumatic circumstances under which many of our refugee students or their families fled their countries of origin and came to America. However, the culture of care sometimes took precedent over setting and meeting high expectations for teaching and learning. In the past couple of years, ICS has made a determined effort to demonstrate that it can equally provide a culture of care and set high expectations at the same time, and our growth in CCRPI is evidence of this effort and that we can be successful at both.

The school's myriad programs and innovations like SWS provide students with means of growth that are not historically measured: students' confidence, engagement, cultural intelligence, and connectedness are all capacities ICS has predictably grown over its operation. Alumni, current families, and volunteers note the tremendous shifts that all ICS students and community members experience as a result of the school: ICS has built a model wherein Beloved Community is the focus, and emerging multilingualism and the celebration of diversity are non-negotiables used to empower every student. Student growth in SEL, language



acquisition and cultural intelligence is no small feat, so the lower performance on standardized assessments was not perceived as something that could be improved without compromising what makes ICS so effective in other realms.

After the implementation of Readers and Writers Workshop and Fountas and Pinnell to drive literacy instruction across K-5 classrooms, teachers could see the rapid growth in literacy that was taking place for all students. This experience of using data to inform instruction yielded positive gains for students without undermining the unique elements of the school that empower students and promote the celebration of diversity. All stakeholders became more open to the use of standardized assessments as a tool, and the use of data shifted. The teaching staff has begun to build capacity around the use of data, and the integration of additional assessment measures and more robust coaching in the final year of this charter term will build on this momentum. The significant gains in CCRPI, Milestones, and MAP were effected by a dedicated focus on the use of data demonstrated the power of such an approach and the potential for higher performance from all students. This will continue to be leveraged in the next charter term and demonstrates a significant shift in the culture of the organization.

A holistic approach to students and their education and the IB framework will be maintained as innovative features of the school. A holistic approach to education will continue to include the concept of the Beloved Community to respond to the social-emotional needs of students and promote a sense of belonging. Daily instruction in specials will also continue, as well as the SWS tutoring program. Designed with the unique needs of ELs in mind, this individualized support not only builds academic content knowledge and English language but has provided many students and their families with a dedicated community partner with whom they can navigate American schooling and culture. At ICS, with a large population of ELs, holistic education includes a commitment to the cultural and linguistic



development necessary to ensure that all of our students, and especially our large population of ELs, can learn to their full potential. Daily language instruction will continue to provide each student with a similar experience of acquiring a new language and developing cultural intelligence. Finally, access to this content is critical to the authentic implementation of the IB program, which ICS will also maintain.

The IB PYP provides the best framework for providing a global approach to curricula and the development of the learner profile that prepares students to be culturally intelligent, inquisitive, critical thinkers. The addition of a more rigorous, data-driven approach to instruction has added to the effectiveness of this framework. Specifically within the context of the superdiverse learning environment that characterizes ICS, the IB PYP framework provides for the flexibility needed for teachers to provide a culturally responsive and inclusive education for immigrant, refugee, and native-born children, grounding instructional and curricular decision-making in the vision for the school. Moving forward, the IB program implementation will be bolstered by collaborative planning within a grade-level scope and sequence ([Exhibit 10](#)). This helps to horizontally and vertically align curricular resources and content and provides greater consistency across grade levels.

Professional development is key to improve teachers' capacity to effectively utilize the IB framework. Not only do new teachers attend IB trainings, the current IB coordinator (who taught for a year at the International School of Geneva where the IB program began) is working towards ensuring staff has the opportunity to visit other IB schools to see exemplary models in action. An orientation to IB took place during pre-planning week that looked at IB through the lens of the rules and routines of the first two weeks of school. ICS is promoting visibility of IB across the school by adding door signs with details such as the IB theme, essential question, and focus learner profiles. The IB Coordinator will be attending content-based learning IB training in October and will be attending the monthly lunch and learns with



CASIE (Center for Advancement and Study of International Education). An IB Committee is already working together to think about how to improve IB at ICS, and the Specials and Languages teachers have asked to use their Professional Learning Community time specifically to explore how to use IB to make connections to what is happening in homeroom classrooms (see [Exhibit 41](#) for additional descriptions and illustrations of IB at ICS).



Multi-Year Strategy for Improved Performance at ICS

ICS has attained strong community engagement, retention, and satisfaction from stakeholders through informal practices that will be codified and formalized in the next year. ICS has made significant student performance gains through the implementation of assessments and data analysis structures that are facilitated through individualized staff coaching. These areas of strength will continue to be leveraged and grown in the next charter term. An area of growth in the next charter term is creating a vision and structures to support student behavior and attendance. Therefore, an additional initiative to reduce absenteeism and disciplinary referrals that impede instructional time will be initiated in the current charter term and further developed in the next.

By the start of the next charter term, ICS will have dedicated one full year to the implementation of a revised approach to literacy with embedded assessments (2016-17), the integration of data into decision-making through individual teacher-principal conferences after each MAP administration (2017-18), and the implementation of a school-wide approach to math with embedded interim assessments (2018-19). A revised approach to teacher development will build on individualized coaching for every teacher in the 2018-19 school year through the recruitment of an academic coach to provide individualized observations and feedback to every lead teacher at least semi-monthly. Through the establishment of this foundation in this charter term, ICS will have a vertically aligned instructional approach in literacy and math, interim assessments for both reading and math, and structures in place to analyze assessment data and support teachers in using data to drive instructional planning and student interventions. The addition of two innovations: family engagement programming and culturally responsive foci for curricular and instructional resources, positions the school to codify and expand programming that is currently working on a smaller scale. The four elements of the strategy to drive ongoing growth over the next charter term are:

3. Frequent use of consistent, reliable data to inform student and teacher development.



4. Frequent, formal, individualized coaching for each teacher that includes semi-monthly observations and debriefs on key practices being practiced across the school.
5. The codification and expansion of best practices in place that have driven high levels of stakeholder connectedness and engagement.
6. Implementation of a vision and structures to promote a culture conducive to learning for all students.

These four elements of the multi-year strategy and metrics of success for continued improved school performance will be the guiding direction for the school leader and community, and the specific action steps will be developed by the school leader. The staggered approach to adding new initiatives for each element across the charter term will be critical in ensuring all change is organized in manageable segments and is supported by the foundation of successful elements and the coaching model. Although the phases are outlined according to the year of the charter, school leadership will own action planning and roll out, and they will be expected to have attained metrics of success before moving on to a new phase. Details of this four-part strategy, broken down by each year of the charter term is in [Exhibit 40](#).

Four Elements of the Multi-Year Strategy

1. Increased access to interim data and the support to use the data in meaningful ways will drive predictable student growth.

This element is organized around the success attained as the result of using F&P data to drive literacy instruction and MAP data to drive student groupings, interventions, and teacher supports. By the end of the next charter term, the goal is for there to be a clear ICS approach to the instruction of each of the five core content areas (ELA, math, science, social studies, and language), and an associated interim assessment that can be used to evaluate growth and inform instruction in each. Because all K-5 classrooms are self-contained and led by a lead teacher, one new content area is rolled out each year, so



International Community School

no teacher has to roll out more than one new content area approach in a year. Language teachers will collaboratively plan with lead teachers in year 2 of the next charter term to devise their approach and build out associated interims.

In year 3, teachers will house lesson plans and curricular resources in a centralized place for all staff to access as a means of providing culturally relevant curricular resources to any teacher who seeks them. Year 3 will also feature the integration of additional language and literacy development strategies across grade levels. Building on the use of Readers and Writers Workshop, a word study approach that is designed to be culturally responsive will be implemented across content areas to help build literacy across the five core disciplines. This is completed only after all strategies and assessments have been implemented in each content area to ensure the curricular materials align appropriately to the approach and interims put in place. The action plan for this tenet is projected to include:

- Before next charter term: Literacy models and math strategy and interim assessments implemented
 - Year 1: Implementation of a science strategy and interim assessments
 - Year 2: Implementation of a social studies strategy and interim assessments; Implementation of a language strategy and interim assessments (for ELs learning English and English speakers learning French or Spanish)
 - Year 3: Revision of interims to address data; Collection of common source curricular materials for each content area and grade level; Word Study integrated across all five core content areas
2. Individualized coaching for each teacher on a single school-wide focus provides each teacher with access to the support needed to predictably grow the capacity of the full staff.

The coaching model being implemented in this charter term positions every teacher to receive frequent, regular, dedicated coaching from an instructional expert with whom they can be transparent.



International Community School

This coaching supplements that provided by each teacher's formal manager and evaluator. This approach to providing every teacher with a dedicated coach and protected coaching time at least twice each month enables the entire school to grow their capacity toward a common goal. Because the focus is currently on integrating data into decision-making and planning, each teacher will receive support on data analysis and data-informed instruction, as well as any key strategies for instruction or culture that are identified as a school-wide focus.

A more directive approach to teacher support, wherein teachers are expected to teach the same thing or work from a common curriculum, is contrary to the research about how to best serve a superdiverse population,¹² and autonomy to make learning meaningful to the cultural references and schemata of the unique students in each setting is crucial to both language development and the acquisition of content in a language in which the student is not fluent.¹³

¹² Kaisa, K. (2015). Training translators for a superdiverse world. *Translators' intercultural competence and translation as affective work*.

Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Лингвистика, (4).

¹³ Billingsley, B. (2016). Ways to prepare future teachers to teach science in multicultural classrooms. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 11(2), 283-291. Barwell, R. (2016). Mathematics education, language, and superdiversity. In *Teaching and learning mathematics in multilingual classrooms* (pp. 25-39). SensePublishers, Rotterdam.

Therefore, ICS will leverage the high rates of teacher engagement to identify and codify the best practices that are demonstrated to effect strong results within the building. Given the unique diversity of the student body and the similar diversity of staff, ICS will continue to support teachers in developing curricular materials that match the interests and schemata of their students.

Additionally, grade level chairs will be included in the growth of this coaching model, deepening leadership capacity throughout the school by allowing them to provide support to their colleagues in the same department or grade level through collaborative planning, peer observation and feedback, and mentorship of new teachers. The action plan to achieve this goal is projected to include:

- Before the next charter term: All teachers participate in one-on-one data analyses



International Community School

with the principal after each MAP administration, designation of an academic coach to provide each lead teacher with semi-monthly (or more frequent) observations and debrief

- Year 1: Department and grade level leads conduct peer observations in their departments/ grades and are coached by the academic coach on key strategies to integrate; Academic coach provides greater coaching support to new teachers and teachers who are not making adequate student performance growth
- Year 2: Department and grade level leads assume greater responsibility for driving implementation of best practices

3. Codification and expansion of best practices across the school provide greater consistency to grow the school's capacity to serve a unique, diverse population in a Beloved Community.

Over the course of the next charter term, teachers will collaborate more to leverage best practices across the building and build consistency, while preserving the flexibility and autonomy that enables ICS teachers to engage a superdiverse population. Individualized coaching support in service of a school-wide focus and specific strategies that can be implemented across the school enables each teacher to receive the support needed to implement best practices that are appropriate across grade levels, departments, or the whole school. A new teacher onboarding and mentorship program, being devised by the Teaching and Learning Committee (a Board committee with teachers as members), will provide new teachers with an experienced mentor and training to promote strategies that have been demonstrated to be critical to success at ICS ([Exhibit 36b](#)).

In addition to the sharing of best practices amongst teachers in structured grade level and department collaborations facilitated by the academic coach, the school will implement two more innovations, which are a formalization of practices that have been an informal part of the school's culture since its inception. The two strategies address ICS' cultural intelligence and advocacy priority by growing



International Community School

the multi-cultural family-focused programming and linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy approaches. Each of these strategies is being developed in the 2017-18 year and has been approved by the Board, and each will be implemented starting in year one of the next charter term and grown over the charter term. Although some elements of each of these innovations are already in place, naming these two innovative features is critical to the school's ongoing commitment to English Learners and vision for holistic, multicultural education. The approach to the innovations as codified elements of the school model has been informed by research to provide a more coherent and research-based approach to serving a superdiverse community of learners. Rather than a more general approach to providing culturally-responsive support, the two priorities are each organized around research focused on:

- Strategies for superdiverse learning communities
- The needs of English language learners
- The needs and common experiences of students from refugee and immigrant families

Moving forward, ICS will commit to school-wide metrics of success for each innovative feature, as outlined in [Exhibit 31e](#). This articulation of SMART goals for each innovative feature codifies the school's commitment not just to an input, but to an outcome that has a demonstrated impact on students, their families, and the school community.

Multicultural Family-Based Programming

To promote and reinforce the school's cultural and linguistic diversity in the next charter term, ICS will add this innovation to provide programming and staffing dedicated to serving student families. For teachers to connect with students' communities, engagement with the family is essential.

Researchers have noted that a family approach to the education of children of refugees is critical to their connection and growth.¹⁴

¹⁴ Isik-Ercan, Z. (2012). In Pursuit of a New Perspective in the Education of Children of the Refugees: Advocacy for the "Family." *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 12(4), 3025-3038.



International Community School

Moreover, given the potential for misunderstanding between the school and the family and between the student and his or her family due to participation in a new culture at school, allowing additional time for changing roles in the family and access to family-based information creates the potential for less intergenerational conflict.¹⁵ Currently, this innovation is addressed through annual events that bring students and their families together to identify and celebrate the cultures, languages, and traditions from which each ICS student hails. These events are the most widely attended at the school, and they provide students and their families with opportunities to share information about their cultures and languages and learn about the languages and cultures of other ICS families (see [Exhibit 35](#) on United Nations Day (UN Day)). Home visits are also integral to teachers forming connections with students' families to inform instruction. The Community Liaison Coordinator, who oversees these initiatives, is critical to the vision for this innovation. As a school who seeks to facilitate equity and recruit diversity, this staff member is unique to ICS and an important part of the communication and connection to ICS for refugee and immigrant families.

Moving forward, this initiative will be expanded, with a goal to provide more opportunities for family involvement and increase both the amount and effectiveness of communication between the school and all families. For the families of ELs, the goal is to understand the family culture and the assets each family brings, advance families' understanding of American schooling, the role of parent advocacy at schools, and their students' academic progress. Current plans include maintenance of the Community Liaison Coordinator role, establishment of a task force to assist the Community Liaison Coordinator in his or her role, teaching and learning committee meetings devoted to the development and assessment of yearly goals and needs surrounding this initiative, and line items in the budget for the Community Liaison Coordinator role and the translation of school documents and communication items into families' languages. Metrics of success will include parent feedback in annual surveys.

¹⁵ Ascher, C. (1985). The social and psychological adjustment of Southeast Asian refugees. *The Urban Review*, 17(2), 147-152.



Linguistically and Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy

The second innovation that is being codified as foundational to the ICS model is the development and implementation of culturally-responsive pedagogy and curricula. “Culturally responsive curricula and instruction go beyond an additive approach to pedagogy, where diversity is represented superficially...Culturally and linguistically diverse learners are better served by curricula and instruction that build on their prior sociocultural and linguistic knowledge and experiences.”¹⁶ This innovation, therefore, aims to continue the research-based curricular changes that have been implemented and identify ways to make them more effective for teaching English Learners in a superdiverse learning community. Current plans include tasking a staff member with making this a priority, establishment of a task force to assist the staff member in his or her role, teaching and learning committee meetings devoted to the development and assessment of yearly goals and needs surrounding this initiative, and professional development and assessment of yearly goals and needs surrounding this initiative, and professional development and mentoring of new staff members that include linguistically and culturally-responsive methods. Strategies may include the organization of scopes and sequences into culturally responsive units, a priority of providing for additional teachers to earn their ESOL endorsements, professional development series on strategies that are critical to diverse classrooms. Other approaches include procurement of curricular resources that are culturally responsive (and housing of materials used to be accessed by teachers in the future), a culturally diverse approach to balanced literacy, strategies to connect to prior knowledge for diverse students as a common element of each lesson cycle, and explicit instruction on cultural norms and practices. Although some of these strategies are already in place, they have not been codified as a set of specific strategies implemented as part of a school-wide innovation to be rooted in a culturally-responsive approach. Given the superdiversity that characterizes the ICS

¹⁵ García, S. B., & Ortiz, A. A. (2006). Preventing disproportionate representation: Culturally and linguistically responsive prereferral interventions. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 38(4), 64-68.



International Community School

community, a dedicated commitment to cultural responsiveness requires the acquisition, organization, and dissemination of specific strategies and materials that address the unique needs of English Learners. The plan to actualize this innovative feature is projected to include:

- Before next charter term: School-wide assemblies to discuss expectations; Assistant principal collects and disaggregates discipline data by cohort, subgroup, teacher to identify areas of strength than can be leveraged. 6 IB planning days annually to align instruction; new teacher mentors and support programming.
 - Year 1: Staff-wide professional learning wherein effective strategies for instruction and classroom culture are both shared and celebrated. Roll-out of parent engagement workshops on weekends. Use of collaborative planning days to integrate support staff into collaborative planning.
 - Year 2: Grade-level and department coordinators lead culture-building strategies across classrooms in their grade/department. Coaching by lead teachers of support teachers to align strategies for student support.
4. A systematic approach to integrating already existing restorative practices will better position all students in a diverse setting to be successful.

An area of focus for the next charter term is the implementation of school-wide practices to support a culture conducive to learning. Because ICS has had few disciplinary referrals, it is clear that mentorship, restorative practices, and relational approaches to driving school-wide culture have been successful for most students. However, inherent in the mission of the school is the intent to meet the holistic needs of all students. Therefore, although small in number, the students who commit infractions that warrant in-school and out of school suspensions are of concern to the Board and administration. Over the next charter term, the disproportionate rate of referral for Black students and percentage of absences of native-born students suggest that additional supports and structures need to



International Community School

be implemented school-wide for the school culture to effectively serve all students. ICS will continue to use a restorative approach to discipline, wherein teachers and students engage around the concept of the Beloved Community and look to discipline as a means of growing capacity and relationships across the school. Ongoing strengthening of relationships and interventions to provide guidance once an infraction or absence has occurred will build support for students in meeting expectations.

Before and throughout the next charter term, the Board and administration will use data to more specifically identify the sources of the challenges and seek research-based interventions. The ICS leader will establish a protocol to identify students at risk and develop an intervention that will address their specific needs in order to provide supportive measures that will equip them to be successful in the classroom and avoid disciplinary referral, as well as a more structured approach to the use of restorative practices school-wide. Greater engagement of and focus on educating parents of students with frequent absences will result in students missing less instructional time. The plan for this tenet is projected to include:

- Before next charter term: Teachers continue to be trained in basic restorative practices, School-wide recognition of structures to promote behavioral expectations, Collection of discipline data to identify underlying issues and gaps in practices and systems
- Year 1: Adoption of an SEL curriculum that is aligned to the school's vision for Beloved Community and responsive to the superdiversity of the student and staff bodies, training for all staff in specific restorative practices and Beloved Community principles to drive a common approach to discipline and culture

B. GOVERNANCE CHANGES:

- *The school's governance structure.*
- *The school's governing board composition.*
- *The school's relationship with an Educational Service Provider or other Charter Partner.*
- *The relationship with the local district.*



International Community School

- *The increase of diversity among the members.*

ICS enjoys the support of a committed, skilled and diverse Board that has grown in its experience and expertise over the course of the charter term. Through structures to promote strong partnership with the school principal and the multi-year strategy to build on the growth accomplished in the past two years, the Board is positioned to better guide the school to realize its mission and vision. The Board is committed to supporting the new principal to sustain her tenure and provide the school with the leadership and stability necessary to continue to grow and improve. See leader retention plan, [Exhibit 37](#). One piece of this leader retention plan is the opportunity to work with a Georgia State professor who previously served on the Principal Search committee to conduct a cause analysis of the high turnover in school leadership. Through this process, the board will have an opportunity to respond to findings and set up policies and practices that support retention long-term.

Another way that the board can promote stability and direction at the school is to have a more strategic focus on data to better understand the reality of academics, programs, and stakeholder satisfaction and consider how to best support growth. With this in mind, the board created a calendar of monthly data focus topics that can be used year-to-year and set clear goals for the 2018-2019 school year (see goal #2 of [Exhibit 39](#)). By December 2018, a data dashboard will be in place to gather data into one, user-friendly place which will be an essential structure to ensure the board is monitoring data throughout the coming years of the next charter term.

The Governance Committee is currently looking outward at other schools' board onboarding plans as it works to craft a robust, stream-lined onboarding process for all new board members. The second goal of the governance committee is to index all current policies and prioritize any policies that still need are still needed so that there is a clear direction for current and new board members and transparency and direction for school leadership. Following the merger of two committees, the Board currently consists of four committees: Governance, Finance, Teaching & Learning, and Development & Communications. Each committee sets annual goals based on Strategic Plan and Charter.



International Community School

Recognizing the importance of continuing to build capacity, a succession plan and a list of skills deemed essential for the board has been developed (education, legal, finance, human resources, development, diversity). Strategic new member recruitment is a focus of all board members. With two graduates of United Way's VIP Board Training program on the current board and former board members who have been through the program, board members invite VIP program participants to come to ICS to learn about board membership and work to recruit from their program graduates. Over the past two years, the board has added an attorney, a CPA, a former ICS teacher, a human resources professional, and a former business executive, a Ph.D. candidate in educational psychology, an urban planner.

The ICS board values the strong relationships with all partners. There are regular interactions with the Georgia Charter School Association to learn best practices and to address new challenges, and board members plan to look outward to share things that have worked for ICS at upcoming GCSA conferences and visit other school board and committee meetings to learn from others how to be more effective.

FINANCIAL CHANGES:

- *The school's financial structure.*
- *The school's CFO.*
- *The school's relationship with any major creditors (e.g., landlords, investors, etc.)*

ICS has stabilized its finances through the recruitment of external expertise to oversee financial management and the removal of burdensome lease expenses through the move into a district-provided facility. The school plans to continue contracting with an outside vendor, On Call Accounting, and employing their principle as the CFO. Although the school will conduct a feasibility study to determine the long-term needs of the facility and the budgetary capacity to meet these needs, continued lease of the current facility using the capital improvement funds is the projected course of action. ICS will add to its development capacity through the appointment of a full-time Development Director to increase annual fundraising.

By looking at the budget carefully and considering what needs are best suited to fundraising, money can be reallocated to teacher salaries. The focus of the coming charter term is to maintain financial stability while improving



International Community School

our compensation (see [Exhibit 36a](#)). During the 2018-2019 school year, the board is working with school leadership to do an in-depth analysis into how to improve salaries. By keeping a careful eye on data through a monthly data focus at board meetings and a data dashboard, the board will take a careful look at what programs are most effective and how money ought to be allocated to improve more struggling areas. As suggested by the Georgia Department of Education during their finance training for board members, monthly bank statements will now be sent to the Board treasurer in addition to the principal and staff accountant/bookkeeper for increased accountability and transparency. Each Board committee is working to communicate needs lifted up during committee meetings with the Finance Committee to inform the budgeting process. While annual budget inputs sessions have been taking place regularly, the goal is to improve attendance at these events to gather more input from all stakeholders.

C. OPERATIONAL CHANGES:

- *The school's facilities – this should include any proposed expansion or renovations.*
- *The school's attendance zone and any enrollment priorities being used (see O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1)).*
- *Whether the school will utilize a weighted lottery to provide an increased chance of admission for educationally disadvantaged students pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1) and State Board Rule 160-4-9-.05(2)(g).*
- *Racial and socioeconomic demographics in an effort to align with the District.*
- *Any services provided to students such as transportation, food service, etc.*
- *The grades the charter school will serve. Please note this includes adding additional grades or reducing current grades.*

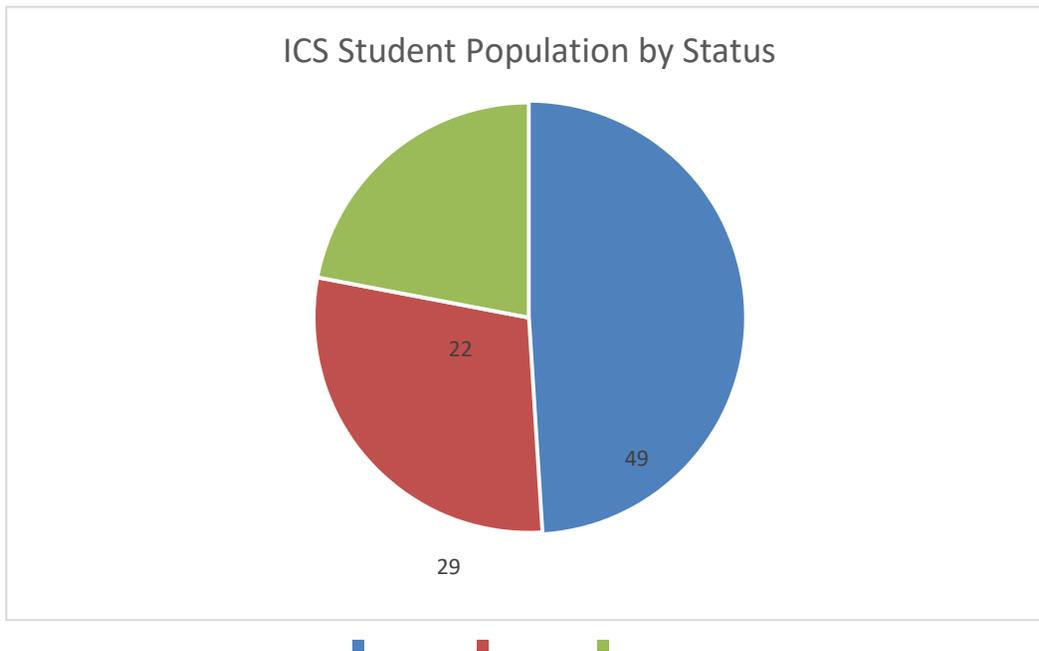
ICS has committed to serving a student body that reflects the diversity of the district and recruits and retains a staff and volunteer community that reflects the student diversity. ICS is open to any student eligible for DCSD schools grades K-5 who completes the pre-lottery application. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066 (1)(A), ICS provides enrollment preference to eligible applicants in the following order: (1) A sibling of a student enrolled in ICS; (2) A student whose parent or guardian is a member of the governing Board or is a full-time member of the staff at ICS. The percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch was 63% in 2014-15, 67% in 2015-16, and 69% in 2016-17. Just under



International Community School

half of ICS' students are native-born, with the other half identifying in nearly equal parts as either immigrants or refugees. This diversity has enabled students to learn about the cultural diversity that exists in our community and build relationships with students who are representative of the diversity of DCSD (which is unique because of the large number of refugee and immigrant students served). See Figure III.D.1. for the composition of the student body by status.

Figure III.D.1. ICS Student Status (2017-18)



The 51% of students who identify as immigrants and refugees include 28 different birth countries and 27 different languages, as illustrated in Figure III.D.2. The largest percentage of these students come from Burma, India, and Malaysia, and the languages spoken by most students are Burmese, Hindi, Somali, and Arabic; therefore, these are the languages into which most school artifacts are translated for families.

See [Exhibit 7b](#) for the motion that was approved by the ICS Board on October 23, 2017, to implement a weighted lottery in the next charter term. One critical way ICS promotes access to all



International Community School

families is through the provision of transportation. While not all charter schools provide buses, the ICS board and school staff are committed to devoting a significant portion of the budget to busing to make the school more accessible to all families. ICS provides buses through a contract with DeKalb County and an additional after-school activities bus through a contract with a private company. With many free activities in the afternoon, the after-school activity bus allows more children who might not otherwise have access to these type of enrichment activities due to transportation barriers to participate. This afterschool activity bus is also critical during Title 1 tutoring, as it provides a way home for a significant portion of participating students.

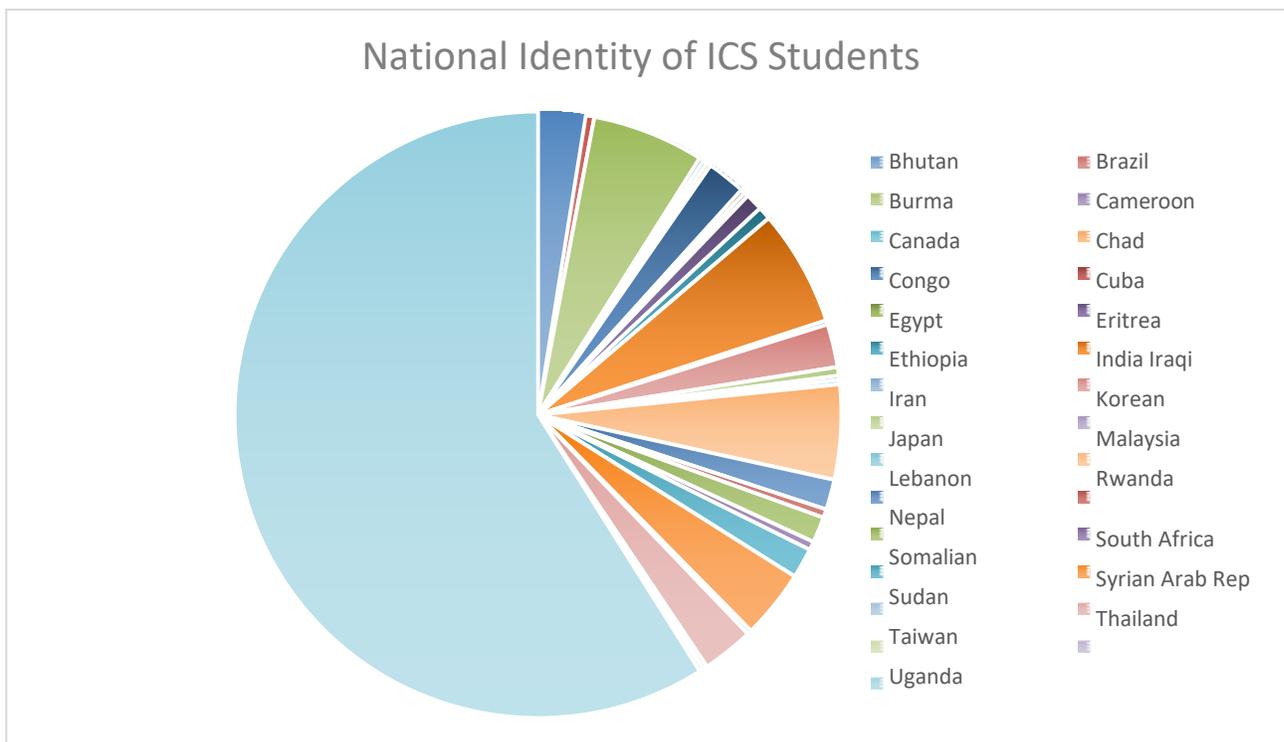


Figure III.D.2. National Origin/Identity of ICS Students (20117-2018)

IV. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

9. Briefly describe how the school has and will continue with its proposed changes to serve the needs of its students for the upcoming (renewed) charter term.

ICS is unique in that it has operated for more than fifteen years with the distinct mission of recruiting and empowering a superdiverse¹⁷ student body. Although ICS has largely maintained a demographic composition over the charter term that reflects the diversity necessary to achieve the school's mission, in the next charter term, ICS will utilize the weighted lottery option for educationally underserved students as outlined in HB 747. In the next charter term, ICS will use the DCSD weighted lottery worksheet to determine the annual weight allocated for those students whose applications reflect eligibility for Limited English Proficient services (English Language Learner designation) to maintain a student body that is at least 50% EL.

The socio-emotional, familial, and academic needs of students from refugee and immigrant families are best met through an environment that builds multilingualism and cultural understanding through research-based, holistic practices. Strategies include recruitment of diverse staff and students, culturally responsive communication in multiple languages, data-driven instruction and intervention, curricular materials that reflect diverse cultures, regular access to small group and individualized academic supports, and intensive teacher growth support.

In the next charter term, the trifold approach to education at ICS that has included expectations that students from diverse backgrounds are all able to make educational gains, systematic yet individual instruction, and culturally responsive curricula and pedagogy will be maintained. Strategic interventions for improvement will also be implemented. The Board

¹⁷ Arnaut, K. (2015). Superdiversity: Elements of an emerging perspective. In *Language and Superdiversity* (pp. 59-80). Routledge.



will support ICS' principal in leveraging this foundation and implementing the interventions for continued improvement in student outcomes. The new school leader, who is an experienced school administrator with a track record of using data and research-based best practices to improve teaching and learning, will have the autonomy and support to leverage her expertise in service of continued growth of the school. To support and to set targets and expectations for the new school leader the Board has identified two innovative features to maintain, two additional innovative features, and four elements of a vision for continued growth and shared these with the new leader. The Board will provide guidance, resources, and accountability metrics for students and staff. [Exhibit 40](#) breaks the four overarching goals into specific, measurable, and time-bound goals by year of the coming charter term.

ICS does not anticipate making any further changes to the organizational structure, which has been organized for the 2018-19 school year to provide greater support to lead teachers, increase development capacity, and build leadership capacity.