

Dear Creative Families,

I started thinking about the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) long before we opened CMI. I was still a graduate student, given to exuberant brainstorming sessions with colleagues during which we would imagine the perfect school: “We’d need a curriculum that was arts-integrated and multi-sensory,” I remember saying. “Something that is engaging, encourages critical thinking, and really prepares kids, no matter where they go in the world.” That’s when a colleague who works at the International School in Geneva told me about the IPC.

Over the next several years I learned about this curriculum, which originates in London and is widely implemented in private schools throughout Europe. I toured IPC schools, and met students who were driving their own education, demonstrating leadership and engagement, and developing a genuine love for learning. The founding impulse for CMI came from these visits – why couldn’t we bring this extraordinary depth of learning and engagement to a public school setting here in DC?

Teachers who come to work at CMI are passionate, creative, and believe in a child-centered, international education. They embrace the IPC, and it’s inspiring to see the high levels of engagement in learning they are able to accomplish with it. I walk into classrooms and see students smiling, laughing, contributing their knowledge, and asking questions as they learn. Each year, students studying the same units create different projects, go on different field trips, and engage with the material from a plurality of perspectives. The IPC provides a framework for exploration, but the teachers adapt the units to respond to student interests and knowledge. This makes for a dynamic learning environment and fosters a culture of creativity and empowerment.

Just as the students experience the dynamic potential of IPC in the classrooms, CMI educators and leaders experience it in our professional development as well. During our yearly IPC conference, we learn about the latest research in cognition and child learning. We make connections to other schools from around the world implementing the curriculum, and through these connections, we challenge ourselves to continue to think outside the box.

The rigor and creativity of the IPC is foundational to our school. I invite you to read on to learn more about the way IPC offers a framework for a child-centered, international education.

Sincerely,



Golnar Abedin, Ph.D.
Head of School/Founder

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER 5, 2015
Ribbon-cutting Ceremony

NOVEMBER 11, 2015
No School – Veterans Day

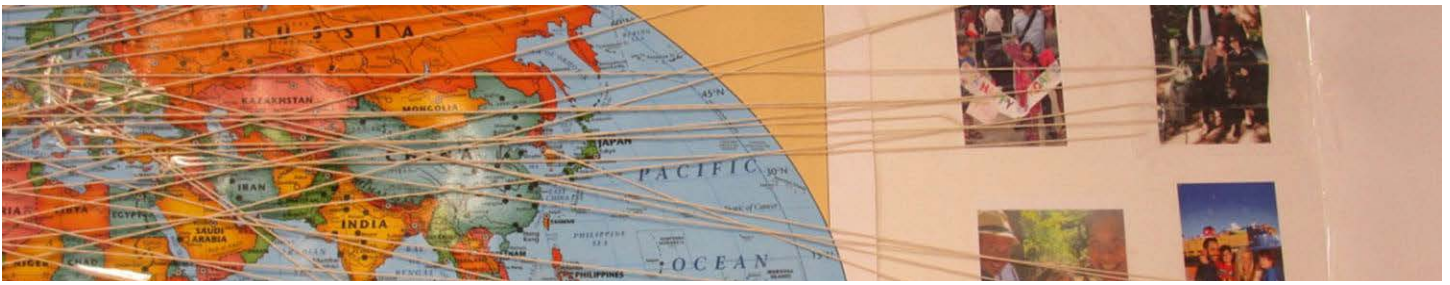
NOVEMBER 15, 2015
CFA Thanksgiving Potluck

NOVEMBER 25 - 27, 2015
No school – Thanksgiving
Holiday

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INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: A PILLAR OF CMI

What was it about CMI that first attracted you to the School? If it was the “I” for “international,” you’re not alone! Many families choose CMI specifically for the international focus of its high-quality instruction.

International Education is one of three pillars of the CMI program. Together with Inclusion and Arts Education / Integration, International Education is central to fulfilling our School’s mission: to offer students a rigorous education that helps them develop the skills required for successful participation in a global society. International Education permeates the culture of our school; CMI celebrates our diverse cultural heritages in weekly community meetings, emphasizes global language instruction with Spanish and Mandarin classes, and engages students in the rigorous IPC and IPC Early Years program (next year, CMI middle school will feature the International Middle Years Curriculum, or IMYC).

WHAT IS THE IPC?

According to Fieldwork Education, the London-based organization that developed it, the IPC is “a rigorous, learning-focused curriculum that sets out to help teachers help children learn and develop academically, personally and internationally.” First developed in the 1990s for use in English-language Shell schools located around the world, IPC was designed to meet the need for an internationally-focused, student-centered, skills-based, and engaging curriculum. As word of this innovative curriculum spread, schools all over the world adopted the IPC; today, there are nearly 1,800 schools in more than 90 countries that use this curriculum.

As we learned from Dr. Abedin’s letter, the idea of bringing the IPC to a Washington, DC public charter school actually preceded the founding of CMI. The discovery of this dynamic and creative curriculum gave shape to

an emerging vision of a child-centered, international, and inclusive educational community that now defines Creative Minds International.

Now in year four of using the IPC, our School will participate in the reflective process of self review. This process is built around a set of criteria called the “Bottom Line Nine,” a list of “non-negotiables” for successful implementation of the curriculum. Since CMI is entering self review this year in preparation for the accreditation process in 2016-17 — and since administrators, teachers, students, and parents are all part of the self-review process! — we’ll briefly describe what must be demonstrated for each of these key criteria.

KEY CRITERIA FOR CMI’S SELF REVIEW

Improving Learning: The School is clearly focused on improving learning; all systems and structures of the School reflect our passion for improving learning.

Shared vision: CMI has a shared vision of the kind of children it is helping to develop; everything the School does reflects this vision.

Classroom practices: In the School, there is a clear and evident link between classroom practices and the kinds of children that we are helping to develop.

International mindedness: The School has a definition of international mindedness with which students are engaged; it is reflected in all aspects of school life.

Significance and importance of K, S, and U: We value knowledge (factual information), skills (things students are able to do), and

FOCUS ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

understanding (the development of conceptual ideas): the foundation of learning at CMI.

Rigorous learning: In our School, children engage in rigorous learning in all classes. School leaders ensure high expectations for all students.

Learning process of the IPC: At CMI, the learning process of the IPC (entry point, knowledge harvest, explaining the theme, research activities, recording activities, exit point) is being implemented and has an impact on improving learning.

Independent yet interdependent subjects: Students at the School are engaged in the IPC's thematic units; learning is linked through independent yet interdependent subjects.

Assessment: At our School, assessment is both "for learning" and "for reporting"; all teachers use assessment to improve student learning.



Schools that use the IPC are encouraged to think of it as a philosophy, pedagogy, and process. Here at CMI, that is already the case. Our task is to make this way of thinking visible during the upcoming self review and later, accreditation process. We'll call on all community members to help make these goals a reality!



HOME CONNECTIONS

Below are resources such as websites, materials, events, and opportunities related to this month's focus on International Education.

CMI program: <http://www.creativemindspcs.org/programs.php>

IPC (Fieldwork Education) website: <https://www.greatlearning.com/ipc/the-ipc/what-is-ipc>

History of the IPC: <http://www.greatlearning.com/ipc/about/our-story>

IPC accreditation: <http://www.greatlearning.com/ipc/the-ipc/ipc-accreditation>

National Geographic Education, Educational Games: <http://education.nationalgeographic.com/games-and-interactives>

My Wonderful World – resources from Smithsonian Education: <http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/mywonderfulworld>



CONNECTIONS TO OUR LEARNING



Kindergarten students display their self-portraits during the Exit Point for the IPC unit “Who am I?”



Preschool students look at children’s books from France, as a parent describes popular characters.



First-grade students learn new Spanish-language vocabulary through movement and song.



In PreKindergarten, students create a “friendship chain” during their IPC unit “Family and Friends.”



CONNECTIONS TO OUR LEARNING



In fourth grade, students taste-test chocolate during the Entry Point for the IPC unit “Chocolate.”



In third grade, students constructed models of houses as part of the IPC unit called “Different Places, Similar Lives.”



Fifth-graders practice thinking reflectively while using rubrics to assess their learning.



As a special guest in Community Meeting, a parent tells students about her experiences in Germany.



Second-graders create a poster with drawings and information about Rock Creek Park as they learn about our local community.