

**SELF-STUDY VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

**FOR**

**Saigon South International School**

**Nguyen Van Linh Parkway**

**Tan Phong Ward, District 7**

**Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam**

**March 6-10, 2011**

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## CHAPTER I: STUDENT/COMMUNITY PROFILE

### GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Saigon South International School (SSIS) is a private school that offers a U.S. based curriculum to students from EC3 (Early Childhood) through to grade 12. SSIS was begun in 1997 to serve the needs of expatriate students in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. It was established as a non-profit entity within the Phu My Hung Corporation (PMHC), owners of the Saigon South urban development project. The PMHC provides oversight and assistance with school finances, construction needs, and construction capital.

The school's mission is to provide a college preparatory school experience that is committed to the intellectual and personal development of each student in preparation for a purposeful life as a global citizen. The school's Core Values (reflecting the personal beliefs of the founders and corporate ethos of the school's parent company) are at the heart of SSIS, while the school's Expected Student Learning Results (ESLRs) of the following are clearly integrated into the school's academic and extra-curricular programs. The Core Values are:

- Academic excellence
- Balance in life
- Sense of self
- Dedicated service and
- Respect for all

The school has Elementary, Middle/High School divisions and offers both the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB) programs for the upper grades in the High School.

In the past six years, SSIS has faced major challenges. These years have been characterized by significant growth and change. Enrollment and staffing as the school has doubled and new programs have been put in place that include the development of a High School program with courses following both the AP and IB programs. Concomitantly, the facilities have been significantly enlarged and improved with three major construction projects. In the midst of ongoing expansion, SSIS has worked to manage the pace and breadth of the change in alignment with the school's mission, purpose, and Core Values, and has sought to ensure that students are achieving based on the Schoolwide Expected Student Learning Results (ESLRs) and academic standards.

**Enrollment:** SSIS has witnessed substantial growth since it was established fourteen years ago. At the inception of the school, SSIS began with 37 students, and currently, enrollment stands at 761 students. In recent years, enrollment for grades EC3 to grade 12 has grown steadily from 397 students in 2006 to its present enrollment of 761 students in 2011 (EC3–Grade 5 401 students and MS/HS Grades 6-12 360 students). In the past two years, in the wake of the 2007-8 economic downturn, annual enrolment increases have leveled off. Since the completion of the new High School facility in 2010, it is anticipated that SSIS will be able to accommodate approximately 1,100 students from EC3 to grade 12.

The current demographics at SSIS include more than 33 nationalities. The largest nationality represented at the school is Korean at 25%, followed by the U.S at 16%. 14% of the population is Vietnamese. About 5% of students hold European passports, 3% Canadian, 3% Australian and New Zealand, and 2% British. Qualification for initial and continued enrollment at the school is based on passport status. Vietnamese students are not eligible for admission into grades 1-9 due to licensing restrictions by the Ministry of Education of Vietnam. Vietnamese students

are able to enroll in the Early Childhood program and grades 10-12. However, Vietnamese student returning from two or more years of schooling abroad, or with parents holding a foreign passport are eligible for admission.

SSIS has taken steps to maintain the international character and national diversity of the school. In 2008 a decision was made to limit each nationality to 20% of enrollment. Currently only the Korean student population exceeds this nationality target.

Within SISS there is a high proportion of non-native English speakers, with the majority of students at SSIS viewing English as their second or third language. In the Middle/High School, English is the home language for approximately 22%, with 28% speaking Korean, and another 28% speaking Vietnamese at home. The high level of non-native English speakers at SSIS continues to have profound implications for instruction and program development. In 2008, in an effort to improve reading and writing (K-5) the school hired a Literacy Coordinator to coordinate and develop the literacy program. At the same time, instruction, course offerings, professional development, and resource acquisition are among the other areas that should continue to be responsive to the students' learning needs. This is to ensure that learning can be maximized by all students at the school.

The admissions criteria are well defined at the school with SSIS admitting students from EC3 to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Students must be three years old by August 31<sup>st</sup> of their enrollment year in order to be eligible for the program and must graduate before turning twenty one. Students are carefully screened to determine eligibility for admission. Admission is primarily based on academic suitability for a program that requires English proficiency. Applicants with no English proficiency are currently not admitted beyond grade 5. The total number of ESL students admitted at each grade level is limited by the school. In common with many international schools, SSIS does not provide services for students with learning, emotional, or physical disabilities that would preclude them from access to the regular program.

**External Test Scores:** In the last six years, the school has established a comprehensive schoolwide assessment program and on an annual basis administers a variety of external assessments. Following a successful pilot of the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), SSIS implemented testing in language usage, reading, and mathematics in grades 3-10 in 2010-11. Testing occurs twice a year in fall and spring, while use of the International Schools' Assessment (ISA) has been discontinued.

Since 2008, students in grades 3-12 have taken the Writing Assessment Program (WrAP) produced by the Educational Bureau (ERB). The test measures writing performance in six key skill areas, aligned with the Six+1 Traits Writing Framework.

In High School, all students in grades 10 and 11 take the PSAT in October. The SAT 1 and SAT 11 are offered throughout the year to college-bound juniors and seniors. The results are as follows:

Class of 2007 average PSAT score G10 (Math 56.43, Reading 40.84, Writing 39.23)  
Class of 2007 average PSAT score G11 (Math 57.51, Reading 43.00, Writing 43.71)  
Class of 2008 average PSAT score G10 (Math 53.41, Reading 40.89, Writing 42.72)  
Class of 2008 average PSAT score G11 (Math 56.59, Reading 45.00, Writing 45.73)  
Class of 2009 average PSAT score G10 (Math 53.10, Reading 43.70, Writing 44.90)  
Class of 2009 average PSAT score G11 (Math 58.80, Reading 45.10, Writing 48.00)  
Class of 2010 average PSAT score G10 (Math 53.40, Reading 43.50, Writing 42.60)  
Class of 2010 average PSAT score G11 (Math 57.85, Reading 49.49, Writing 47.28)

Class of 2006 average SAT score (Math 591, Reading 454, Writing 473)  
Class of 2007 average SAT score (Math 591, Reading 490, Writing 494)  
Class of 2008 average SAT score (Math 620, Reading 549, Writing 536)  
Class of 2009 average SAT score (Math 630, Reading 517, Writing 510)  
Class of 2010 average SAT score (Math 642, Reading 493, Writing 533)

The external tests administered to the students indicate that, for the most part, SSIS students tend to score well above the U.S. mean in mathematics and average or slightly below in reading and writing. In 2010 SSIS' reading score on the SAT Critical Reading Assessment was below the U.S. mean. Results from the external Writing Assessment Program (WrAP), grades 3-12, are generally at or near the proficient level in mechanics and organization. Areas that continue to need improvement are sentence structure and overall development.

The test results at SSIS identify a continuing need to strengthen the students' academic achievement in the areas of critical reading and writing. Though the school responded to the data by hiring a K-5 Literacy Coordinator, additional measures are needed. This may mean making adjustments in instruction, curriculum, course offerings, program, and professional development in order to ensure all students have the opportunity to achieve at the highest levels of learning.

SSIS has offered AP classes, open to all students in grades 11 and 12 since 2007. The decreasing pass rate in AP over the last five years has caused SSIS to explore strengthening prerequisite course requirements for students taking AP. In 2010-2011 SSIS implemented the IB Diploma Program and plans to expand the program 2011-12 by offering more courses.

Currently, the school makes limited use of external and internal tests and end-of-unit assessments to adjust instruction in the classroom and inform curriculum. The use of standardized and classroom assessment data to inform classroom instruction is a major growth area for the school and a goal of the school's leadership.

**Post Graduate Plans:** Nearly all SSIS graduates matriculate to universities, mostly in the U.S. and Canada but also in Korea, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The goal of the counseling department is to help students find appropriate universities based on each student's academic performance and future interests. Graduates from the past few years have attended schools such as: Boston University, Boston College, Brown University, Cornell University, Duke University, Exeter University, Georgia Institute of Tech, John Hopkins University, McGill, New York University, Purdue University, University of Michigan, University of British Columbia and Toronto, and University of Southern California.

**Faculty:** SSIS faculty consists of the administration (9) and the teaching faculty (79) that includes ESL teachers, Counselors, Learning Support and a part-time school Psychologist. More than five nationalities make up the foreign staff at SSIS. They include 68% from the United States, 15% from Canada, 4% from Australia, 2% from the United Kingdom, and 1% from China. The remainder of teachers come from Cuba, Equador, France, Netherlands, Philippines and Spain. Most of the faculty are relatively new to SSIS, with half the faculty in their first two-year contract. A considerable number of the faculty bring to SSIS significant experience in education, with 68% having twelve or more years of teaching and/or administrative experience. One percent of faculty have doctorate degrees, 70% hold master's degrees, while 29% have a bachelor's degree. Almost all faculty are currently teaching in an area in which they have been certificated or trained.

**Administration:** The administration at SSIS is comprised of the Head of School, two divisional Principals in Early Childhood/Elementary and Middle/High Schools,

together with two Associate Principals, Directors of Curriculum and ICT, an Admissions/Marketing Director, and a Business Manager. The Head of School has been in his current position since 2007.

**Professional Development For Faculty:** SSIS has adopted a two-pronged approach to professional development that consists of: targeted in-service to the whole staff and support for individual teachers aligned with SSIS' identified goals. Currently, professional development accounts for 1% of the school budget.

Professional development for individual teachers can include graduate work, ongoing teacher certification, professional conferences and regional conferences that are held on and off the site. The school provides a professional development allowance for all school employees, both foreign and local hire. Teachers can access up to \$750 in each of the first two years at SSIS and \$1,000 for each subsequent year. All professional development funding has to be approved by the Head of School and the divisional Principal.

In the past four years, schoolwide inservices have reflected the school's areas of focus. Internal workshops at SSIS have included: 6+1 Traits Writing, Literate Response in the Classroom, Critical Friends, Assessment and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom. SSIS has hosted three EARCOS workshops, two on *Differentiated Instruction* led by Bill and Ochan Powell and another on *Understanding By Design* presented by Jay McTighe.

Beginning in 2010-2011, the school administration took a step further to hone professional development and prioritized four areas. They selected the critical areas of differentiated instruction, curriculum mapping utilizing Understanding By Design (UbD), information technology, and professional learning communities.

**Discipline:** On the whole, students exhibit positive behavior at SSIS. However, when there are serious discipline matters, consequences include: conference with teacher, administrator and/or parents; in-school or out-of-school suspension. A conference with the student's parents is required prior to re-admittance following an in-school or out-of-school suspension. The area of greatest concern, highlighted by both students and parents, concerns bullying within the school.

**Attendance:** A high expectation for regular school attendance is part of the school culture, with students having, on average, 96% attendance rates.

**Co-curricular Opportunities:** SSIS students have numerous opportunities to participate in co-curricular activities that include fine and performing arts, athletics and community service.

In the Elementary School, students participate in the Extra-Curricular Activities Program (ECAP). This serves students from grades 2-5 from 3:15 - 4:15 p.m., three times a week, in eight-week sessions that run three times a year. In 2009-10 approximately 193 students participated in 40 different ECAP activities. The activities provided by administration, teachers, parents and community members include: academic games, athletics, cooking, dance, drama, martial arts, music, and piano lessons. In 2010-2011, an inter-scholastic sports program for students in grades 3-10 was implemented. It includes basketball, netball, soccer, and swimming.

The Middle/High School offers a range of activities. These include basketball, soccer, swimming, and volleyball. Additionally, clubs and societies reinforce SSIS' values and include Habitat for Humanity, Global Issues Group, National Honor Society, Operation Smile, and English Language Service Club. Middle School athletics has high student participation with more than half of the 183 students involved. High School is similar with more than half of the student body involved in after-school athletics.

**Parent & Student Perceptions:** SSIS used the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) to provide data on community perceptions in the areas of curriculum, learning environment, and school environment. Overall, the survey results reveal high levels of satisfaction from the students, parents, and teachers. SSIS is rated highly by parents (3.8 or above on a scale of 1-5) in many areas, including the following:

- Parent/school relationships
- Resource management
- The quality of instructional program
- Support for student learning
- School climate/ environment for learning

High participation was evident and included 60% of SSIS families and 97% of faculty. Results indicate an improvement from 2007 in parents' perception of the quality and support for student learning and student/parent relations. Like the students, parents cited bullying as an area of concern.

Teachers highlighted retention of staff, increased salary and benefits, building a sense of school community, and clearer processes and protocols as areas for school improvement. In light of the school's need to continue to plan and prepare for increased enrollment to meet the needs of the growing expatriate community, it is imperative that the school continues to be mindful of the need for communication, recruitment and retention of effective faculty. These are some of the characteristics that support quality education.

## CHAPTER II: PROGRESS REPORT

### ● Briefly comment on the school's major changes and follow-up process since the last self-study.

**General Comments:** The previous Visiting Committee left seven critical areas for follow-up that were subsumed into four major areas within the school's initial Schoolwide Action Plan (2005). Implementation of the Action Plans was tasked to a small committee and they were responsible for reporting back to the annual Master Planning meeting. After the 2008 WASC Midterm Visit and the additional recommendations that were given, direct responsibility for the oversight and implementation of the Schoolwide Action Plan, was assumed by the administrative team led by the Head of School. The centralization of oversight responsibilities was largely due to administrative turnover and the high number of new faculty joining the school during that time. The Schoolwide Action Plan (2008) was streamlined to include three areas: facilities, curriculum, and assessment. The school has followed this document since the Midterm Visit.

SSIS has made significant strides in a number of areas. Major developments at the school since the WASC 2005 Visit include: program development, curriculum development, co-curricular expansion, additional staffing and facility expansion – all in response to student growth.

**Curriculum Development.** Significant progress has been made in this area and the improvements undertaken by SSIS to establish a guaranteed curriculum have been extensive and involved the entire instructional team. Curriculum frameworks have been developed for almost all academic and specialist areas and include: the philosophy, curriculum goals, scope and sequence, content standards, some assessments, and subject-related terminology. A six year curriculum review process is in place. Teachers map their unit plans on Atlas Rubicon following the (UbD). Curriculum work at the school is ongoing.

To improve writing, the school has adopted the Six Traits of Writing as a schoolwide guiding framework. The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and Lucy Calkins units of study are utilized in the Elementary School.

**Program Growth.** Steps have also been made to expand various programs to foster improved student learning and achievement. In the Early Childhood and Elementary a coordinated and integrated literacy program has been established. A resource and Learning Support Program has begun in the Elementary and Middle Schools for students who need academic support to fully optimize their learning. While in Middle School, the academic program has been expanded with the addition of World Language offerings in Mandarin and Spanish. Outside the classroom, both the Middle and High School have developed *Week Without Walls* curricular program

In the High School, in addition to the AP program begun in 2007, SSIS is in the beginning stages of implementing the IB Diploma Program for grades 11 and 12. This program will run concurrently with the AP courses.

**Co-curricular Expansion.** In co-curricular areas, activities have been augmented to better serve the needs of students within the school. In 2010-2011, an inter-scholastic sports program for students in grades 3-5 was implemented. It includes basketball, netball, soccer and swimming.

**Additional Staffing.** New faculty positions have been established to further support the academic, social and emotional development of students. Counselors and a part-time Psychologist have been added, and serve as a resource for both the instructional faculty and parents. In Elementary School, for grades 1-5, a Literacy Coordinator was hired to develop the literacy program.

**Student Growth.** Enrollment for grades EC3 to grade 12 has substantially increased from 397 students in 2006 to 761 in March 2011.

**Facility Growth.** As the school's student numbers have increased, the school has provided new facilities that are safe, secure, and educationally appropriate. There have been three major construction projects that include: in 2008 the Tsien Elementary building, in 2009 the cafeteria and library enlargement, and in 2010 the High School and administrative complex.

● **Discuss how the school though its Action Plan has accomplished each of the critical areas for follow-up, including the impact on student learning.**

Previous critical areas for follow-up from the WASC Visiting Committees have, in large measure, been addressed. The Visiting Committee in 2005 provided SSIS with seven recommendations to support the school's ongoing improvement. The areas dealt with the critical area of curriculum development and establishing a guaranteed curriculum, together with the development of assessments (both external and internal) that assess the learning outcomes. Below are summary comments regarding the issues that were addressed.

**Recommendation 1: Curricular terminology must be defined in order to ensure that all faculty members have a common language as they work toward the vision and definition of the curriculum and how it will be used**

The school produced in 2010 *A Curriculum and Professional Development Handbook* that outlines and systematizes the curriculum practices of the school. These include the establishment of a curriculum framework for each subject area, the UbD template for unit development and the textbook selection process. The curriculum framework, adopted for each discipline, includes: a philosophy statement, curriculum goals, scope and sequence, content standards, some assessments, and subject-related terminology. Teachers utilize Atlas curriculum mapping system when writing their units.

**Recommendation 2: Curriculum standards and the related assessments must be adopted/developed as a top priority.**

Developing a well articulated and vertically aligned curriculum in the core content areas has been a high priority for the school, with the curriculum development work led by the Curriculum Director. Standards and benchmarks have been adopted for the majority of subject areas and approval for use obtained from state and national curriculum frameworks. Teachers have made progress in creating assessments, following the UbD model, that include real world performance tasks. These are additional to existing paper and pencil assessments.

A curriculum review cycle was implemented in 2008 to facilitate ongoing examination, analysis and action within each subject area. The Department Heads, Principals, and Curriculum Director meet on a quarterly basis to review units and progress in curriculum development. In 2010-1011, K-12 departments met six times during the year to discuss vertical articulation.

This recommendation was considered to be the most critical by the Visiting Committee and the school has demonstrated commitment and focus to this ongoing work.

**Recommendation 3: The school needs to define and identify best pedagogical practices and materials that support the beliefs at SSIS in order to provide the highest possibility of classroom practice.**

In the past four years SSIS has focused upon developing understanding in the areas of unit planning, writing, and differentiation. In 2010, the administrators formalized a professional growth and goal setting process that targets four main schoolwide instructional goals: differentiation, technology integration, professional learning communities, and curriculum alignment. The administration has not yet put a system in place that identifies the changes in learning and classroom practices that have resulted in response to these initiatives.

Internal workshops at SSIS in the last four years have focused upon: 6+1 Traits Writing, Literate Response in the Classroom, Critical Friends, Assessment and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom. SSIS has hosted three EARCOS workshops, two on *Differentiated Instruction* led by Bill and Ochan Powell and another on *Understanding By Design* presented by Jay McTighe.

**Recommendation 4: Longitudinal student achievement data needs to be collected, disaggregated and analyzed annually.**

In 2010, SSIS adopted the Northwest Evaluation Association's 'Measures of Academic Progress' (MAP) standardized tests for grades 3-10, for the purpose of informing instructional practices. Departments and grade level teams review and analyze MAP data twice a year immediately following the testing.

Additional work is needed in the area of assessment analysis, so that the students' results (from various assessments) can be systematically used to inform instruction for the purpose of enhancing learning. Assessment development is important, at the same time assessments are of limited value unless the students' assessment results are used to direct learning.

The school is in the initial stage of implementing the ongoing analysis of assessment results to inform instruction. As an initial step teachers and administrators have begun the process of developing SMART goals in response to the MAP 2010 results. To date, systems are not yet in place that allow for the ongoing analysis of assessment results to guide instruction. The school has identified that further work is needed in this area and this is outlined in the Schoolwide Action Plan.

**Recommendation 5: A standardized testing program needs to be implemented.**

The school has implemented an external testing program that includes a range of assessments. In High School, the SAT I and SAT II are offered throughout the year to college-bound juniors and seniors. All students in grades 10 and 11 take the PSAT in October. Each year all students in grades 3-12 take the WrAP assessments.

Following a successful pilot, the school has put in place the MAP standardized tests in language usage, reading and mathematics. These assessments occur twice a year, for grades 3-5. Use of the International Schools' Assessment (ISA) has been discontinued.

**Recommendation 6: A timeline that will expedite the development and implementation of the curriculum and assessment programs needs to be established.**

SSIS implemented a timeline and has made significant progress on the development of a guaranteed curriculum with associated assessments. As the school moves forward, an area of concern is how to create a more systematic administration of the various external and internal assessments so the results can be used to inform instruction and increase student achievement.

**Recommendation 7: One comprehensive and specific plan should be developed that knits together all of the school's initiatives, such as, facilities, curriculum and governance etc.**

The 2005 WASC Visiting Committee expressed concern that the various action plans within the school needed to be streamlined into a single and coherent Schoolwide Action Plan. The school accomplished this recommendation.

Since 2005 the Schoolwide Action Plan has been reviewed and revised on an annual basis at the school's master planning meeting. This is organized by the school administration in collaboration with the Board of Directors and facilitated by an outside consultant.

**Five additional recommendations were added in the WASC Midterm Report (2008)**

**Recommendation 8: Narrow the scope of the Action Plan to curriculum/ instruction, assessment, and facilities**

The school has completed this recommendation as evidenced by the Schoolwide Action Plan.

**Recommendation 9: Establish a formal evaluation system for all employees**

SSIS has implemented a coherent evaluation system for teachers based on Charlotte Danielson's model. The school utilizes a slightly modified set of Danielson's six domains.

Based on their years of employment at SISS, teachers are in a formal or informal evaluation cycle. In a teacher's first and second year, he/she has one formal observation per year. The major components of the evaluation system include: the professional goal setting, classroom observations and summative evaluation, and conference. At the end of the school year, each teacher completes a self-appraisal. The administrator contributes a summative narrative to the self-appraisal form. At the feedback meeting, between the administrator and teacher, future goals are also identified for application in the new school year.

Since 2008, all Vietnamese staff members are annually evaluated by their supervisors using a standard evaluation instrument.

**Recommendation 10: Continue to raise literacy expectations at each grade level with the school goal of graduating students equipped to excel in a rigorous college prep program**

In the Elementary School, a Literacy Coordinator was hired in 2008 to support faculty and administration in strengthening students' literacy learning. Since 2008, under the guidance of the Literacy Coordinator, a program has been developed that draws on the work on numerous leaders in the field of literacy. The language arts evidence shows that students are experiencing a rich language-learning program and print-rich environment in the classroom supported by Lucy Calkins units of study. In the Middle School, literacy is embedded within the humanities program that combines both social studies and language arts. At the same time there is a continued need for work in literacy and writing to enhance student learning as substantiated by the students' assessment results from the Writing Assessment Program (WrAP).

**Recommendation 10: Review the need to establish a more comprehensive Schoolwide discipline program at all levels.**

SSIS has developed a comprehensive Student Code of Conduct to address the need for a clear and consistent discipline policy. The code of conduct for all divisions is based on the school's Core Values and ESLRs. The Student Code is reviewed with students and used by teachers as they outline classroom expectations.

**Recommendation 11: Encourage all students to speak only English in the classroom setting**

SSIS has adopted a Language Policy that articulates the philosophy and expectations regarding language use by students across the grades.

It is clear that the last three years have been a period of steady growth and improvement for SSIS. Many changes, consistent with the WASC recommendations have been put in place by SSIS. Guiding the school's development and improvement process has been the Schoolwide Action Plan. This document has provided the framework for the school leadership to determine priorities of the school that best strengthen effective learning and achievement of students.

## CHAPTER III: SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- **Comment on the school's self-study process with respect to the parameters and accuracy.**

It is clear that the last three years have been a period of steady growth and improvement for the school. SSIS has kept clear the difference between their Core Values and ESLRs (which remain the same) and the operating strategies (that continually adapt). The school has adapted to many changes, necessitated by ongoing expansion. These developments, associated with ongoing improvement, have been effectively instituted and managed by the school's administration.

- **The involvement and collaboration of school and community members in the self-study.**

SSIS has demonstrated commitment to conducting a thorough self-study using the WASC self-study criteria. The self-study process resulted in the involvement and collaboration of all of the various stakeholders. The Leadership Team and the Focus Group leaders provided direction and guidance to the self-study process. The Focus Groups included faculty, students, and parents. SSIS looked at a variety of sources including surveys, performance test data, attendance, and discipline records. Throughout the process, the school has endeavored to present an accurate reflection of the school's program.

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

The school has identified its purpose through the mission statement, Core Values, and ESLRs. It has clearly articulated what students are to achieve through the EC3-12 trans-disciplinary learning outcomes (ESLRs) and the grade-level benchmarks established in most subject areas. Great effort has been made to embed the ESLRs within the curricular and co-curricular programs.

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

The external test results indicate a continuing need to focus on increasing students' academic achievement in the areas of critical reading and writing. While, for the most part, SSIS students tend to score well above the mean in mathematics, they are average or slightly below in reading and writing. The need to focus on these two areas was reinforced in 2010 when SSIS' reading score on the SAT Critical Reading Assessment was below the mean. The next step also includes a sustained focus upon using the students' assessment results to routinely direct and enhance learning in the classroom.

- **The development of a Schoolwide Action Plan that integrates subject area program and support plans to address identified growth needs.**

Since 2005, guiding the school's development and improvement process has been the Schoolwide Action Plan. This document has provided the framework for the school leadership to determine priorities of the school that strengthen learning.

The Action Plan that is now in place for 2011 is broad-based and comprehensive. The Schoolwide Action Plan reflects a two-pronged focus. It is a combination of both the growth areas identified in the self-study and critical issues developed during strategic planning, with the Leadership Team identifying six broad school improvement goals. Direct responsibility for the oversight and implementation of the Schoolwide Action Plan will continue to be assumed by the administrative team, led by the Head of School.

## **CATEGORY A. ORGANIZATION FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

### **A1. School Purpose Criterion**

- **To what extent has the school established a clear statement of purpose that reflect the beliefs and philosophy of the institution?**
- **To what extent is the purpose defined further by adopted expected schoolwide learning results that form the basis of the educational program for every student?**

The articulation of SSIS's mission, which identifies the purpose of the school, and the Core Values reflected in the ESLRs, is the result of a Board of Directors planning process initiated in 2002 and culminating during the first WASC self-study completed in 2004.

The SSIS mission is clear. The school exists to provide "a college preparatory school committed to the intellectual and personal development of each student in preparation for a purposeful life as a global citizen." The Core Values reflected in the ESLRs include: Academic Excellence, Balance in Life, Sense of Self, Dedicated Service and Respect for All.

These foundational statements are at the very core of the focus and subsequent activity of SSIS. The mission and ESLRs represent the lens through which decision-making and professional practice is aligned on a daily basis. The SSIS mission and the ESLRs can be consistently found in publications produced by the school, appear in prominent locations on the school website and are posted in classrooms and offices across the campus to both sustain and promote clarity, consistency and coherence with the mission and Core Values.

The ESLRs are embedded in the culture of SSIS and the faculty has developed age-appropriate rubrics for students to self-assess their progress in meeting each ESLR. Each division (Early Childhood/Elementary, Middle and High) is currently engaged in a process for determining how to best report on the level of student progress in achieving each of the ESLRs. Once this process has been successfully completed and SSIS is able to give evidence of student learning aligned with each of the ESLRs, the school will be in an excellent position to further celebrate the accomplishments. The qualities and characteristics, that are difficult to measure, will be made transparent in a manner that will better serve both students and the school.

The SSIS planning process initiated in 2005 has developed in a manner that now provides a more inclusive approach to school planning. The current strategic planning model uses a focus group methodology that annually provides for a high degree of input from all SSIS stakeholder groups. This planning model enables the school to draw upon a committed and talented school community for the express purpose of developing a comprehensive plan which continues to guide the SSIS commitment to continuous school improvement.

### **A2. Governance Criterion**

- **To what extent does the governing authority adopt policies which are consistent with the school purpose and support the achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results for the school?**
- **To what extent does the governing authority delegate implementation of these policies to the professional staff?**
- **To what extent does the governing authority monitor results?**

SSIS is licensed to operate through its parent company and owner, Phu My Hung Corporation (PMHC), based on an agreement with the government of Vietnam. Although the license held by PMHC is proprietary, SSIS operates as a not-for-profit

school with all income and revenue being dedicated to support and advance the mission and Core Values of SSIS.

The Board of Directors of PMHC is responsible for appointing two or three of its members to serve on the SSIS Board of Directors. Responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the school is delegated to the Head of School and members of the professional staff.

The school license defines the role and responsibilities of the governing Board of Directors. In practical terms, the Board provides general oversight to ensure compliance with relevant Vietnamese laws and ensures that SSIS operates in a manner that is consistent with the school's mission. The Board approves the annual operating budget, major capital expenditures for construction and addresses recruitment and terms of employment of the Head of School. The Board, through the approval of the annual budget, considers recommendations from the Head of School on compensation and benefits, staffing, educational planning and all other aspects of the operation of the school.

The Board has developed an operational model that results in annual planning meetings with members of the SSIS community, to include members of the administrative team, members of the faculty and staff and members of the broader parent community. These planning meetings are professionally facilitated and serve as the primary opportunity for the Board of Directors to receive input from the community served by the school. Comments during the team visit reflected that this governance model is serving the school quite well.

### **A3. School Leadership Criterion**

- **To what extent does the school leadership make decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energies of the school on student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results?**
- **To what extent does the school leadership empower the staff?**
- **To what extent does the school leadership encourage commitment, participation and shared accountability for student learning?**

SSIS has a documented leadership structure with defined responsibilities and relationships among a cadre of professionally competent, and dedicated administrators. There is an emerging commitment to a distributed leadership model which is empowering both team leaders and department heads to assume increasing levels of responsibility for decisions that directly impact day to day collaboration, planning and program delivery.

Through a collaborative approach to planning, design, development and implementation, the Head of School, Division Principals, Associate Principals, Curriculum Director, ICT Director and faculty have made significant progress in further developing curriculum, assessment and instruction, aligned with best practices, since the mid-term WASC visit in 2008.

The school leadership has made decisions and aligned financial resources in a manner that demonstrates a commitment to student success in achieving the learning outcomes reflected in the adopted curricula and the ESLRs. Access to an increased number of supervised and organized activities now enable students to expand their experiences beyond the scope of their core academic experiences.

The commitment to Academic Excellence is apparent in both program and facility development decisions that have relatively recently been made by the school leadership. The implementation of the IB diploma program in 2010 provides students with yet another academically rigorous program to facilitate their growth and development. The implementation of a 1:1 laptop program to bridge the globally developing digital divide will enable students to acquire and develop the knowledge

base and skill set required to successfully function in a 21st century work environment. The commitment to creating physical spaces that promote and extend learning is represented in the construction of a new High School.

Particular attention is being given at SSIS to schoolwide participation and shared accountability for student learning. Cross-divisional collaboration is enhanced through the use of Atlas Rubicon curriculum/unit planning mapping. The sustained commitment to the use of this particular planning tool will enable the school to create increased levels of consistency in the identification of the learning outcomes, assessment and delivery of the educational program.

The introduction of Critical Friends protocols is serving to further develop the professional learning community within SSIS in ways that are empowering the faculty to discuss professional practice in the context of improved student learning. The further development of vibrant professional learning communities will serve to further support the student achievement of the schoolwide learning results.

#### **A4. Staff Criterion**

- **To what extent are the school leadership and staff qualified for their assigned responsibilities?**
- **To what extent are the school leadership and staff committed to the school's purpose?**
- **To what extent does the school leadership and staff engage in ongoing professional development that promotes student learning?**

SSIS administrators, faculty and staff are professionally qualified for the positions they hold with all but a few teachers possessing a current professional credential/license/certificate. Seventy percent of the instructional and administrative staff have earned advanced degrees. The faculty and staff are committed to the SSIS mission and Core Values and demonstrate an understanding of and a strong commitment to these values.

The annual recruiting process is focused on identifying and attracting professional educators who are aligned with the mission and Core Values of the school. Prior to formal interviews, candidates receive comprehensive information about the school for the express purpose of seeking to assure there is an appropriate professional alignment between the candidate and the purpose and Core Values of the school. The interviewing process is intentionally focused on ensuring the "right fit" prior to making an offer for employment.

SSIS provides a wide range of opportunities for growth and development that are delivered on site, within the EARCOS region and at international conferences. These professional development opportunities are systematically aligned with the priorities of the school and the needs of the faculty and staff members.

Administrators recognize the importance of linking professional development offerings with the specific needs of professionals to more effectively and successfully promote student learning. They have created a process for ensuring the alignment between resource allocation and development of the knowledge base and skill set that will contribute to the promotion of student learning. At the same time, outside consultants are helping to develop the envisioned professional learning community critical to student success at SSIS.

#### **A5. School Environment Criterion**

- **To what extent does the school have a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school's purpose?**

- **To what extent is the school environment characterized by a respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student?**

SSIS is active in creating a healthy, nurturing environment for all students, faculty and staff that is aligned with the school's mission and Core Values. There is a clear recognition that the quality of staff employed at the school is paramount to creating a nurturing and caring environment conducive to high levels of student learning. The SSIS professional instructional staff "is at the front line in promoting the values and attitudes that foster self-confidence, respect, trust and high expectations."

Safety has been given a high priority in the daily operation of SSIS. Twenty-four hour campus security is provided by the Phu My Hung Corporation and full-time security personnel monitor the campus.

The school culture reflects the professionalism, trust, caring and respect for differences inherent in the stated Core Values of SSIS. There is focused effort to make all members of the community welcomed and valued and there is a number of activities throughout the year that are intended to promote a stronger sense of community at SSIS.

#### **A6. Reporting Student Progress Criterion**

- **To what extent does the school leadership and staff regularly assess student progress toward accomplishing the school's expected schoolwide learning results?**
- **To what extent does the school leadership and staff report student progress to the rest of the school community?**

Individual student progress is reported at regular intervals to parents. The administration and faculty assess student progress toward accomplishing the learning outcomes aligned with the adopted curricula and ESLRs and these results are annually reported to the school community. The faculty, students, parents and administration are reviewing and validating the ESLR rubrics for K-12 and these documents will provide students, parents and faculty with a common language. The use of the ESLR rubrics is creating common reporting protocols across each division. SSIS recognizes that as the ESLRs are further integrated into the school curriculum, the means for assessing and reporting on student development in these areas will be possible in a more comprehensive manner.

Reporting of student learning progress takes a number of forms. Traditional report cards are issued on a regular basis, web based student progress is now made available to parents via Power School, Parent-teacher conferences and student-led conferences further compliment the methods for sharing student learning, growth and development. Reports are also generated through points of internal and external student achievement. These reports are not limited to but include: Development Reading Assessment, Six Traits Writing, Scholastic Aptitude Test and International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement examination results.

#### **A7. School Improvement Process Criterion**

- **To what extent does the school leadership facilitate school improvement which is driven by plans of action that will enhance quality learning for all students?**
- **To what extent does the school leadership have school community support and involvement?**
- **To what extent does the school leadership effectively guide the work of the school?**

- **To what extent does the school leadership provide for accountability through monitoring of the Schoolwide Action Plan?**

SSIS facilitates school improvement through offering a variety of opportunities for faculty and administration to be actively engaged in the daily work of continuous school improvement. Additionally, the parent community is invited to collaborate as partners in the process of improving what takes place at school in promoting the learning of students.

Sustaining focus on plans of action to promote student learning can be a challenge during times of significant growth, campus development and change. SSIS is making a concerted effort to sustain a focus on learning while addressing the myriad of challenges associated with designing and implementing systems that will serve the school well into the future.

Monitoring progress and ensuring alignment and consistency in identified priorities established through the planning process has been challenging, given the rapid growth of SSIS over the past several years. However, the faculty and administration have demonstrated consistent efforts to align programs, systems and structures that will successfully lead to high levels of student achievement of the ESLRs and student learning outcomes embedded in the adopted curricula.

#### **Areas of Strength for Organization for Student Learning Category**

1. The school has a strategic planning process that is inclusive, allows for an annual review of progress and leads to timely updating of the Schoolwide Action Plan.
2. The Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs) are derived from the school's Core Values, which have earned support from across the school community.
3. The school leadership and professional staff share a commitment to professional development for the purpose of developing the knowledge and skills that contribute to more effective teaching.
4. The administration, since 2008, has proactively demonstrated a commitment to addressing rapidly expanding student enrollment and the changes that are associated with this growth.
5. The SSIS School Board has demonstrated extraordinary vision, leadership, and a clear understanding of their role in the further development and overall operation of the school.

**Key Issues for Organization for Student Learning** (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

1. The faculty and administration, in order to ensure that student learning remains at the center of the focus for SSIS should consider developing a tighter alignment between the school mission, Core Values (ESLRs), adopted curriculum, use of comprehensive assessment strategies and implementation of instruction that reflects "best practices".
2. The faculty and administration should commit to further improving the quality of communication with parents, particularly among non-English speakers. Success in this area will encourage increased levels of parent involvement, provide greater clarity about student progress, and inform parents of the school purpose, learning outcomes (ESLRs) and future directions.

3. The faculty and administration need to develop a comprehensive crisis response plan that articulates and communicates clear procedures in the event of a range of emergency events.

**Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

- Self-study document
- School documents
- Focus group meetings
- Classroom observations
- Interviews
- Individual conversations with Board, administration, faculty and students

## **CATEGORY B. CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT**

### **B1. What Students Learn Criterion**

- **To what extent does the school provide a challenging, coherent and relevant curriculum for each student that fulfills the school's purpose and results in student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results through successful completion of any course of study offered?**

**Introduction:** SSIS faculty has aggressively pursued the challenge of articulating the school's curriculum through the development of curriculum frameworks using the UbD (backwards design) philosophy. This activity has taken place to a significant extent since the school's last self-study in 2005. The Rubicon Atlas curriculum mapping web-based system has also been used in the efforts to bring about the desired changes. Curriculum frameworks from various U.S states have been used as models, but a variety of international sources have been used to incorporate a broader worldview within the school's curricular offerings. A number of commonalities have resulted from the curriculum articulation and alignment, such as common vocabulary and format for curriculum mapping, similar standards with related benchmarks, essential learnings and understandings, and common assessments. In conjunction with the articulation and alignment efforts has been the development and implementation of the IB Diploma Program. Additional curriculum developments have included the refinement of the scopes and sequences for science, social studies, math, and world languages. Academic rigor has been increased in grades 6-10 to better enable students to be successful in Advanced Placement and IB courses during their junior and senior High School years.

**Current Educational Research and Thinking:** To ensure an appropriate approach to the articulation and alignment efforts, all teachers received the basic Rubicon Atlas training. Two new writing programs were implemented beginning in the intermediate elementary grades and built upon at each grade level through High School. The models used are research-based and the faculty monitors the effectiveness of the programs through a variety of assessments on a regular basis.

**Learning Results Complementing Standards:** The completion by faculty of basic Rubicon Atlas training in 2004 led to the development of curriculum maps for the majority of core subject areas. In 2005, the addition of ESLRs into the Rubicon System assisted faculty in establishing connections between the ESLRs and the core subject areas. Additional links were made with the ESLRs and the IB Learner Profile in 2009. The school's self-study examined and identified the types of assessments used in all of the subject areas and determined that, in general, assessments lead toward progress in the attainment of the ESLR Academic Excellence. However, it was also found that the connection between assessment and non-academic ESLRs was not explicitly stated in the school's curriculum or being addressed in the classroom or schoolwide as a whole. The result was that ESLRs were added to Rubicon Atlas in 2005 and can be linked directly to specific assignments and assessments. Although the non-academic ESLRs are addressed at each grade level informally and in a subjective manner, the development of the K-12 continuum for each non-academic ESLR will continue to be revised, communicated, and implemented in the coming year at each grade level in order to address these ESLRs in a more formal, objective way.

**Curricular Standards:** The school has adopted content standards from various states and professional organizations in the U.S. Several professional development activities have focused on research-based teaching practices.

**Student Work — Engagement in Learning:** Teachers at SSIS have been using research-based knowledge regarding instructional strategies and student learning modalities to design and implement a variety of learning experiences. These

learning experiences engage students in high level critical thinking skills that are linked with the school's purpose and goals for student learning (ESLRs). Professional development activities have provided faculty with added knowledge and skills that have assisted them in addressing the need to correlate standards and the ESLRs. The faculty recognizes the need for further collaboration time to ensure curricular alignment with standards and ESLRs and the need to ensure consistency across grade levels and courses.

**Acceptable Student Achievement:** The school offers a variety of standardized assessments during the school year to assess whether or not students are achieving at an acceptable level. Most standardized testing focuses on areas of mathematics, reading, language, and writing. Test results are generally in line with scores with other schools in Asia that have similar student demography and language background. For the most part, SSIS students tend to score well above the mean in mathematics and average or slightly below in reading and writing.

**Curricular Review, Revision, and Evaluation:** The use of standardized assessment data to improve instruction and enhance learning is a major growth area for the school and a goal of the instructional leadership. The school belongs to a consortium of schools in Asia working together to better use standardized test results to review, evaluate, and revise curriculum and instruction.

**Accessibility of all Students to Curriculum:** Students have access to a rigorous international curriculum. In 2006, SSIS offered Advanced Placement (AP) classes to students in grades 11 and 12. The administration allowed all students who requested to do so to enroll in AP classes. With the change in policy allowing greater accessibility, AP class enrollment nearly tripled and AP exams increased five-fold. The consequence of this greater accessibility was that some students did not have the prerequisite skills, content or motivation to succeed. The school has reviewed the "open enrollment" policy with the aim of continuing to encourage student accessibility while at the same time strengthening prerequisite requirements to ensure an appropriate level of student experience and aptitude necessary for the class.

**Policies — Rigorous, Relevant, Coherent Curriculum:** There are policies and procedures in place to implement and monitor the curriculum. Curriculum frameworks from various U.S states have been adopted, but a variety of international sources have been used to incorporate a broader worldview within the school's curricular offerings. A number of commonalities have resulted from the curriculum articulation and alignment, such as common vocabulary and format for curriculum mapping, similar standards with related benchmarks, essential learnings and understandings, and common assessments.

**Articulation and Follow-up Studies:** The school is working on increasing articulation within and between grade levels.

## **B2. How Students Learn Criterion**

- **To what extent does the professional staff use research-based knowledge about teaching and learning?**
- **To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students at a high level of learning consistent with the school's purpose and expected schoolwide learning results (student learner outcomes)?**

**Introduction:** The faculty uses research-based information regarding teaching and learning to develop and implement a variety of learning experiences for students. These experiences engage students in ways that encourage high levels of thinking and are consistent with the school's mission, purpose, goals and the ESLRs. The

professional staff uses research-based knowledge to support teaching and student learning. Current areas under study include ESL, differentiation, literacy across the curriculum, technology integration, and IBD preparation.

**Research-based Knowledge:** Research-based teaching practices have been the focus of in-house professional development workshops. Beginning in 2004, several workshops and other professional development activities have been offered in such areas as ESL in the Mainstream, best practices in developing units of study using Understanding by Design Framework, Differentiated Instruction, and Assessment and Grading in a Differentiated Classroom. Literacy across the curriculum at all grade levels has been targeted as an area for schoolwide improvement. Technology training has been a focus in the Middle School and High School with some efforts in this regard being made at the elementary level.

**Planning Processes:** In the past two years, faculty and administration have been involved within their divisions and departments in the planning and development of varied and differentiated approaches to assessment in their subject areas. The school has developed rubrics in writing at all grade levels. These rubrics, however, are being modified to better meet grade level needs. In 2009, the faculty collaboratively planned and established a K-12 continuum for each ESLR with progressing of performance indicators appropriate for each of the school's divisions.

**Professional Collaboration:** During the past school year, the instructional leadership identified several instructional areas to focus upon. The areas identified for study were differentiation, technology, English as a Second Language, literacy, and needs/support. These workshops were helpful as they informed faculty of current best practices in these areas of study.

**Professional Development:** In 2010, a review of the staff development policy and procedures has facilitated closer alignment of professional development with schoolwide goals. The adoption of schoolwide Professional Growth Goals for faculty in 2010-2011 focuses on personal development with school and curriculum goals.

**Challenging and Varied Instructional Strategies:** The school has identified differentiation as one of their primary schoolwide goals for the 2010-2011 school year. Earlier this school year a workshop was conducted on Assessment in the Differentiated Classroom. The faculty recognizes the need for differentiation, a concept that is being addressed to varying degrees throughout the school. There is an acknowledged need for clarification of schoolwide expectations in the area of differentiation. The Instructional Focus Group identified the need for further differentiation for high achieving students in the form of a Gifted and Talented Education initiative across all levels of the school. Additional support is needed at the Middle and High School levels for students with learning needs and for ESL students.

**Technological Integration:** The integration of technology at a developmentally appropriate level is viewed as a strength at the school, especially at the middle and High School levels. The High School has one laptop computer per student program that should facilitate the school's technology goals. Having Technology Resource Facilitators at the divisional level would allow for a more systematic approach for the integration of technology.

**Evidence of Results based upon Challenging Learning Experiences:** The school's self-study provides several examples of challenging experience in various subject areas. Art, for example, is offered at all grade levels with increasing course options and difficulty levels. Students are introduced to a wide range of media, methods, and practice skills and techniques in drawing, painting, sculpting, painting, textiles, and ceramics. Sketchbooks are used by Middle School students to explore ideas and record their creative processes. The High School art program offers a wide array of options, including AP and IB art. A variety of assessments are used,

including portfolios that are used at each level to highlight student development of skills and processes, thereby showcasing students' identities with regard to art preferences and styles. Music and dance are also available, so students can develop skills in those areas and challenge their creative interests. The English/Language Arts curriculum follows the New Jersey Language Arts Literacy standards and covers the development of skill development in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing. The scope and sequence of the curriculum is articulated from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Students develop English/Language Arts skills along a continuum where they learn by applying what they know to reading and writing. Formative assessments in the middle and upper grades are used to gauge understanding of units of study and allows teachers to expand the depth or breadth of a unit based on students' performance. There is an emphasis on meta-cognitive learning. Once summative assessments are graded and returned to students, they are asked to reflect on what they did well and how they need to improve their content knowledge, style, writing, reading, viewing, or speaking skills. Similar patterns are followed in other courses, such as science and math, where students are challenged to excel and to use higher level cognitive skills.

**Perception of Students:** To assess the perceptions of students, the school used a questionnaire that encompassed four broad areas, divided into 62 specific questions. The broad areas surveyed were: Quality of the Instructional Program; Support for Student Learning; School Climate/Environment for Learning; and Student/School Relationships. In each category, there were very high levels of student satisfaction indicated. Question 50 asked, "Do you know and understand the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results?" On a 10 point scale (A through J) with A being the highest level, 98% of the students marked A and B, with more than 60% marking A.

**Student Needs:** Teachers employ a variety of strategies to facilitate students' acquisition of skills associated with the subjects they are learning. An example of this is student learning of reading skills such as predicting, inferring, analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating. These skills are learned by application of reading strategies such as annotating, close reading, and graphic interpretation to assist students in actively engaging with the text. The librarian assists classroom teachers to integrate information strategies through collaboration on units of work and relevant topics. Students have the opportunity to collaborate on activities during class as well as before and after school. New library on-line services have rendered library materials more accessible for students' reading and research needs.

**Student Use of Resources:** Teachers have recognized that as they engage students in the learning process there is a need for high-quality resources that will contribute to student successes. Significant amounts of capital have been allocated to the improvement of a variety of resources, especially in the areas of literacy and science. The collection of books in the library to support the literacy program has increased significantly. There has also been an increase of high-quality leveled books in classroom libraries. In science, each teacher has their own Full Option Science System kit for each unit being taught. To support learner-centered strategies that address the diverse needs of students, the school has implemented the SSIS Learning Portal. It provides an on-line venue where students and teachers can interact, create, and collaborate. The learning portal comprises a Moodle, wiki, and blogs servers, and integration with several Google applications. This Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure has increased substantially over the past three years. Surveys indicate high levels of teacher and student belief (80%+) that they have access to a variety of resources to help them succeed in their learning.

### **B3. How Assessment Is Used Criterion**

*(Note: Include comments on the degree of acceptable progress by all students toward clearly defined expected schoolwide learning results, academic standards, and other institutional and/or governing authority expectations.)*

- **To what extent are the assessment results the basis for measurement of each student's progress toward the expected schoolwide learning results (student learner outcomes)?**
- **To what extent are the assessment results the basis for regular evaluation and improvement of curriculum and instruction?**
- **To what extent are the assessment results the basis for the allocation of resources?**

**Introduction:** SSIS policy states that the main purpose of assessment is to support and promote student learning. The school's assessment goals include the improvement of student learning, the collection of information that students can use for self-evaluation, as well as the communication of achievement to all concerned stakeholders. The variety of assessments used by the school is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's instructional programs and provide direction for ongoing planning, development, and implementation of learning programs and activities.

**Appropriate Assessment Strategies:** There is a consistent use of Rubicon Atlas that allows teachers to identify clear learning targets and directly link assessments to standards. Teachers are expected to generate assessments that are transparent and objective, comprehensive and varied, and allow equal opportunity for success of all learners. For the past five years, the ESLRs have been added to Rubicon Atlas and can be linked directly to specific assignments and assessments. In 2009, the IB Profile was added to Rubicon Atlas. Currently, non-academic ESLRs are addressed at each grade level informally and subjectively. Plans are developing that will provide for a K-12 continuum for each non-academic ESLR to be addressed in a more formal, objective way.

**Correlation:** In the past two years there has been the development of varied and differentiated approaches to assessment for the various subjects. Significant development has been focused on the types of common assessments that will consistently be used within grade levels and same courses to help ensure equitable learning opportunities and grading criteria that show student progress. The school has developed rubrics for writing in grades K-12, but these rubrics are being modified at each grade level to meet the grade level needs. SSIS has established a K-12 continuum for each ESLR with progression of performance indicators appropriate for each division.

**Changes/Decisions based on Assessment Data:** At the elementary level, assessment results are used to reflect and report to parents about students' achievement levels and they are used diagnostically. As a result of the diagnostic results, instructional practices may be modified as well as re-teaching activities. Data collected through assessments is used for the planning of objectives and learning activities. At the elementary level, it was determined that the common standardized assessments were used predominately as assessment tools rather than to drive instruction. In the middle and upper grades, assessment results are used primarily as a guide for reporting grades. There are assessment rubrics that are used across the Middle School to ensure accurate communication and consistent feedback to parents, students, and teachers. At the High School level, teachers review and evaluate methods of assessment on a regular basis. Various exams and standardized tests are administered at specified times through the year. Decisions,

such as the allocation of resources, is based on the yearly cyclical curriculum review process, which means that one subject area is allocated a majority of funds for that year. The school's self-study concluded that a review of assessment practices will help strengthen the link between allocation of resources and assessment results.

**Student Work and Other Assessments:** The school offers a variety of standardized assessments during the school year to assess whether or not students are achieving at an acceptable level. Most standardized testing focuses on areas of mathematics, reading, language, and writing. Test results are generally in line with scores with other schools in Asia that have similar student demography and language background. For the most part, SSIS students tend to score well above the mean in mathematics and average or slightly below in reading and writing.

**Student Feedback:** Student feedback comes primarily from teacher-made and standardized test materials and how well they are achieving on these tests. In preparation for this self-study, students responded to a Student Opinion Inventory that contained 62 questions in four general areas: Quality of the Instructional Program; Support for Student Learning; School Climate/Environment for Learning; and Student/School Relationships. The self-study states that teachers and students had a satisfaction rate with the school's technology offerings and infrastructure of around 70% four years ago. The current self-study now shows a satisfaction rate of around 85%.

**Teacher Monitoring:** Various exams and standardized tests are administered at specified times through the year. Decisions, such as the allocation of resources, revision of teaching strategies, and the need for review of curriculum and standards, is based on the yearly curriculum review process. The Rubicon Atlas mapping system and Understanding by Design (UbD) framework has provided a format for curriculum mapping, identified common standards and benchmarks that have been linked to common assessments. By monitoring assessment results, teachers are able to determine the degree to which students are mastering the standards that are being addressed in the various subject areas.

### **Areas of Strength for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Category**

1. The schoolwide ESLR review is a compilation of input from all stakeholders; ESLRs are successfully embedded within the curriculum and integrated within the classroom.
2. Understanding by Design (UbD) has been successfully implemented as a framework to provide alignment among the written, assessed and taught curriculum with the school providing appropriate training to support UbD development. The school has demonstrated commitment to this process on an ongoing basis.
3. Rubicon Atlas web-based system has been adopted and enables teachers to archive and analyze curriculum maps for alignment with the written, assessed and taught curriculum and the school has provided appropriate training to support Atlas Rubicon development.
4. Professional development at SSIS is targeted to enhance student learning and to introduce teachers to current best practices.
5. The appointment of a Literacy Coordinator to address needs in writing and reading K-5 has created coherency within the program and has the potential to increase learning at SSIS.

6. The school network infrastructure has recently been upgraded to support a broad range of learning and instructional opportunities for students and teachers.

**Key Issues for Curriculum and Instruction (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students**

1. The faculty and administration should examine the provision of further focused collaborative time and professional support for curricular alignment and unit mapping. This will support consistency and coherency of practice across the grade levels and within the same courses.
2. The faculty and administration should sustain their commitment to develop ways to assess the non-academic ESLRs to support the measurement of each student's attainment of the ESLRs.
3. The faculty and administration should develop a comprehensive approach for reviewing assessment results. This would likely include systematically disaggregating, analyzing and implementing data driven decisions focused on improved student learning.

**Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these and key issues include the following:**

- Self-study document
- Focus group meetings
- Classroom observations
- Student work
- School documents
- Interviews
- Individual conversations with administration, faculty and students

## **C. SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC GROWTH**

### **C1. Student Connectedness**

- **To what extent are students connected to a system of support services, activities, and opportunities at the school and within the community to meet the challenges of the curricular/co-curricular program in order to achieve the expected schoolwide learning results (schoolwide learner outcomes)?**

**Personalized Student Support:** Students are connected to a system of support services, activities and opportunities for their personal and academic growth and success at school and within the community. Available support services include admissions, counseling, psychological and academic support, ESL, tutoring, library, information technology, co-curricular activities and after school activities. In the HS, the Counselor also assists with career and university exploration and goal-setting. There is a caring environment that supports the students.

The K-12 Counselors have reviewed their program in order to more effectively meet the academic and social needs of their students. They have adopted the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) framework model and are now in a review process, with the anticipation of adopting the ASCA program that includes the following content standards for the three domains: Academic, Personal/Social and Career Development. (p 178)

The Counselors directly assist with admissions and screening, class placement, transitional issues with students and families, academic advice and placement, special services support, and social/emotional needs of students, parents and staff. SSIS admission's assessments require students to provide their previous academic records for the past 2 years, plus any recent standardized test results. In addition, all new students are assessed in reading, language, math and a writing sample. Students with learning needs that cannot be met will not be accepted.

The English as a Second Language (ESL) program supports English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolled in the ESL program. The aim of the ESL program is to acquire adequate English skills to function linguistically and culturally at Saigon South International School (SSIS) and in the mainstream classroom. (ESLCF p1). The ESL department, in collaboration with administration and teachers, developed the SSIS English as a Second Language Curriculum Framework, based on two American frameworks. The philosophy, mission, and vision were adapted from the 2007 ESOL/Bilingual Program in Montgomery County Public Schools in Rockville, Maryland. The ESL Curriculum Framework is guided by the overarching ESOL standards from the National Council of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. English Language Proficiency and benchmarks were adapted from those developed by the Michigan Department of Education. (ESLCF p 1)

Applicants with no English proficiency are normally not admitted beyond grade 5, although this is currently under review with an view to limiting admission to grade 3. ESL support is offered K-grade 10. ESL placements are based on interviews and diagnostic testing (p 19). ESL students are placed in one of the following levels: Beginning, High Beginning, Low Intermediate, or High Intermediate. The current ESL Curriculum Framework provides more details of the program, including the TESOL standards and the English Language Proficiency standards. Admission protocols and ESL exit forms are under review. (p 135)

**School Support Systems:** To meet the demands of the growing school population, the counseling department at SSIS has increased its staff in the past few years. There is now a fulltime Counselor devoted to each division, compared to previous years with only two Counselors for the whole school. Currently, there is one HS

college Counselor, one MS Counselor, one EC-ES Counselor and a part-time school psychologist (all together, three males and one female) to meet the needs of the diverse student population.

In addition, the ES has a fulltime Learning Specialist, while the MS has a 0.5 FTE Learning Specialist to address the needs of the students in grade 6-8. Learning support services are not currently in place in the HS. The MS/HS is committed to monitoring and reviewing the needs of students who may have mild learning needs. Over the next few years, SSIS needs to further review and refine the learning support staffing needs in order to support the students. (p178).

The SSIS Student Services Team is in the process of developing a framework for identifying, assessing and providing interventions for students with learning needs, based on best practices in international schools. SSIS recognizes the need to align the admissions policies with the scope of learning support provided. (p 124) There is an identified strong need for schoolwide coordination of EC-12 Support Services team to develop policies, procedures and provision of services to students.

A certified school Psychologist is employed on a part-time basis to consult with SSIS Counselors, Learning Support Specialists and administrators, as well as to provide student assessments. Speech-Language services are currently available for students on a private contractual basis between the parents and a speech/language pathologist based in Saigon. The school is currently developing an admission policy and guidelines that will assist in linking with the growth of this program.

In both the EC/ES and MS divisions, formal and informal assessments, self-reflections and learning strengths are used to identify students' strengths and areas of need for the purpose of strengthening academic functioning. Assessments are used to set goals and objectives and to assist in monitoring progress. The assessments corroborate informal classroom data and observations. Assessments, gathered by teachers and the Learning Support Specialists, provide information during SST student review meetings and parent-teacher conferences. Assessment information is also utilized to prioritize students in need of learning support and to assist in the determination whether a student is no longer in need of support by the learning support classes. It has been noted that further diagnostic and remediation resources are needed to assist in the development of the Learning Support Program.

The education of the English Language Learners is a collaborative responsibility shared by the ESL teachers and the content/classroom teachers. Structured and systematic instruction in the ESL content area, using a rigorous, standards-based ESL curriculum, supports the attainment of English language proficiency. The ESL curriculum presents an integrated approach to the four language skills that coincide with the core English Language Curriculum Framework: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition, the ESL and Learning Support teachers are involved in the testing and referral systems and ongoing communication with teachers, students and parents. Currently, the Woodcock-Munoz test is being piloted as a possible assessment for entry and exit of ESL students in the EC/ES and MS/HS levels. Also, MS/HS applicants are given teacher-developed reading and writing tests based on grade level content course requirements. ESL teachers review the results and students' files to make recommendations. (p 138) It is noted that on the current Action Plan, initiated August 2010, principals are planning to reorganize the collaborative planning time for faculty.

**Strategies Used for Student Growth/Development:** The comprehensive school counseling program from EC to grade 12 promotes the academic and personal/social development of all students. The Counselors work in partnership with teachers, specialists, principals and parents to provide a dynamic and proactive Guidance and Counseling program to support the intellectual and personal/social development of each student in preparation for a purposeful life as a global citizen. (p.131)

In the HS, the counseling program is delivered to students through a combination of individual meeting, small group and grade level presentations. Each student is issued a student portfolio that addresses the goals and objectives for a given grade level. (p.130) Students are provided access to Career Counseling throughout HS, with the annual visits of the Linden College Tours and evening presentations offered by the Counselor to parents on different evenings in three languages: Korean, Vietnamese and English. The Counselor will soon be using the software program Naviance to further enhance the support for the students. If required, the Counselor can suggest a list of available tutors for parents to contact.

The MS Counselor supports students in a variety of ways, such as group discussions, role-playing, targeted guidance lessons, cooperative learning in small groups, one-on-one individual counseling and viewing media. She attends planning meetings with the grades 6-8 teachers to identify topics and helps to choose resources that reflect the ESLRs. Advisory groups meet regularly with their designated teachers to discuss issues and join in team-building activities. The MS Student Council meets regularly with the Counselor and another MS teacher to plan Spirit days and to organize presentations on current issues that reflect the ESLRs. The students learn organization skills by keeping a planner, calendar and by accessing their class information on Moodle. (p. 130) This year the MS Counselor position is fulltime, so she is available every morning for personal counseling with students.

In the ES, the guidance and counseling curriculum is delivered through a variety of classroom presentations. In the HS, ESL students in grades 9 and 10 receive Language Arts instruction in the year-long English Language Development class which has been tailored to serve their needs. New students admitted to grades 9-10 must meet the criteria of the High Intermediate level of proficiency (according to the SSIS ESL Reference Proficiency Guide). New students admitted to grade 11 must meet the High Intermediate criteria of proficiency. No ESL support is offered at this grade level. New students admitted to grade 12 must test at the Advanced level of proficiency.

The ESL program is delivered in various models. In the EC/ES division, three full-time ESL specialists provide a flexible model of inclusion and pull-out instruction from K-5. ESL students in Grades 2-5 receive additional English language instruction tailored to their level of English language proficiency from an ESL teacher. Students at a beginning level of English are accepted from pre-K to Grade 5. In the MS, ESL students are supported in a sheltered-immersion model, which provides support while simultaneously immersing the student in the mainstream population. ESL students in Grades 6-8 receive instruction appropriate for their level of English language proficiency in ESL resource classes taught by an ESL teacher as well as support provided by the ESL teacher for Language Arts and other content area classes.

SSIS has shown progress since the last WASC visit by including readers' and writers' workshops, assessments such as the DRA II that guide instruction, and a print-rich environment where everyone can progress at his or her own level. In addition, all students are encouraged to speak only English in the classroom setting.

**Support Services and Learning:** The Counselors regularly consult with the students and teachers to ensure ongoing progress. Student IEPs are regularly monitored with ongoing SRTs held with the appropriate staff and parents involved, when necessary. The three Counselors meet once a month to discuss student needs.

The ongoing results of regular standardized tests, including MAP, ERB and WrAP in the ES/MS, and PSAT, SAT, and WrAP in the High School are carefully monitored

for trends. In addition to in-class and pullout support, ESL students can receive extra language help from HS students in the English Learners club.

Since the last WASC report, the ES has created a new position for a Literacy Coordinator to work on improving reading and writing from K-5. From the results on the standardized tests, it was clear that the main areas needed for improvement are in reading and writing, particularly in writing: sentence structure and overall development.

The education of the English Language Learners is a collaborative responsibility shared by the ESL teachers and the content/classroom teachers. There are four models of instruction used in the K-8 classes, including pull out/sheltered vlassroom, team-taught classes, mainstream/immersion, and resource class.

**Co-Curricular Activities:** In the MS and HS, students have numerous opportunities to enhance their personal growth and development through the participation in After School Activities (ASAs) in the areas of the arts, academics, athletics, and community service throughout the year. ASAs include intramural gym activities, chess, Model United Nations, National Honor Society, Global Issues Group, Challenge 20/20, Operation Smile, Robotics, and Habitat for Humanity. In addition, the MS and HS House Activities Program (HAP) is available year-long. In this program, teachers are assigned to a house team of approximately 70 students to facilitate the students in developing relationships with peers by working together in house activities to solve academic problems and participate in athletic challenges.

Also, throughout the school year, SSIS sports teams compete in the Mekong River International Schools Association (MRISA) and Saigon City athletic conferences in volleyball, basketball, soccer and swimming, as well as cultural exchanges. SSIS provides stipends to teachers for coaching certain extracurricular athletic teams. (p. 179)

The SSIS Community Action Program (CAP) helps students fulfill the core value of Dedicated Service, Sense of Self and Balance in Life. ALL SSIS HS are expected to participate in at least 60 hours of service tasks in both community projects and activity-based projects. Community projects are service tasks that will help students develop leadership and communication skills. Through CAP and Community Action Service (CAS) and charity work, many people in Vietnam have been helped by the efforts of the SSIS community. (p. 179)

In the ES, there is an active co-curricular program called ECAP (Extra-Curricular Activity Program) offered to students after school on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning in the second quarter of school. The activities are taught to students, (grades 2 to 5) by community members, parents, and staff. There is a combination of indoor and outdoor activities, based on the interests and ability of the community. The ES also offers opportunities for student leadership on the Student Council for grades 4 and 5.

The school has identified the need for a review of ECAP/ASA program offerings to ensure that they are meeting the needs of a growing school. (p. 179)

**Adequate Available Services:** The Guidance Counselors coordinate the Student Support Teams (SST) in all school divisions. The SST's are consultative groups that support students, teachers, and families regarding academic, social-emotional and behavioral development. Each division has a well-developed referral process, focused on early intervention. Teachers noting concerns about students typically consult with their grade level teams or departments to discuss the student concerns to generate pre-referral interventions. If the student concerns continue after the initial teacher/team intervention and parent notification, a referral form is completed and submitted for review by the Counselor. Counselors schedule SST meetings with teachers, administrators and specialists, as needed, for further follow-up and assistance for the students and teachers.

In critical situations, Counselors can be immediately contacted and the student can be sent directly to the Counselor for intervention. When the student concern is beyond the scope of the school counseling department, outside resources are recommended to the parents. SSIS maintains contacts with local and regional medical/mental health service providers for further support.

As of October 2010, nine students in grades 1-5 are receiving pull-out Learning support in the areas of reading, math and written language. The EC/ES Learning Support Specialist is currently monitoring an additional 13 students. Seven 6<sup>th</sup> graders, six 7<sup>th</sup> graders and six 6<sup>th</sup> graders are receiving support from the Learning Support Specialist. (p. 125)

The school has identified the need for a review and refinement of the learning support staffing to help define their role further and provide enough support for each division.

**Student Involvement in Curricular/Co-Curricular Activities:** In the area of non-academic activities, SSIS students have numerous opportunities to enhance their personal growth through participation in many clubs in the areas of arts, academics, athletics and community service.

In 2010-2011 there are 18 non-athletic, after school activities in MS with 123 students participating. At the HS level, there are 14 non-athletic, after school activities involving approximately 125 students. These activities are popular and meeting the need for many students for recreational and competitive sports.

In the EC/ES levels, approximately 193 elementary students participated in 40 different ECAP activities. Most activities are free of charge. Beginning in 2010-2011, an after-school athletic program for ES students in grades 3-5 is being offered in basketball, soccer, swimming and netball. These teams compete against other schools in HCMC.

In the area of service, over the last 18 months, 925 students, staff and community members have participated in CAP and over 2,300 Vietnamese students and families have benefitted from the 15,809 hours of service performed. CAP service activities benefit both the local school community and the greater Ho Chi Minh City community. Each year these students are involved in various projects to raise funds, collect goods and volunteer time.

**Student Perceptions:** Each year the school conducts online surveys with students. The 2009 results indicate that about 80% of the responses replied positively to 11 of the 13 statements under the heading Support for Student Learning. Students felt that teachers and Counselors gave them help and feedback when needed which helped them improve their learning. They also noted that in addition to written tests, they were provided with a variety of ways to show their learning. They responded that there were a variety of resources and technologies available for them to use.

However, there were two areas with lower scores in the 60 – 70% range regarding the recognition of achievements of students for all types of accomplishments and the grading and fair evaluation of schoolwork. (p. 221)

## **C2. Parent/Community Involvement Criterion**

- **To what extent does the school leadership employ a wide range of strategies to ensure that parental and community involvement is integral to the school's established support system for students?**

**Regular Parent Involvement:** The school has regular processes for the involvement of parents and community. The school leadership at SSIS encourages parent involvement at all levels and in all functions of the school. The SSIS eNews online provides timely updated information for the parents, students, teachers and staff. There is also a newsletter given to current SSIS families which features informational

articles about student activities and school events written by faculty, Counselors and administrators.

Parent-Teacher conferences are held in fall and spring. In addition, parents are encouraged to schedule appointments with teachers, Counselors and administrators when they have questions or concerns. Also, parents are sent an annual survey to provide their feedback on several areas of school climate and their children's education. At all divisions, the faculty maintains regular communication between school and home regarding student progress. Beginning August 2010, the school moved to *PowerSchool* because of its superior functionality, ease of use, and integration of grading and reporting modules. Parents and students in MS/HS seem to agree that the program is easier to use, provides real-time data, and allows quick communication with teachers through its convenient email feature.

The SSIS PTA is very active, working with the school administration to support student achievement and enrich the students' learning environment. The PTA sponsors and promotes many annual events such as new parents' coffees, BBQs, Charity Bazaar and International Week.

ECAP activities in the ES involve many parents and community members. As well, the MS/HS service activities involve parents and other community members. Also, SSIS provides facility use for weekend sports and periodic charitable fund-raising events.

However, as evidenced through parent feedback during the strategic planning process, the school must enhance communication particularly with non-native English speaking parents to encourage their involvement in and their understanding of the school.

**Use of Community Resources:** When necessary, Counselors will make referrals to other Counselors, medical and social workers in the community to help parent receive the assistance they need for their children and themselves. Because of the limited mental health services in Ho Chi Minh City, referral agencies are not always available for specific needs. Consultation with parents, teachers and other professionals is provided to explore available alternatives.

**Parents/Community and Student Achievement:** The school's educational philosophy, ESLRs, mission statement and Core Values are communicated clearly to parents and the community. They are found on all school publications, on the SSIS website, posted in classrooms and offices and used to gauge measure achievement at annual master planning meetings. They are referred to often at parent and community meetings and at school assemblies. SSIS acknowledges that communication of these statements and beliefs must be an ongoing activity, especially to accommodate the large Korean and Vietnamese populations so that everyone understands them. The 2009 Parent Opinion Survey revealed that 80% of the parents understand the school's mission and purpose compared with 81% on the 2007 survey. (p. 49)

All curricula, unit, lesson plans and assessments reference the ESLRs. In line with the midterm WASC recommendation, the school instructional staff and leadership reviewed the ESLR and developed age-appropriate rubrics for students to self-evaluate and assess their achievement and progress in meeting each ESLR. Each division is now determining how best to report on these assessments.

The Self-Study opinion surveys, taken in October 2009, found that 57% of the parents and 61% of the HS students understood the ESLRs. However, when asked about the school's Core Values, a much higher percentage of students and parents said they did.

The school leadership needs to raise awareness within the community about the schoolwide learning outcomes. (p. 50)

In preparation for the upcoming WASC visit, in September 2010, the school began using a strategic planning model that uses focus groups of stakeholders to gather information and comments from a wide, cross selection of the school community. (p. 50)

#### **Areas of Strength for Student Personal and Academic Growth Category**

1. SSIS has demonstrated a commitment to delivering a quality guidance program through the adoption of the American School Counselor Association framework and increasing the number of Counselors.
2. A Student Services Team referral process has been developed and implemented and has facilitated increased communication and collaboration with students, teachers and parents, focused on meeting the needs of students.
3. The ESL Curriculum Framework has been developed and adopted with common planning time provided so that ESL specialists and classroom teachers can better address the learning needs of students in grades K-10.
4. There is a significant partnership that is emerging between the SSIS administration, parents and Parent Teacher Association that serves to build community and enhance the educational experience at the school.

#### **Key Issues for Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth Category (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students**

1. The faculty and administration should continue to develop a coordinated approach to successfully deliver the following student services: counseling, ESL, learning and psychological services.
2. The faculty should consider developing a systematic approach to: monitoring the progress of students with identified learning needs, ensuring successful transitions from one grade level to another, and collaborating with mainstream teachers to achieve the grade-level student learning outcomes.
3. The faculty and administration should consider formalizing and publishing a schoolwide protocol for entrance and exit into the ESL services.

#### **Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

- Self-study document
- Focus group meetings
- Classroom observations
- School documents
- Interviews
- Individual conversations with administration, faculty and students

## **D. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **D1. Resources Criterion**

- **To what extent are the resources available to the school are sufficient to sustain the school program and effectively used to carry out the school's purpose and student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results (school learner outcomes)?**

**Allocation Decisions:** SSIS is a financially sound, well-resourced institution. Resources are aligned to support the vision and the expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs). The Mission Statement and ESLRs provide a clear objective for resource procurement and management. SSIS clearly places importance on maintaining and planning for financial security. To this end, the Board and administration have determined on the following conditions: having facilities capable of accommodating an enrollment of 1,100 students; maintaining tuition necessary to accomplish the vision and Core Values of the school and matching tuition rates of other international schools in their proximity; implementing sound financial planning and practices that provide for a balanced budget while providing instructional resources aligned with a learner-centered, 21st century school.

**Practices:** The purposeful and thoughtful approach to planned growth has allowed the school to adjust financial resources as necessary, increase enrollment, and provide for long-term financial strength. The school leadership and various parent and teacher planning committees are to be applauded for this strategic planning. The school community continues to grow in its acknowledgement of the school's use of available resources to maintain safe and high quality facilities. Included in this growth was the addition of the business department that oversees human resources, financial affairs, foreign hire housing, maintenance and groundskeeping on campus, governmental documents, and external and public relation affairs.

SSIS follows a well-documented procedure for budgetary allocations. Program and instructional budgets are developed in collaboration with instructional staff, department heads and divisional leaders. To ensure alignment with enrollment and schoolwide priorities, divisional administrators examine divisional budget requests. The administrative team conducts a final analysis of all budget requests and submits them to the Curriculum Director and the Business Manager, for final approval by the Head of School. The recommended budget is then proposed, along with new tuition and fees, to the full Board for approval. SSIS is audited annually by KPMG that in turn is reviewed by school management and the SSIS Board of Directors. Recently SSIS has been realizing a slight operating surplus that has been reinvested into the school's infrastructure and ongoing facilities development. This alone is testament to sound financial planning and execution.

**Facilities:** SSIS is in a strong financial position to continue to provide for the growth and maintenance of school facilities. Between 2008 and 2011, large construction projects including the construction of the EC/ES building, a new High School and administration building, reorienting the main entrance of the campus, and the addition of a new kitchen and cafeteria. A number of building wide improvements such as CCTV, a new septic system and air conditioning were installed in the gymnasium. Upgrades to the existing ICT framework were implemented comprised of the SSIS learning portal, including a Moodle installation, wiki and blog installations, and efficient use of Google's suite of online applications. Further technology improvements have included the use of IP telephony, adoption of a new email client, a school information system (SIS), and an updated library database to allow for online access.

**Instructional Materials:** Teachers and parents believe they have sufficient resources to meet the expectations of the SSIS vision and ESLRs. This is evidenced in teacher and parent surveys where data collected supports the notion that teachers continue to grow in their recognition of the resources that SSIS provides its instructional and support staff to best meet the needs of learners.

Facilities improvements in EC/ES division have focused on enhancing learning environments with the addition of LCD projectors, classroom computers, and furniture. Additionally, SSIS underwent a major ICT infrastructure overhaul to meet the demands of their developing 1:1 laptop initiative. Further development of the EC/ES ICT program is needed with additions in both ICT human resources and hardware/software acquisition.

Diligence will be needed, as SSIS moves to occupy and fill its new High School, that material purchases are carefully planned and executed. Increases in capital and operational budgets will need to be made to ensure equal and appropriate distribution of instructional materials in line with SSIS's vision and ESLRs.

**Well-Qualified Staff:** SSIS recognizes that its most important resource are the faculty. Approximately 72% of the budget is used for salaries and benefits.

Given the difficulties in hiring and, more importantly, retaining staff due to the highly competitive packages of other international schools in the region. SSIS has worked hard to stay competitive with their teacher compensation package. They have increased the salary scale by one step for the last two years and now offer teachers and their dependents 100% full coverage for health benefits. The school continues to attract and hire experienced staff with 70% of teachers holding a Masters Degree, and over 60% having taught 11 years or more. A goal of this longer-term vision for compensation is to encourage the retention of current high quality staff as well as to attract qualified faculty and staff as needed in the near future. SSIS will need to ensure that tuition increases are sufficient to continue to attract the best possible faculty and staff to the school and to offer competitive compensation packages that compare to or exceed those of other international schools in Vietnam.

The school is to be recognized for its commitment to providing the resources necessary to offer a professional development program designed to provide sustainability to schoolwide programs and initiatives. SSIS has established grade level teams and discipline departments to foster conversations and collaboration between teachers and across divisions. Team leaders receive a stipend for their added responsibilities. In addition, to facilitate collegiality and a culture of learning, SSIS has adopted and trained a portion of its administrators and staff in Critical Friends Protocols (CFG). SSIS will need to ensure that its investment in teacher professional development is aligned to school improvement initiatives. Further staff professional development is required for SSIS to realize the full potential of its distributed leadership model.

## **D2. Resource Planning Criterion**

- **To what extent does the governing authority and the school leadership execute responsible resource planning for the future?**

Long range planning is guided by SSIS's annual strategic planning exercise and a Schoolwide Action Plan developed through their self-study. The Saigon South International School's vision and ESLR statements were developed in 2002 and revised in 2004 as part of their WASC Midterm visit and provide the guidance for both long term strategic planning and the development of medium and short term plans. These statements continue to be revised and vetted by the SSIS administration, staff, and parents to make them easily accessible and understandable to the multi-lingual, multi-cultural community of SSIS.

In 2010 SSIS started to employ a more inclusive planning model utilizing focus groups representing a wide cross section of the community. Planning meetings were professionally facilitated and served to allow the school Board to consider and plan school initiatives while being inclusive of the school's stakeholders. All action plans are based on current school data including demographic trends, standardized test scores, and facility/infrastructure management and maintenance. The Board of Directors receives training in governance and educational leadership from outside, qualified consultants. A continuing challenge will be to keep the different stakeholder groups educated about long range plans and the budgetary issues associated with these plans and program cycles.

The compensation plan is designed to ensure that well qualified staff will be recruited, retained and developed to meet the future needs of the school. The financial plan prioritizes programs and initiatives relative to the SSIS vision and the facilities plan provides direction for current and future facilities needs. Consideration needs to be given to the communication of the plans with all SSIS stakeholders. Tuition levels will continually need to be examined to ensure that adequate revenue is available for the retention and draw of highly qualified instructional staff.

### **Areas of Strength for Resource Management and Development Category**

1. The SSIS Board and administration has developed and implemented a thoughtful and purposeful plan for growth that has resulted in excellent, purpose-built facilities and an aesthetic campus that is inclusive of the natural environment.
2. The SSIS Board and administration recognize the need to attract and retain high quality faculty and have developed a compensation plan to encourage faculty to remain at the school.
3. SSIS has embraced the importance of providing its students with the tools, and skills necessary to learn and thrive in the 21st century by investing in major ICT infrastructure upgrades and initiatives.

### **Key Issues for Resource Management and Development Category (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students**

1. The administration should develop ways to ensure the allocation of funds are congruent with improvements in the technology infrastructure and the provision of human resources that are appropriate for implementing 21st century skills across all divisions.
2. The administration should continue to develop adequate and safe playground structures and activities, aligned with appropriate supervision for EC/ES children.
3. The administration should consider providing adequate space and resources for the visual and performance arts.

### **Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

- Self-study document
- Focus group meetings
- School documents
- Classroom observations
- Interviews
- Individual conversations with Board, administration, faculty and students

## GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE SCHOOL

It is clear that for SSIS the last six years have been a period of significant improvement in a wide variety of areas, combined with steady enrollment growth. The faculty and administration have worked tirelessly to put a variety of systems in place in the school. SSIS has kept clear the difference between their Core Values/ESLRs (which remain the same) and the operating systems that have had to adapt to continued enrollment growth. These developments and changes have been effectively implemented and managed by the school's administration and faculty.

At this juncture, with many of the necessary systems in place and the programs expanded, the school is well positioned to celebrate their significant accomplishments in the various areas and to move forward. Both the administration and faculty are committed to re-framing and sharpening the focus so that even greater prominence can be placed on learning to support the achievement of all students.

A strengthened focus on learning will likely lead the school to examine and develop a deeper understanding about issues such as:

how can we enhance student learning that result from the unit plans following the UbD template?

how can PLCs at each grade level and in each subject effectively enhance learning?

how can we ensure that professional conversations are more often collegial rather than congenial?

what does learning leadership at SSIS look like?

what constitutes a common understanding of effective instruction that includes developmentally appropriate reading and writing instruction?

how can assessment results (both external and internal) be consistently used to inform and adjust instruction?

what does effective early intervention look like that supports the ongoing learning of students?

how can professional development be responsive to the student population and students' learning needs?

how can SSIS assess the impact of professional development on learning in the classroom?

how can inservice time be extended and dedicated to support curriculum unit writing?

how can teachers' leadership capacity be further strengthened to give each individual a skill set that supports a focus on learning?

how can technology be used to support 21st century learning?

With both limited time and personnel available, it will be imperative for SSIS to prioritize the actions that should be taken and to first firmly focus on issues that directly impact student learning and the high achievement of all students .

Throughout the *Focus on Learning* WASC self-study, the stakeholders at SSIS are to be commended for the thoroughness of their preparation of the *Focus on Learning* document. SSIS has sought to present a transparent and accurate reflection of the

school's program and to actively engage in dialogue about the next steps as they position themselves to be a school of increasing reputation and excellence.

### **SCHOOLWIDE STRENGTHS**

1. The SSIS School Board has demonstrated extraordinary vision, leadership, and a clear understanding of their role in the further development and overall operation of the school.
2. The SSIS Board and administration has developed and implemented a thoughtful and purposeful plan for growth that has resulted in excellent, purpose-built facilities and an aesthetic campus that is inclusive of the natural environment.
3. The administration has a strategic planning process that is inclusive and allows for an annual review and monitoring of progress and further updating the school wide Action Plan.
4. The Expected Schoolwide Learning Results are derived from the school's Core Values and clearly implemented across the divisions by administrators, teachers and students. The development and review of ESLRs is an ongoing process that involves all stakeholder groups.
5. The systematic focus and substantial development of curriculum by the administration and teachers within the school has led to the schoolwide adoption of standards and benchmarks, the subject area frameworks, the UbD unit framework and Rubicon Atlas to store and analyze curriculum maps.
6. The school leadership and professional staff share a significant commitment to professional development and improvement. The provision of professional development is targeted to enhance and develop teachers' skills in a manner that is aligned with best practice for the express purpose of promoting student learning.
7. The Board and administration have recognized the need to encourage the retention of high quality faculty and have developed a compensation plan to encourage faculty to remain at Saigon South International School.
8. There is a significant partnership that is emerging between the SSIS administration, parents and Parent Teacher Association that serves to build community and enhance the educational experience at the school.

### **SCHOOLWIDE AREAS FOR FOLLOW-UP**

The Visiting Committee concurs with the school's identified areas that are outlined in the Schoolwide Action Plan. They are summarized below.

1. The administration consider ways to attract, retain and develop highly qualified teachers, administrators and staff who are committed to the school's mission and educational goals.
2. The faculty, administration, and parents develop ways to further enhance understanding among all of the constituents about the school's purpose, educational goals and programs.
3. The faculty and administration allocate instructional resources to ensure student learning and achievement of ESLRs.
4. The administration continues to recruit and enroll qualified students in line with the language and diversity targets established to promote an international balance of students and an academic environment where students are challenged and successful.

**In addition the Visiting Committee has identified areas that need to be strengthened:**

**For purposes of further promoting the quality of learning at SSIS:**

5. The administration and faculty should ensure the development and alignment of curriculum, assessment and instruction through the development of curriculum units that promote high levels of student learning.
6. The faculty and administration should develop structures within the school that create extended opportunities for collegial work. These structures should facilitate the analysis of students' assessment results that informs instruction and supports changes in professional practice to promote higher levels of student achievement.
7. The administration and faculty should review student learning needs in relation to technology. This will likely involve an analysis of the human and financial resources necessary to successfully implement 21st century learning skills that focus on learning across all divisions.

## **Chapter V: Ongoing School Improvement**

### **• Include a brief summary of the Schoolwide Action Plan**

The Visiting Committee found the Schoolwide Action Plan proposed by Saigon South International School to be generally appropriate. The school created a Schoolwide Action Plan that correlated to the growth areas identified by the Schoolwide Focus Groups and the Schoolwide Strategic Planning.

However within the Schoolwide Action Plan, strong linkage with student learning and addressing the critical areas of need was not evident. The Visiting Committee made some specific additional recommendations to deal with these needs.

The Visiting Committee is very confident that the school will strengthen their focus on learning. This work requires developing structures within SSIS that provide a venue for collegial work, the ongoing examination of curriculum units and the identification of students' learning needs through assessment analysis. Additionally, it means placing a stronger focus on assessment analysis, using a range of internal and external assessments, to result in the adjustment of classroom instruction. This is particularly targeted at reading and writing where SSIS received scores on or below the U.S. mean, though it is not limited to these aspects.

The school recognizes the need to move the school from systems development (clearly needed due to substantial increases in enrollment) to a sharper and substantive focus on learning.

### **• Will the Action Plan steps enhance student learning?**

The additions to the Schoolwide Action Plan that focus on developing structures to support assessment analysis, professional conversations and ongoing professional conversations mean that there is a stronger focus on student learning

### **• What are the existing factors that support school improvement?**

**Issues to be aware of include:**

The school has a proven track record in responding to the WASC Visiting Committee recommendations and using the Schoolwide Action Plan to drive development. The Visiting Committee in 2005 provided SSIS with six recommendations to support the school's ongoing improvement. These were addressed by the school. In 2008 the WASC Visiting Committee required SSIS to work on an additional five recommendations. These were again consistently focused upon by SSIS. Since 2005, the Schoolwide Action Plan has provided the framework for the school

leadership to determine priorities of the school that best strengthen effective learning and achievement of students.

The administration and faculty recognize the need to re-position themselves so that they have a firmer focus on learning. The administration and faculty have worked tirelessly to put in many of the systems – whether evidenced in curriculum, program development, professional development, or co-curricular activities to meet the needs of enrollment growth. With the organizational systems in place, both the administration and faculty are committed to sharpening the vision and placing even greater prominence on learning that supports the achievement of all students.

The stability of the current administration will support the implementation of the Schoolwide Action Plan.

- **What are impediments to school improvement that the school will need to overcome in order to accomplish any of the Action Plan sections?**

**Issues that the school needs to be aware of include:**

Ensuring priority is placed on learning and that there is sufficient time to support the work within the Schoolwide Action Plan.

Ensuring that the school can successfully retain qualified faculty so that the learning-focused work can be sustained.

Ensuring that training is provided so that teachers develop skill sets in areas such as: leading learning focused meetings, assessment analysis and instructional adjustment.

Being willing to specifically address learning issues in reading and writing at the school. There are a high proportion of non-native English speakers at SSIS that require ongoing support in both mainstream and ELL classes. Instruction, curriculum, early intervention systems, course offerings, professional development and resource acquisition are among the areas that need to be responsive to the needs of the English Language Learners in order that learning can be maximized by all students within the school.

- **What is the soundness of the follow-up process to monitor accomplishment of the Schoolwide Action Plan?**

**Issues to be aware of include:**

Overall the school is strongly committed to the follow-up process. There is support for the Schoolwide Action Plan that is a combination of the growth areas identified in the self-study and critical issues developed during Schoolwide Strategic Planning. In the past the school has successfully used the Schoolwide Action Plan as a long range planning tool and will continue with this practice.

Direct responsibility for the oversight and implementation of the Schoolwide Action Plan, will continue to be assumed by the administrative team led by the Head of School.

The school has adequate resources to ensure proper implementation and oversight of the Schoolwide Action Plan.