



International Community School
Strategic Plan January 2020- December 2024

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Introduction

Our International Community School (ICS) brings DeKalb County families from immigrant, refugee and local backgrounds closer together around one powerful belief: that our model for intentional diversity helps future leaders understand, and ultimately improve, the world they will inherit.

ICS remains one of the longest-running charter schools in the state. We have drawn interest from all over the world because of our innovative platform which emphasizes educating the whole child, seeking to develop the innate curiosity of our students while celebrating cultural differences in a challenging, nurturing and intentionally multi-ethnic environment.

With this new strategic plan, we are excited to look ahead to the future and add to our intentional view of what The International Community School can become. We are fortunate to have advocates from all corners of our community cheering us on in this endeavor, from our partners at DeKalb County School District, the Georgia Department of Education, and Georgia Charter Schools Association.

Thank you to all the members of the ICS community, the leadership, teachers, staff, students and families who contribute every day, in large and small ways, to our unique and powerful mission!

Respectfully,

The International Community School Board of Directors

Mission

The International Community School (ICS) is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School that welcomes children from refugee, immigrant and local backgrounds providing a rigorous and holistic education in an intentionally diverse community of mutual learners.

Vision

The International Community School seeks staff and welcomes families who are committed to creating a supportive community of students, staff and parents, learning from each other and celebrating diversity among us.

ICS Statements of Understanding

- We understand that each member of our community (staff, family, student) is unique and essential to our life together.
- We believe that everyone is inherently able to learn and it is our collective responsibility to nurture the unique genius of every person.
- We believe in educating the whole child – their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, cultural and creative selves. Teaching in a culturally responsive lens, we view socio- emotional development as important as promoting academic excellence.
- We encourage expression through honoring home languages, fostering fluency in Standard English and offering opportunities to learn other languages.
- We welcome and engage with people of all identities including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical ability, faith and political affiliation.
- We are preparing children to be global citizens who take action and work toward social justice in their communities.
- As a beloved community, we approach complex issues with strong communication, collaboration, perspective, respect and active listening.

I contribute to a legacy and my voice and actions matter.

Our Beloved Community¹, and What the Term Means to ICS

“The Beloved Community” is a term that was first coined in the early days of the 20th Century by the philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce, who founded the Fellowship of Reconciliation. However, it was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., also a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, who popularized the term and invested it with a deeper meaning.

Dr. King’s Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict.

The concept of the Beloved Community, as used by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., fits our school’s identity as a forum and a refuge for many members of the community who have experienced the traumatic circumstances stemming from acts of war, institutional discrimination, and/or economic hardship before arriving to ICS.

At ICS, Beloved Community, far from being an abstraction, enables administrators, teachers and students to deepen their learning through living into the values of safe haven, mutual respect, equality, responsibility, and the healing power of love and compassion. We want to create a spirit of beloved community among students, staff, parents and volunteers. Everyone associated with ICS should have a place of honor and respect every day and everywhere on our school campus.

Beloved Community includes high expectations for student learning and the necessary support systems that will allow students to successfully demonstrate their knowledge and learning. High academic performance will allow our children to break through the evils of poverty that Dr. King frequently referenced.

With Beloved Community also comes accountability. All members of the beloved community are accountable to each other for the academic performance, the safety and well-being of our children. We believe that everyone in the ICS community has something important, unique, and essential to offer, that all offerings are welcomed, and that we are all obligated to do the best we can by each other and for each other.

The commitment to Beloved Community is reflected in the ICS Strategic Plan. It is a significant component of what makes ICS unique.

¹ The King Center, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Philosophy, Beloved Community, <https://thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy/>

2 Barbara R. Thompson, Executive Director, SIE, <https://www.solutionsforinterruptededucation.org/beloved-community>

5-Year Goal

By December 2024, ICS will be the highest-performing charter school in Dekalb County. We will attract and retain world-class talent, garner national recognition for academic results, and be the go-to for donors looking to make an impact in the educational social-justice space in Atlanta. ICS will be a national model welcoming educators from around the world to showcase strategies for serving a superdiverse population of students and families in an inclusive and equitable way.

Portrait of a Graduate

In order to lead the most choice-filled lives in their journey beyond 5th grade, our graduates will embody the IB learner profiles of balanced, open-minded, and caring thinkers. They will have the skills to communicate effectively and persuasively and the tools to solve complex problems. They will believe that they can achieve their goals, and they will believe they can accomplish anything if they believe in themselves. Our ICS graduates will leave our Beloved Community and become teachers, artists, engineers, lawyers, elected officials, and change-makers of all kinds in a complex and rapidly changing world. ICS graduates will create and discover things we cannot even dream of at this moment in time. Their strong foundation at ICS will ignite their potential and springboard them into lives full of choice, purpose, and action.

History

ICS was established by a group of educators, religious leaders, business professionals, community activists and parents to bring together children from refugee, immigrant, and local backgrounds in an academically challenging and nurturing environment.

The school opened in 2002 as one of Georgia's earliest start-up public charter schools, serving 125 Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade students and operating on the campus of Avondale Patillo United Methodist Church. One grade level was added annually as children progressed, and in 2006 a second campus was opened for 5th and 6th grade students at St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church. The two-campus solution was taxing on logistical, financial and human resources, and was not a viable long-term solution.

The school consolidated operations and moved to the Medlock Elementary facility in 2012, with a focus on serving grades K-5. Atlanta's philanthropic community supported a \$900,000 capital campaign to catalyze the move, including major gifts from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, Tull Charitable Foundation, Sartain Lanier Family Foundation, and the Rich Foundation. The Medlock neighborhood surrounding the school has opened its hearts and arms to ICS again and again contributing to food, clothing, and supply drives and blanketing our school with signs of love and welcome.

In recent years, ICS has celebrated significant accomplishments. In 2017, we completed our IB renewal authorization. Also in 2017, we celebrated our 15th year in operation with an ICS Runs the World 5k and 1-mile Fun Run. In 2018, we received accreditation from AdvanceEd (now Cognia). In 2019, ICS celebrated its most recent five-year charter renewal by the DeKalb County Board of Education and the Georgia State Board of Education. Throughout our years, we have proven that ICS constitutes a viable and sustainable school and operational model that has made a positive impact in the community we serve and garnered local, national, and international exposure.

Today, ICS serves more than 400 children annually in grades K-5, representing over 25 countries and speaking even more languages. We rejoice in our diversity every day and also formally in an annual United Nations Day with a parade of nations, special programming, and an international potluck. The ICS curriculum, distinctive instructional methods, educational programs, and intentional demographic diversity are based on one crucial concept and unifying principle: ICS is not a school for children from refugee or immigrant backgrounds or a school for children from America. Instead it is a school where community is built around all groups under the powerful pedagogical idea that no group can properly learn without the others, both academically and socially.

Strategic Planning Process

At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, ICS’s governing board embarked on an update to our 2016-2019 strategic plan. The update, known as the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, is aligned with the terms of our recent five-year charter renewal (2019-2024) and the associated goals of our charter contract. The strategic plan is meant to guide monitoring of our charter goals; decision-making related to policies, programs, and actions; and implementation of these initiatives throughout the remainder of the 2019-2025 charter term. It is also intended to assist in the planning and preparation for charter renewal which will be submitted during the fourth year of the charter term.

The strategic planning process formally began on July 27, 2019 with a Strategic Planning Process Kick-off facilitated by The Georgia Charter Schools Association (GCSA). At this session, a process and timeline for development of the plan was agreed upon. Using the current strategic plan as a guide, the mission, vision, statements of understanding and history were reviewed and refined. An inventory was taken of existing documents to assist with the plan, including charter compliance tracking documents and a SWOT analysis (results on page 9) was performed to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats pertaining to ICS and its continued success. The key phases of the plan include:

1	Project Startup	Identifying overall objectives, process, and timeline for plan development
2	Discovery	Environmental scan including review of previous and current strategic plans and charter documents; planning sessions with planning team to identify additional content
3	Plan Development	Aligning charter goals with strategic directions; mining previous plans and current charter tracking documents for supporting objectives; mapping strategic directions to key indicators; and assigning implementation and timelines to stakeholders.
4	Presentation of Draft	Presenting the draft plan to the ICS community for validation and revising as necessary
5	Finalization/Approval	Securing Board approval for the plan
6	Implementation	Ongoing work with assignable tasks, measurable outcomes and regular intervals of plan review/refinement

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (SWOT) ANALYSIS

This analysis completed by the Board and led by GCSA at the July 27th kickoff informed our Strategic Priorities:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally diverse community • Holistic student experience • Parent community and volunteers • Low student-teacher ratios • Location (particularly for Clarkston residents) • Dedicated board of directors • Strong returning leadership team and committed staff • Financial and legal compliance • IB program and Teaching Assistants • 5-year charter renewal from DCSD • Improved reading and math scores in 2019 • Improvement in safety and discipline in recent years • Creation of Development Director position • External partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic lack of academic rigor • Turnover (staff, leadership, board) • Fundraising • Aging facility • Inconsistent family involvement • Communication between school and community • Lack of shared understanding of goals • Low staff morale due to leader/staff turnover
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased fundraising to support goals • Improving DOE student climate star rating • Continue upward trend in reading and math • Increased technology • Safety and facilities funding available • Redefine culture with new staff for 2019-20+ • Align strategic plan with current charter goals • Increased community programming and partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff/leader/board turnover • Facility maintenance cost • Non-competitive teacher pay • Highest performing students withdrawing in upper grades • Inconsistent test scores • Relationship with authorizer and cluster • Transportation for students • Political environment for charter schools • Facility lease agreement

Summary of Strategic Priorities

In order to accomplish our 5-year goal, embody our mission, and fulfill the vision for our future graduates, we will pursue 6 strategic priorities:

1. Academic Excellence
2. Holistic Student Experience
3. Multi Cultural Family Programming
4. Organizational Stability
5. Financial Efficiency
6. Effective Governance and Legal Compliance

Objectives for each priority are listed below as lettered bullets.

Strategic Priority 1: Academic Excellence

Continually evaluate, implement, and monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessments to increase academic achievement for all students.

- a. Highly qualified, collaborative, and resilient teaching staff
- b. Rigorous academic program with intentional intervention strategies for ALL students
- c. Inclusive gifted program
- d. Language programs that lead to mastery of and love for foreign languages
- e. ESOL program that produces the highest gains for ESOL students in the state of Georgia
- f. Specials classes to foster a love of the arts, encourage self-expression, and improve mental and physical well-being
- g. Expansion to include IB Middle Years Programme through 8th grade

Strategic Priority 2: Holistic Student Experience

Consistently implement a culturally responsive approach to support academic growth and development of the whole child. Support character traits and habits of mind to foster global citizenship.

- a. Culturally responsive, asset-based and individualized learning for ALL students
- b. World-class afterschool activities

- c. Daily focus on social-emotional learning, restorative discipline systems, and explicit embodiment of IB learner profiles
- d. Healthy school with focus on nutrition and wellness
- e. Environmentally responsible school environment

Strategic Priority 3: Multicultural Family Programming

Maintain strong community relationships through timely, accurate communications and accessible engagement opportunities.

- a. Clear, predictable and transparent communication with families and local community
- b. Welcoming environment for all families and community members
- c. Access to resources, information, and guidance for families
- d. Clear and simple updates about student progress for families
- e. Transportation that meets the needs of families
- f. Communication assistance such as translators

Strategic Priority 4: Organizational Strength

Maintain strong organizational performance by ensuring the stability and consistency of school leadership and the Board of Directors and promoting staff and student retention.

- a. Proactive and transparent Board of Directors
- b. Consistent school leadership and collective staff leadership
- c. Strategic and responsive human capital management program
- d. Model Professional Learning Community distinction
- e. Efficient, transparent, and predictable student enrollment process

Strategic Priority 5: Financial Efficiency

Manage all ICS assets with a great deal of integrity and fiscal responsibility. Continue to enhance fund raising capability to allow further investment in ICS future.

- a. Education for ICS community on philanthropy
- b. Transparent communication to public about use of funds

- c. Strategic partnerships to meet academic, holistic, and family programming goals
- d. Diversified income streams to supplement operating budget
- e. Completion of feasibility study for additional campus

Strategic Priority 6: Effective Governance and Legal Compliance

Maintain a strong volunteer Board of Directors with strong and diverse skills who support the mission, vision, and strategic plan of ICS; hires, supports, and evaluates a school leader; ensures resources are in place to carry out school performance objectives and works with the school leader to ensure legal compliance in all areas.

- a. Strong partnership between school leader and Board
- b. Board commitment to diversity
- c. Board use of data to drive decision making
- d. Board collaboration with DeKalb County School District and other charter schools to build capacity and share best practice
- e. Board continual monitoring of effective and best practices for governance, oversight, and transparent communication

Georgia Department of Education Accountability Measures

In Spring 2019, the International Community School charter was renewed for 5 years. In order to be eligible for renewal in 2024, ICS must provide evidence of meeting the 5 accountability measures below. The right-hand column aligns these accountability measures to the strategic priorities in this strategic plan.

1	<p>During each year of our charter contract term, ICS will meet <i>at least one</i> of four performance standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase the College and Career Readiness Index (CCRPI), Content Mastery, Progress, and/or Closing Gaps scores by at least 5%, 10%, or 20% of the gap between 100 and the respective 2019 score until it reaches 90 and maintain each respective score at 90 or above once it reaches 90. b. Exceed the CCRPI, Content Mastery, Progress, and/or Closing Gaps scores in those district schools that at least two-thirds of ICS students would otherwise attend. 	<p>This accountability measure aligns with Strategic Priority 1: Academic Excellence</p>
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	<p>c. Achieve an overall positive statistically significant Value-Added Impact Score compared to similar school throughout the state. Value-added Impact Scores estimate the academic impact the school has on student achievement while controlling for the characteristics of the student body.</p> <p>d. Earn a Beating the Odds designation by performing higher than similar schools statewide.</p>	
2	<p>During each year of our charter contract term, ICS shall demonstrate its financial viability and stability by achieving <i>all five</i> of the following financial performance standards.</p> <p>a. Have a Current Ratio (Working Capital Ratio) that is 1.0 or greater and a one-year trend that is positive;</p> <p>b. Have a Debt to Asset Ratio that is less than 95 percent;</p> <p>c. Have Unrestricted Days Cash (Total Expenses/365) greater than 45 days with a one-year positive trend;</p> <p>d. Be neither in default of loan or bond covenant(s) nor delinquent with debt service payments;</p> <p>e. Submit to GaDOE by November 1 an annual independent audit with an opinion of the auditor as regards the accuracy of the Charter School’s accounting records, financial position, change in financial position, compliance with rules of various governing entities, including GAGAS (Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards or GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An unmodified audit opinion; • An audit devoid of significant findings and conditions, material weaknesses, or significant internal control weaknesses; • An audit that does not include a going concern disclosure in the notes or an explanatory paragraph; and • No other adverse statement indicating noncompliance with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to financial management and oversight. 	<p>This accountability measure aligns with Strategic Priority 5: Financial Efficiency.</p>

3	During each year of its charter contract term, all ICS governing board members act in accordance with the Standards for Effective Governance of a Georgia Non-Profit School Governing Board as sworn to in the Effective Governance Affidavit included in the Annual Report and as evidenced by the lack of any verifiable contrary information received by GaDOE and DeKalb County.	This accountability measure aligns with Strategic Priority 6: Board Governance and Legal Compliance.
4	During each year of its charter contract term, ICS shall implement all the legal requirements included in federal and state laws, rules, and regulations and outlined in the charter contract. Additionally, ICS shall not do anything which results in Georgia Department of Education and DeKalb County placing on probation more than one time in any 12-month period or more than two times during the charter term contract.	This accountability measure aligns with Strategic Priority 6: Board Governance and Legal Compliance.
5	Throughout the charter term, ICS will maintain strong organizational performance by ensuring the stability and consistency of leadership and the Board of Directors and promoting staff retention.	This accountability measure aligns with Strategic Priority 4: Organizational Strength.

2019-20 Implementation Plan

This one-year Implementation Plan was created in Summer 2019 for the 2019-20 school year, focusing on the most critical goals for the school's continued success. Subsequent years' implementation plans will have goals aligned to all 6 strategic priorities.

Goal 1	Action Steps	Person Responsible	Resources needed	Target Due Date
By May 2020, 51% of students will be on proficient or distinguished according to GMAS (3-5) or MAP (K-2) in math.	Implement all 3 main components of Eureka Math	Academic Coach, Assistant Principal	Eureka Curriculum, smartboards in all classrooms, math manipulatives	Dec. 2019
	Professional Development for staff on Eureka Math	Academic Coach	Eureka Teacher Editions	Aug. 2019, Jan. 2020
	Weekly PLCs for grade level teams about math	Academic Coach, Grade Chairs	-----	Sept. 2020
	TAs support math daily in 2 nd -5 th grades	Assistant Principal	-----	Aug. 2020
	iXL used for intervention, enrichment and	Assistant Principal, Grade Chairs	Chromebooks, computer lab, ipads	Dec. 2020
	Affirm assessments used as common assessments	Academic Coach, Grade Chairs	Edulastic subscription, chromebooks, computer lab, ipads	Feb. 2020
	2 Math nights for community	Academic Coach, Title 1 coordinator	Math fluency game materials	Mar. 2020
	Math Masters fluency Competition for students	Academic coach	T-shirts, fluency probes	Jan. 2020
Goal 2	Action Steps	Owner	Resources Needed	Target Due Date
By May 2020, 51% of students will be on proficient or distinguished according to GMAS (3-5) or MAP	Professional Development on Fountas and Pinnell	Academic Coach, Reading Specialist	Fountas & Pinnell Assessment Kits, substitute teachers	Aug 2019
	Monthly Reading Support Meetings	Academic coach, Reading Specialist	-----	Oct 2019
	ESOL teachers push in during reading	Principal	Guided Reading Leveled Library, common planning time	Aug 2019

(K-2) in English Language Arts.	Fridays reserved for IB projects integrating social studies and science with reading	Principal	-----	Aug. 2019
Goal 3	Action Steps	Owner	Resources Needed	Target Due Date
By May 2020, 80% of the staff will plan to return to ICS for the 2020-21 school year.	Quarterly staff surveys and next steps	HR Manager, Principal	-----	May 2019
	6 weeks of self-care	Principal, Counselor, Sunshine Committee Designees	Supplies for planned activities per calendar created by sunshine committee	Nov. 2019
	Monthly temperature checks followed by monthly interventions	HR Manager	-----	May 2019
	Behavior specialist support students/teachers needing assistance	P/T Behavior Specialist	P/T Behavior Specialist	Sept. 2019
	Stable and healthy administrative team	Principal	Teambuilding activities off site once per semester	Mar 2020
Goal 4	Action Steps	Owner	Resources Needed	Target Due Date
By June 2020, \$160,000 will be raised.	\$20,000 raised through Georgia Gives	Social Media Coordinator, Development Director, Principal	Marketing collateral, pledge cards, DonorPerfect software, Americorps Member	Dec. 2019
	\$100,000 raised through grants	Development Director, Grants Committee	-----	May 2020
	\$50,000 raised through corporate donors/foundations	Development Director	-----	May 2020
	\$10,000 raised through events	Development Director, BOD Development Committee	Venue for events	May 2020
	\$10,000 raised by the board of directors	Board Chair	Board Member Commitment Forms	May 2020

Acknowledgements

ICS Board of Directors:

Barry Balint, Co-Chair (Jan. 2018-Jan. 2021)
Kristine Hansen-Dederick, Co-Chair (March 2018-March 2021)
Iris Goodson, Vice Chair (Sept. 2017-Sept. 2020)
Alia Kerimbaeva, Treasurer (June 2017-June 2020)
Troy Covington, Secretary (May 2019-May 2022)
Candice McKinney (Dec. 2016-Dec. 2019)
Rebekah Pollack (Apr. 2017-Apr. 2020)
Tomika Johnson (Feb. 2019-Feb. 2021)
Kathleen Cole (June 2019-June 2022)
Jason Hern (Oct. 2019-Oct. 2022)
Julie Allen, Principal (Ex Officio)

Jeff Homan, Georgia Charter Schools Association

ICS teachers, staff, students, and families