

Cultural Convergence amidst Diversity: The Role of Strategic Communication in the Promotion of Intercultural Literacy at The American School of Bangkok, Thailand

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Abstract

This case study depicted the roles of strategic communication in the promotion of intercultural literacy, multiculturalism, and a strong sense of “Alternity” or the philosophy of living across cultures as being advocated and enacted by The American School of Bangkok, Thailand. The Culture-Making process in the enhancement of such organizational values was illustrated in the case.

Keywords: Intercultural Literacy, Cultural Convergence, Global Competence, Strategic Communication

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โรงเรียน The American School of Bangkok

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บทคัดย่อ

กรณีศึกษาได้นำเสนอแนวคิดที่ว่าด้วยการสื่อสารเชิงกลยุทธ์ภายใต้กระบวนการการสร้างวัฒนธรรมโรงเรียนนานาชาติสู่การหลอมรวมทางวัฒนธรรมองค์กรในการเปิดรับแนวคิดด้วยความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรมทั้งในกลุ่มผู้บริหารโรงเรียนอาจารย์ทั้งชาวไทยและต่างประเทศในการถ่ายทอดอุดมการณ์ดังกล่าวให้กับนักเรียนตลอดจนผู้ปกครองจนกลายเป็นแนวคิดและแนวทางปฏิบัติของโรงเรียนที่ได้รับการรับรองวิทยฐานะจากของประเทศไทยและต่างประเทศ

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“The highest result of education is tolerance.” . . . American author Helen Keller

“Our young must be taught that racial peculiarities do exist, but that beneath the skin, beyond the differing features and into the true heart of being, fundamentally we are more alike, my friend, than we are unlike.” . . . American author and poet Maya Angelou

“Human history is increasingly a race between intercultural education and disaster. If education is not intercultural, it is probably not education, but rather the inculcation of nationalist or religious fundamentalism.” . . . English education theoretician and author David Coulby

International schools represented a phenomenon that was able to take the lead in providing the education for students toward internationalism, multiculturalism, and international-mindedness, a view of the world in which people saw themselves connecting to the global community with a remarkable insight into people and cultures across the world and a concern for the well-being of the world community. For Mrs. Lakhana Tavedikul, the founder and Director of the American School of Bangkok, one among the top elite international schools in Thailand, the concepts and ideas of founding and managing a truly internationalized school would not be something easy to achieve without a profound understanding of what internationalism in education really meant.

Descended directly from a Thai noble family, descendants of whom had opened and operated the very first school, “Had Yai Vidhaya,” at Had Yai, Songkla province a century ago, Mrs. Lakhana, graduated from abroad, was highly inspired to establish and run her own school in pursuit of her top-of-the-wish-list dream. In 1983, her dream had turned into reality. The Didyasarin International Kindergarten was established in the cosmopolitan setting of downtown Bangkok and licensed by the Ministry of Education. During that time, in line with the greatly increased global mobility of a large number of families, there had been exponential growth in the number of expatriates in Thailand. The kindergarten had gained wide local recognition and growing acceptance from both the Thai and international communities in and around Bangkok.

There had been an ever-increasing number of parents, both foreigners and Thais, bringing their children to the kindergarten. Among them were

“Third Culture Kids,” or the students who had moved to several locations in their life and who existed in expatriate communities where they were part of neither the host culture nor their home culture, but rather part of a third culture with other people of similar experience. Consequently, Mrs. Lakhana had then made the decision to expand the school years from Pre-kindergarten to the level of upper high school (Grade 12) in response to the demands and needs of the international parents. The school was later renamed “The American School of Bangkok,” or the “ASB” in short. Offering a quality modern education based on an American curriculum with an international perspective, the school was then externally accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), and also became a member of the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools (EARCOS). The school was awarded the “Outstanding Achievement in School Management” honor by Her Royal Highness Princess Somsavalee Praworaracha Thinaddemart.

In the year 2011, the number of international schools in Thailand was reported to be 132 schools, offering a wide range of international curricula -- including Canadian, British, American, French, Australian, German, Singaporean, Indian, Japanese, and International Baccalaureate (IB) offerings. Among these, almost one-third were accredited by the Ministry of Education of Thailand and externally accredited by the Council of International Schools and/or one of the major US accrediting agencies. What had made the ASB stand out from its inception was not merely the quality of education resulting from the concerted endeavors and efforts contributed by all staff, but also the inspiring vision of the founder, and how her vision became “shared” and backed by a clear and challenging mission. Mrs. Lakhana, much ahead of her time, was imbued with a strong sense of belief in the significance of “the Culture Quotient” of a leader, i.e., a person with a flair for communicating a particular culture throughout a particular community. For Mrs. Lakhana, an organization’s success could be attributed to its organizational culture. In its governance, curriculum, philosophy, instruction, student and community life, the ASB was the empirical evidence of how an international school could achieve its institutional mission and become successful in its cultural performances when intercultural literacy via strategic communication had been seriously promoted, established, and institutionalized.

The Philosophy of Living across Culture: Roots of the Global Competence with “*Alternity*”

The motivation for Mrs. Lakhana’s entry the international school industry derived from her philosophical assumptions regarding the super-ordinate goal that a decent international school should strive to achieve. For her, globalization had profoundly affected work and education in the 21st century as the global culture had become more pluralistic in today’s world. International schools had adopted their missions in response to the demands of the globalized workplace and aimed to produce “global citizens with global competencies”. The curriculum, modes of instruction, assessments, and learning opportunities that were strategically linked to the vision and missions and tailored to the needs and interests of students were all singled out as important.

However, in order to be truly committed to effective international education, the ASB needed to concentrate on much more than the formal academic curriculum. Internationalism had to permeate the institutional ethos and be essentially experiential, meaning that in every facet of life at school, teachers and students must recognize it as normative. More specifically, among the core functions of an international school was the aim of fashioning students to become great assets to the international and global communities. In essence, global competence was simply having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others and leveraging this knowledge to become adept at interacting, communicating and working effectively outside one’s environment.

Achievement of such global competence was necessarily predicated on certain prerequisite factors. The ASB’s mission was to foster academic excellence in a caring community where diversity was celebrated, and mutual respect among adults and students was practiced. The fundamental philosophical approach to international education underlying the mission involved the inculcation of cross-cultural awareness, a state of mind in which one is alert to “*Alternity*”, i.e., the existence of others possessing different and equally valid world views and ways of life. It represented the development of “self”: After the “self” learned to coexist and develop interdependence with an “other”, this “sense of self” would begin to accommodate the idea of being a member of a nation, and then a part of an “inter-nation”, and finally independence and interdependence on a global

scale. Since its beginning, the ASB had strived to excel in the international educational community and to develop global perspectives and a lasting commitment to international understanding and harmony. Mrs. Lakhana explained that right from the beginning of the school, she had firmly held onto the philosophy of going international with genuine respect for *alterity* as a social fact of life and living toward the global competence in the 21st century. She stated that:

Education was very profound. These whole things could not be directly taught. [They] must be lived through commitment shown in our daily practices. I believe we are different from others. I have run this school with genuine love [of] humankind, like a mom [exerting] her love for her own beloved children, and of course, with a passion [for] respect toward one's culture, both our own and others.' We must be clear that here at ASB, we must strive to learn to learn to preserve one's [cultural roots] with dignity and pride. Thai, Korean, Japanese, American, Indian -- no matter which culture you represent, you must have pride and confidence in your "mother tongue" culture. That is where one's identity developed [and where] . . . formation of character [occurs] in a very stabilized manner. We must teach our children to preserve their original cultures and prepare to develop an appreciation toward interculturalism.

We must teach our students not to change who [they] are, but to be keen on learning to . . . adjust, to adapt to, and to accept similarities and differences in cultural baggage people carry with them, and [thereby] eventually become global citizens. My [emphasis] is that what one yearns to become is to be the representative of [one's] own nationality and culture. It is important for individuals to avoid assimilation in their pursuit of success, [although] there is a great deal of pressure to conform. It is important for an individual to maintain his or her individuality and culture, but with mindfulness toward other cultures. Our children must be the ambassadors to other nations.

Propelled by the conviction that culture was the basis of building one's true character, the climate of multicultural environment allowing both staff and students to understand and appreciate differences in cultures, lifestyles, and beliefs was sustained accordingly. For Mrs. Lakhana, such cultural manifestation could not be achieved with haphazard and partial approaches. Rather, she subscribed to the notion that intercultural understanding and global competencies involved everything ranging from understandings, competencies, attitudes, and language proficiencies to participation and identities necessary for successful intercultural engagement. Leaders had to care enough to promote, in her words, the **"culture of caring for mankind."** It was the responsibility of all schools to educate students toward citizenship beyond the confines of the immediate community, she averred. They must educate students to possess the skills and knowledge to deal effectively with international problems and conflicts across cultures.

In terms of organizational management, for Mrs. Lakhana, no management activity could be culture free. Hence, in this sense, the "culture of caring for mankind" could be designed and manifested right at the core of an institution. Taking into account the cultural side of management presupposed an understanding of the way people's minds could be influenced in a desirable and constructive way. Achieving this took time and concerted efforts to promote internationalism in and around the organization. As the organization's chief manager, she had continually proclaimed the importance of **international education as a "humanization" process**. This ethos underpinned the ASB's commitment to, and celebration of, diversity as desirable for improving the human condition, for promoting understanding and respect for one's own and for other cultures, for encouraging knowledge of issues of global concern, and most of all, for recognizing the benefits of *"a humanistic education"*.

According to Mrs. Lakhana, people must engage in life-long learning to develop what she called *"the artistic and compassionate minds"* towards respect and empathy. True educators must imbue themselves with *"world attitudes"* whereby the concepts and reality of diverse cultures, values, and forms of governance had to be understood and accepted as the first steps toward genuine *appreciation*. According to Mrs. Lakhana, education had to "plant the seed" or to build up a person with good mind— a person who can learn to contribute to mankind regardless of whatever cultural differences

and conflicts he or she has lived amongst. **The school then needed to view its endeavors as an ethical mission, where its culture was built on respect towards cultural diversity amongst mankind.** The international school must then attempt to establish an educational experience that promoted internationalism and intercultural literacy.

Equally important was the promotion of leadership skills in students to equip them to translate the acquired concepts of internationalism, intercultural literacy, and international-mindedness into a larger and lasting reality. In Mrs. Lakhana's words:

Here at ASB, our motto is to build leadership guided by the institutional vision that the graduates [will be] prepared to be critical thinkers, independent learners, effective communicators, and global citizens. [In] "building leadership," we the educators must practice what we preach. We must become good role models for these children of ours. Good leaders must be able to enact and to perform based on [the] sets of philosophies, beliefs, attitudes, and values they truly believe. If we can build up one [person] with such a good mind with ability to lead, he or she could exert influence upon millions. One [person] can make a difference, bring about real change and create positive impacts onto our world. It is quite abstract and needs to be defined in order to develop and measure their attainment.

In response to the ever-changing currents of globalization and internationalization, international schools, including the ASB, had been facing increasing challenges to develop such intercultural understanding and competencies in both theory and practice, and in both the formal and informal curricula. To wit, how to build up a school as a community with true integration of the internationalism that had been both espoused and preliminarily enacted was a constant challenge. It was important to get all levels of the ASB community on board, starting with the highest levels of management. By showing an in-depth understanding and by modeling appropriate practices, school boards and management teams would send a message to the community that facilitated buy-in and emulation.

Toward the Cultural Convergence: The Culture-Making Process toward the Community of Intercultural Literacy

Mrs. Lakhana allowed that she had long observed that an organization's success can be attributed to its culture, and more specifically to a culture that "fit" its mission and strategy. In the process of internationalization, organizations or institutions were faced with the challenge of harmonizing their corporate culture due to the fact that strong corporate culture could strengthen the identity and image of the organization. Since each organization possessed its own culture, organizational culture could reflect as a derivative, at least in part, of the interests, values, and world view of the founder, the owner, or the management. Mrs. Lakhana, subscribed to the view that in order for the ASB could achieve its ultimate goals, its culture could be "designed" or "made" in such a manner as to reflect the high value in which intercultural literacy and internationalism were held. However, a concomitant precondition was that such a culture would need to be infused in all aspects of the school's operations and components – including the school philosophy and values, governance and management practices, international curriculum perspective, subcultural composition of the school, teaching practice and professional development, service learning, and linguistic fluency. Addressing the basic concept of the "literacy," Mrs. Lakhana expressed the view that at the ASB, the core of the international education emphasized literacy -- inclusive of fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing abilities, and listening and speaking competence. **For her, amidst language diversity, an academician must fully appreciate the function of the language. That is, language provided the individual with his or her own ethnic identity. As such, it needed to be well understood that a person's native language had a deep significance because it was the seed of identity that blossoms as children grow.**

The ASB was notably international in its student body, enrolling students from over 40 countries. In the high school, students from the United States, Thailand, Japan, and Korea formed the majority of the international students. Accordingly, Mrs. Lakhana stated that:

Just like the cases of my own three children, all of [the international students at the ASB] could be said to be good examples of students who possess literacy. That is what I would like all of the ASB students to succeed at. I personally believe

that linguistic literacy and linguistic fluency builds up the best in personality in a [person].

More specifically, Mrs. Lakhana posited that teachers . . . must equip themselves with professionalism. Professional teachers had to be adept at “taking care of” and “being attentive” to the outputs of their teaching process. This was essential to the preservation of a good quality of education in which literacy was highlighted. Above all, teachers had to be good role models for students in the usage of language that was profound and deeply reflective of the mastery of literacy to which an educated person should aspire. Elaborating on the role of teachers at ASB, Mrs. Lakhana continued:

In the aspect of academics, we the ASB are action-based. Teachers are like mentors. How they act is critically important for our success. Every year, we will hold an orientation for the new teachers -- the first two consecutive weeks of provision of curriculum, assessments, and knowledge transfer. We treat them like members of one true family. The message that “Caring is the most important” must be echoed. We must substantiate it as we must make it concrete in what we say and do. Professional teachers must have the total care for children. . . . Here at the ASB they all must have a teaching license. They must be impressive models for literacy.

But these literacy practices and capabilities in terms of skills were not, in and of themselves, considered adequate for an international school to be successful in its mission. In the eyes of Mrs. Lakhana, the concept of literacy should not be conceived as involving only reading, writing, listening, and speaking as fundamental skills of students being educated for global citizenship. Rather, literacy should be stretched to embrace and incorporate the very concept of “culture” into a higher order of literacy. In fact, in the era of global interdependence, a state in which the lives of people around the world were intertwined closely and in which any of one nation’s problems were part of a larger global problems, Mrs. Lakhana had realized from the beginning that a profound *global consciousness* was needed – a consciousness accompanied by a growing commitment to embrace cultural pluralism and promote intercultural literacy in both theory and practice.

As defined by Mrs. Lakhana, intercultural literacy was basically the ability to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences in the

customs, values, and beliefs of one's own culture and the cultures of others. It recognized the centrality of culture in education as involving "**competencies, attitudes, and identities**" that could transcend cultural boundaries. As stated in the school's mission, the ASB proclaimed that their graduates were prepared to be critical thinkers, independent learners, effective communicators, and most of all, global citizens. At the ASB, intercultural literacy had become an organizational top priority and was firmly institutionalized. Mrs. Lakhana was continually urging her ASB community, both staff and students, to appreciate how culture could influence perceptions and actions, to become eager to learn about cultures other than their own, and to be capable of adapting as appropriate to other cultures. For her, it was total commitment and management support of the acquisition of intercultural literacy that would lead to true internationalization. She expanded on the subject as follows:

As citizens of the multicultural world, it has been particularly important that our administrators and management be sensitive to the roles that culture plays in the beliefs, values, and behaviors [of] themselves and others. Here at the ASB, the sensibleness of all practices relied on the cultural processes that make them effective, but these cultural processes are strategic, relational and cooperative. We emphasize the importance of cooperation and appreciation among all parties involved.

In this connection, as noted by Mr. Simon Faulkner, the Canadian Principal at the ASB, Green Valley campus, the diversity of nationalities amongst the board and school administration was extremely important to the ASB community for a variety of reasons. He explained that:

An international school staff should indeed reflect the diverse nature of the students. To have a fully Caucasian staff in an international school would send messages to the students that only Caucasians can become effective educators. It would be much like having only male engineers visiting schools to promote the profession of engineering. Multinational role models prove to students that the world is truly multinational and that people from all nations can experience success if they are dedicated hard-working students. Much can be said about

the actual Board of governors; the wider the representation, the broader a range of ideas can be presented making the school truly international. The same issue applies to the student body. Diversity in itself can be a very effective teacher and students can learn more about how various cultures can interact and grow together rather than merely in isolation. Being part of a diverse student body is almost like having a first-hand experience of a different culture. Also, it is important to have diversity in a student body because if we were to have only Thai students, the common language among the students would be Thai. If we have a mixture of languages, the common language thus becomes English which is what our students are here to learn. We encourage students to speak English and, in fact, have “English only” zones; but, it is much easier to reinforce this policy when the common language is English.

Mrs. Lakhana cautioned that sometimes management could be very much constrained inside its own cultural contexts. Thus, she believed that if a school wanted to exemplify “best practices,” these had to be reflected in the philosophy and objectives of the individual international school, which translated into practice, could help shape a global society. Therefore, she held that the management and leaders had to simultaneously develop their own and their communities’ intercultural literacy through promoting community-wide learning of the importance of internationalism and intercultural literacy. For Principal Faulkner, a commitment toward the promotion of such objectives and values was shown by the actions of the board and administration. He elaborated as follows:

*Something as simple as hanging flags from the various nations sends a strong visual image to students that the school is indeed representative of many nations. We have, each year, multinational or international day where students and parents dress in traditional dress and bring in traditional foods to share with each other. My experience has shown that these are among the most popular days of the year. We have fashion shows, music and art from various cultures, and there is a commitment within the curriculum that ensures that a global perspective is presented. **One of our Expected School-wide Learning Results (ESLR’s) that are***

actually reported upon on the report card, is global citizenship. So, our commitment extends beyond the entertainment and cultural sampling of food and dance, etc. It is embedded into the curriculum. Our recruitment process for students also extends to various countries, as does our placement of students in universities around the world.

It was apparent, then, that at the ASB, both the policy and administrative arms of the organization fully recognized the importance of intercultural literacy and international-mindedness. Mr. Faulkner posited that:

*Actual policies are more likely to reflect our perspective on what an international school should look like -- from curriculum, to behavior, to pedagogy -- rather than having direct statements about cultural diversity. **Our policy is behind our curriculum, which includes such subjects as global issues, values, and social studies in which a variety of cultures are studied. An international school strives to establish policies which transcend the cultural barriers and actually prepare students to become global citizens within an international world.***

These “cultural messages” from the management reinforced the significance of intercultural literacy at a much deeper level than that of mere exhortations. But, as Mrs. Lakhana and her management group knew only too well, management’s commitment alone, while necessary, would be insufficient to the task at hand. It was also crucial that management’s outlook on intercultural literacy be echoed, even amplified, at the staff level.

Working among Cultural Diversity through “Diversified Forms and Means of Dialogues”

At the ASB community, intercultural literacy was “*primus inter pares*,” the first and foremost value. It was encouraged, embraced, and expected to be practiced by all stakeholders – e.g., in interactions between the management and the staff, the staff and the staff, teachers and students, students and students, teachers to parents, and schools to external communities. As such, the concept of intercultural literacy reflected being “*relational in nature*,” i.e., defined by the social and communicative practices

with which individuals engaged in the various domains of their socio-cultural environments. Because of this relational nature, communication was an important tool in building and maintaining the linkages through “participatory meaningful dialogues” among all parties.

In sharing her view of the role of communication in the promotion of intercultural literacy, Mrs. Lukhana allowed that:

“Communication is extremely important. From my experience, our lessons learnt from the first five year period of running the school involved the problem of communication. We were not [successful] then because of inadequate communication. We did have communication problems, with communication between teachers and parents, and [between] teachers [and] the management teams. In fact, we did a number of surveys, or what we call “internal assessment[s].” We found out that the lack of communication was the major problem. There was high price to pay for that. [Since] then, we have attempted to improve communication that builds understanding for acquiring the true alignment of organizational goals toward internationalism. Conflict [is] natural when people work together. So here we have built up the culture that we must promote the shared and negotiated understanding in carrying out the vision and missions of the school. Now, parents could voice their feedback in helping us in the process of building leadership in our students. Children could tell what they need. They surely could analyze and come up with needs. I could say that culture was quite rooted in relationships through communication”

Going further, Mrs. Lakhana analogized the forms of communication patterns practiced as highways over which reform ideas and knowledge could flow among ASB staff.

Among our staff, management are likely to have attitudes toward their environments which usually seem full of challenges and opportunities that may be quite different from the attitudes employees have toward their environments. We then must listen very attentively to all staff. Bottom up communication was so important. Without genuine listening, we would not be able to operate in this multi-cultural environment effectively. We must

learn to promote healthy dialogues and active listening among our administrative teams and faculty staff. This is all about enculturation in the workplace.

For Mr. Faulkner, the Principal, the criticality of communication was directly tied to the vision and mission – the goals and purposes – that had been articulated for the school. Organizations without clear, concrete purposes tended to be inefficient and occasionally disappointing to all parties involved. What seemed to be “daunting” at the ASB, from his perspective, was that aspect of the organizational culture where interaction engagement and interaction attentiveness were based on high levels of dialogues, discussion, collaboration, and adjustment among multi-stakeholders. Especially advantageous from his vantage point was the pervasive focus on student and teacher learning in the international community, coupled with a continual, school-wide conversation about the quality of everyone’s work, with unwavering support from parents.

The vision of the school emphasized the significance of molding and crafting the students to become “effective communicators.” It was generally not possible, however, to be an acculturated member of a literate society without having developed, as part of that **intercultural apprenticeship**, ideas about what counts as an effective communicator with adequate literacy, and how it might best be passed on from teachers to students, and vice versa. In particular, the ASB had administered the Expected School-wide Learning Results (ESLR’s) which were incorporated into all aspects of the various programs to ensure that the students were critical thinkers, world-class citizens, independent learners, and effective communicators. Principal Faulkner shared ABS’ approach to ensuring that students’ ability to communicate effectively was developed and measured. He stated:

For our students, in order to become effective communicators, it is important that our teachers, when they develop the lesson plans, [ensure that] objectives regarding communication [are] very well set. We look at the evidence-based [sic] whether students communicate effectively or not . . . to inform and to be informed through the receptive communication. We measure children’s effectiveness in every aspect to ensure the quality of our education.

Moreover, on the staff side, the ASB team attempted to become a “listening and learning” community. One of the benefits of being a listening and learning organization was the enabling of the culture to be self-correcting and highly adaptive to necessary change. The team was in agreement that the best way to bring along staff or teachers, each of whom came from different cultural backgrounds, was to create a professional learning culture where communication was the nexus. With effective communication, the culture could then be created, maintained, and changed via the process of communication itself.

All organizational members had a part in creating the communication system in the workplace. Each organizational member was therefore considered to be a carrier, as well as a potential creator, developer, and change agent of culture. Principal Faulkner continued with a more expansive view of the role of communication in the organization’s functioning:

*For us, communication is extremely important. [We try to] be cautious of any forms of misunderstanding because [they] could lead to inefficiency. To achieve the goals of teaching and learning [requires an] emphasis on the vertical alignment between curriculum and pedagogy. So, we need the open communication. The ultimate goal of the school’s 5- year action plan is about the issue management of “Literacy” (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). To achieve, it is all about politics and procedures. Since we have rules, **communication then is part of the infrastructure here.** People will communicate. Communication plays the major role on expectations.*

The principal noted that the ASB community was abuzz with conversations about important and interesting matters. A language of inquiry and thoughtfulness was the norm, with staff listening to one another and feeling safe enough to evaluate and take risks. In particular, he noted that diversity was being capitalized on as a key institutional strength. With respect to intercultural perspectives, development was focused not only on the acquisition of skills and knowledge related to professional areas, but also the development of values and cross-cultural awareness, with an emphasis on the application of skills and knowledge. Generic indicators outlined by Mr. Faulkner focused on intercultural learning through the development of understanding and valuing of one’s own and

other cultures. The principal commented on the notion of **“Tone of Morale”** as related to the practice of intercultural literacy among staff.

There is a strong sense of empowerment here, the tone of morale, actually. We don't segregate people. We don't have sub-cultures because we have practiced “the shared leadership” [notion] where everybody is treated as an equal partner. People who populate an organization determine the culture. We seek flexibility here. . . . Face-to-face, we are just happy to have a new form of meeting with the oral presentation, “Presentation to Learning”. Teachers gather and share their first-hand classroom experiences in [a] positive and collaborative climate. Staff feels they are allowed to be better teachers. So, the sense of morale goes up. We have Professional Development Committee (PD Committee). People attending the PD pods . . . then come back and share the knowledge gained. With high awareness of culture, we have discussed the “Culture Issue” here for the newcomers. They must attend the Thai language class and the Thai culture course -- 3-days – plus [participate in the] field trip.

Further, noted both Mrs. Lakhana and Principal Faulkner, since culture consisted of the patterns of thinking that leaders transferred to their followers, teachers to their students, and peers to peers, there was the need among international employees, especially the *“international employees,”* for a much deeper understanding of the range of culture-determined value systems that existed among countries – value systems that had to be taken into account when transferring ideas (e.g., *“management ideas”*) from one country to another. Mr. Faulkner spoke of the challenges of intercultural communication that were inherent in working through diversity of value systems:

Leaders must create constructive environments in which individuals [can] expect to have their personal ideas and practices heard and subjected to the scrutiny of their colleagues; concurrently, groups could also expect to have their shared conceptions and ideas of practices heard and subjected to the scrutiny of individuals, especially [in a] “melting pot” type of context... We also have an access to the professional development: Bangkok Teacher Network. It is a real communication challenge.

In America, people love to share. In working with the Thai teachers, . . . , as representatives of the host culture, we have to learn about their cultural values. Silence is the accepted norm in Thailand. Some Thai teachers oftentimes keep silent during the meeting. . . . We used to think that they are not confident in communicating and expressing their points of views. Now we are all trained to respect the cultural differences in people. We American[s] are taught to challenge authority, which would found to be odd in the Thai culture. So, here, at ASB, if we challenge one another in the professional realm, it [is] alright. People learn to agree to disagree. We mobilize the collective capacity to challenge circumstances. We respect differences.

Mrs. Fathima Yazmin Zain, originally from Sri Lanka, with 12 consecutive years working with ASB and currently the Head of Department of the Early Years, spoke to the issue of the climate of communication practiced at the ASB. She stated:

We have [a] social committee and [a] Personal Development Committee for the improvement of the staff for the benefits of the staff and for the betterment of the school. We have [a] steering committee for solid language and Literacy. [The] Board of Directors will work hand in hand with the founder, whose vision has been kept intact. We [have a] weekly meeting on every Thursday. There [are] no racial occurrences and prejudices here. We have vision, and we must steer them; and, we must incorporate everybody's ideas. We lend ears to everybody. Negative [input] could be beneficial . . . [when] we have loop holes to fix.

This was found to be congruent with what nine-year ASB veteran teacher, Miss Pathra Morakot, a Thai citizen who taught Thai Culture and Thai Studies subjects for the upper high school students, stated concerning the communication practices at ASB:

As a Thai, I feel honored by the ASB management and international peers. I have a great opportunity and autonomy to run my own instructional design for the training sessions of teaching Thai culture for foreign staff here. As far as I am aware, in some international schools, Thai teachers are not allowed

*to fully participate in the staff meeting. But here everybody is treated nicely. It is the open climate of communication. It is the two-way dialogue. If I have any problems, I [can] raise them up. The principal would listen and if there is [not] any unanswerable questions, those questions would be referred up to the owner of the school and we surely would get the answer in forms of suggestions and advice. . . . When East meets West, the rule here is [that] through cooperation and open communication we finally learn to adjust and adapt. Almost ten years of working here, I am sure that everybody is [an] integral part to the success and growth of the school where English is the medium of communication. Every principal cherishes the value of intercultural literacy. Previously, when we have administered the Stanford Assessment Test, my role was only to acknowledge the event, no participation. But now, I am also wearing a hat of being the proctor, which is very beneficial to my career path. I have had [a] great chance to learn to take the systems thinking towards trends of curriculum from the international perspective, which could be applied to the teaching of Thai Studies and Culture. **You can feel known and respected and surrounded by “decent” people, regardless of races. That is how I feel.***

Generally speaking, schools were complicated institutions, socially, culturally, and politically. An international school, particularly those serving diverse populations, could harbor many conflicting cultures. It could carry within it a host of values, beliefs, assumptions, and forms of communication. Therefore, from time to time, the ASB community faced some difficulties in communication in terms of its effectiveness and efficiency. Miss Keren Glazier, the Canadian homeroom teacher to the grade 3 students, stated that:

I think that creating a school that has open lines of communication is important to ASB. I think that they want to have a culture where students, parents, teachers, and other staff communicate openly and regularly. However, I don't think that is always the case. With two campuses often teachers who teach similar grades do not have same time or a means to communicate with one another. Additionally, many families and teachers have different cultural backgrounds and beliefs, [and] therefore also

hav[e] different views on how to, or [with whom], communicate. I think that the policy does support communication, but it can definitely be improved.

This viewpoint was congruent with what Principal Faulkner had in mind. It was definitely important to find out how to make the policy at the ASB be more supportive of communication. Firstly, in order to work cooperatively with individuals from vastly different backgrounds, staff would have to understand the different values people place on the importance of the content and form of communication, including the use of time. The ASB had over 80 full time staff, primarily from the United States and Canada, but also from other countries such as Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Philippines, New Zealand, Ghana, and Thailand. The School had to be sensitive enough to promote effective ways to communicate since it would be beneficial for all staff to increase opportunities to maximize uses of time and free up time and energy for strategic endeavors. Secondly, it was believed important for the school to promote more two-way communication with the external communities. With this in mind, the tech Director broached the subject of the adoption of Google communication as an innovative and affordable means to help the staff and the larger ASB community, both parents and students, communicate.

As a form of information literacy, and as the reflection of the temporal dimension to intercultural communication, the adoption of Google for Education enabled the ASB team streamline academic and non-academic tasks. It expanded opportunities for people to co-perform the “**info-cultural apprenticeship**” in their newly communication technology environment. Increasing access to ICT enabled the ASB community to develop a sense of community in which international staff could communicate, interact, and participate in intercultural situations. Mr. Faulkner elaborated:

Every Thursday was scheduled to be the meeting day of all teaching staff or the Staff meeting. Previously, the goal of the meeting was only informative in nature on the operational and procedural issues. It consumed and utilized people’s time. I could say people could come to the meeting physically, not mentally. People tended to be tense and stressful. Traditionally, handouts and paper-based documents were distributed. At present, we communicate using computer-mediated

communication: via Google-based. With the adoption of Google-based system of on-line communication, people can communicate electronically. People save more time for strategic planning. We can share documents on Google and we can share the concept of best practices more effectively. Whole Google communication has streamlined the communication culture at the ASB. We emphasize responses. I could then say learning could be two-way in terms of management structure. Google Ideas derived not from the management, but from one IT coordinator who initiated it. . . . So, electronic communication meets and serves individual needs. We used to have problems with information dissemination with parents via SMS. But now with the G-mail account, we create for mass audience, with classification of accounts. When we have good news, we will promote the Newsletter 4 times a year. In the future, we will tend to go online. Information could then be widely assessed by the parents and the students. Two-way communication holds the parents more accountable. Google is very low-key. It can operate on substance. Google can then be a remarkable tool for learning, and connecting people.

From a broader social perspective, to be effective in operating within a diverse multicultural society necessitated being actively involved not only in understanding, negotiating, and managing the differences in order to have a harmonious global community, but also celebrating the richness that diversity this brings to the teaching and learning contexts. In a narrower sense, how intercultural literacy was promoted through strategic communication was best portrayed in the classroom context—the intercultural classrooms where multi-cultural teaching competencies, were enhanced.

“Class Culture and Community in the Classroom”: Teachers with Intercultural Communication Competence as Exemplars of International-mindedness and the Prelude to the Intercultural Literacy

The ASB classroom exemplified what the school professed, and how, with respect to its philosophies, ideologies, pedagogical values, vision, and missions. In the eyes of Mr. James Feren, the American ASB counselor with five years of sojourning in different cultures and three years in the

counseling job at ASB, there was a general consensus that if students were going to be successful in today's multi-cultural world, they would need to develop a culturally sensitive frame of reference and mode of operation through effective communication.

Nevertheless, as he noted, the concept of culture could be misinterpreted. Culture is not an abstract concept but was nonetheless sometimes manifested with difficulty. According to Mr. Feren, cultural differences within a diverse, multicultural community could give rise to misunderstandings or communication breakdown, clashes, and anxiety. In essence, culture had the potential to negatively impact the communication atmosphere. He continued:

We have good student-teacher ratio here at ASB. As a counselor, [I've observed that] sometimes Asian students are reluctant to communicate. For example, Thai children do not come forward to seek counseling guidance or consultancy because of some Thai cultural values -- the value of "Face." They are probably afraid to lose face. I could say, according to the Thai-Asian cultures, values may restrict communication atmosphere. I am then [a] strong supporter for children. We need to reach out and step to their side. And start to build trust and teach them to learn to value their own cultures and show understanding and respect for the cultures of others. I have conducted interviews with them—in-depth—to talk to them and to get to their problems. We just can't practice "jumping on the band wagon" where we assume things. [What is involved is] abilities to think, behave and communicate effectively and appropriately in multicultural contexts.

Mr. Feren also emphasized the importance of nonverbal communication and intercultural sensitivity in the work of counseling, including sensitivities toward interaction engagement where respect for cultural differences was the key to success in intercultural understanding counseling. It was suggested that developing such skills entailed an on-going learning process that involved interpretation, self-reflection and negotiation. These, in turn, gradually transformed a person's attitudes, knowledge, and skills – making him/her more sensitive to cultural differences and thereby enabling a counselor to become adept at interacting and communicating to facilitate the development of intercultural literacy. How intercultural awareness should be developed and assessed at sites of intercultural

interaction was important due to the fact that some students possessed more responsibility, flexibility, and social skillfulness than others. Mr. Feren continued:

*As a counselor, I need to be keen at observing nonverbal behaviors among children. I have to be sensitive to emotions and empathic to their feelings. **Working with and for students with limited English proficiency, I need to be sensitive to their mental stresses. When it comes to culture, students could be very confused. Never assume . . . that we all have [the] same sets of cultural values. I have practiced the client-centered approach. We have to promote the international-mindedness type of mentality. Students would need to feel respected. Then they could learn to demonstrate acceptance of and adaptability to a changing world, a passion for learning and applying that learning afterwards to the art of living after leaving school. I am certain to assert that no culture, language or tradition of any people is inferior.***

Mrs. Zain, the Head of Department of the Early Years, was another strong believer in intercultural literacy and an avid advocate of intercultural literacy. In her view, small schools like the ASB had a better chance of getting the members to agree upon the school's vision and mission, getting buy-in from their communities, developing a curriculum tailored to their students, increasing the amount of individualized learning, and holding school-wide conversations about improvement. She started with some general observations about the ASB community.

ASB is more like family. ASB is more closely-connected . . . a very family-oriented, small-knitted type of community. [A] smaller school could offer more opportunities for people to know one another and especially for teachers to “personalize” learning. ASB has good potential of adapting process to accommodate or accept the students without rejecting [sic] because the teachers give opportunities and motivate or try to make them fit in or blend in with the school systems. We must personalize. Here people are more personable. However, our role as teachers in [an] international school is very challenging.

Classroom teachers need to have perspectives [on] ethnic, cultural and social-class diversity and [a] more coherent view of knowledge and life to describe the best way to learn. They can equip themselves with abilities to adopt appropriate perspectives, as well as some communicative competencies to facilitate the multicultural classroom climate.

According to Mrs. Zain, one of these “challenges” for international teachers, either directly and indirectly, encompassed cultural elements. When students first came to the school, they might feel alienated from it, at least until such time as they became socialized and acculturated to it. Teachers then had to assume full responsibilities in facilitating this adaptation process through strategic communication that promoted “productive dialogues” with the students. In particular, these “meaningful dialogues” had to be practiced with intercultural sensitivity, especially in the classroom contexts. This involved the practices of interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness which were all considered important for people working in multicultural contexts.

Moreover, Mrs. Zain held on to the belief that this cross-cultural learning experience could lead to deep personal growth for both teachers and students. This growth significantly related to the intercultural communication competence or ability to communicate interculturally, which was essential to teachers in the successful transfer of knowledge to the multi-cultural classroom, in socializing the students to the classroom “multi-culture in miniature”, and in gaining cross-cultural empathy. Of course, communicative skills were not only the keys to professional success for teachers, but also keys to successful adaptation and personal growth for students in multicultural classroom contexts. Students raised in diverse cultures were educated in accordance with the perceived needs of their cultures. They grew up to be socially different because of their cultural experiences. Hence, the school -- in particular, an international school -- could provide the context in which socialization and learning processes based on deeply internalized sets of values could “co-occur” and become internalized by the students.

Further, due to the profound impact that international schools had on intercultural interaction, it could be argued then that international education had the key role to perform in the development of a “universalistic

intellectual” and ethic for the future of humanity. Continuing, Mrs. Zain maintained that:

*Culture plays a big part in the classroom. We here use the Positive Approach, “The Humane Approach”. I believe that the substance of education is development, learning, and human growth. **Teaching is a passion and dedication, purposeful to educate [the] child, to bring the best out of the child.** Teachers must be flexible and adapt to each single child and revitalize to fit with [the] particular child. Teachers must have teaching strategies to communicate with students. In [a] diplomatic way, we must make sure that our students are mentally and physically fit with our international culture and the way we cater it. **Literacy is the key. Through effective communication in another language, students are sensitized to cultural diversity and are better capable of understanding the global world in which they live.***

For Mrs. Zain, teachers in international education were working at the “crossroads of culture”. Some characteristics of a “true community in the classroom” therefore had to be realized. The community must be inclusive and generate a general acceptance and appreciation of differences. Teachers, as well as students, had to have a strong sense of commitment to persevere through both positive and negative experiences; and, they must have awareness of both themselves and others. Members must feel secure enough to be vulnerable to one another. In that way students are accepted for who they really are. The community had to be able to resolve differences by addressing problems using productive conflict-reduction strategies, instead of avoiding, minimizing or disregarding differences. Therefore, it was important for teachers to develop the right attitude, knowledge, and skills towards intercultural understanding in the multi-cultural classroom through the emphatic communication. Empathic teachers then must be able to infer the feelings and needs of their students and to adapt to classrooms that had different and unfamiliar surroundings, languages and behaviors.

Indeed, the key characteristic of the interculturally competent teacher was empathy. Students must also learn empathy and tolerance in the international and intercultural communities. In referring to the idealistic

profile of a culturally literate student, Mrs. Zain pointed out that such students were knowledgeable and appreciative of the way that culture and history—their own as well as those of others—impacted behaviors, beliefs, and relationships in a multi-cultural world. They were capable of understanding that culture impacted their behaviors and beliefs, and the behaviors and beliefs of others. They would be aware, as well, of specific cultural beliefs, values, and sensibilities that might affect the way that they and others think or behave. They must also learn to appreciate and accept diverse beliefs, appearances, and lifestyles, and be able to communicate and work positively with individuals from other cultural groups.

Miss Kanitha Pornsipak, the Thai teacher of compulsory Thai cultural studies for Grade 1-8 who had been working with the ASB for 23 years, voiced beliefs derived from her own first-hand experience in exposing herself to the multicultural classroom context in particular. She stated that:

*[There are] many opportunities and venues [here] for creating international culture. We could talk, discuss the fundamental values, take responsibility, come together as a community, and celebrate both individual and group success. [These are] our everyday practices and certainly, in the classroom. **Instead of beginning with what the school offers, you have to begin with what the students need. The job of the teacher is to know the student and draw him or her toward the subjects and the curriculum.** My subject would reflect the Thai wisdom. In content, I emphasize that both Thais and non-Thai students must learn about Thai culture, covering ways of life, beliefs, traditions, rituals, food.*

Miss Keren Glazier, the Canadian Grade 3 homeroom teacher, proffered yet other views on the ASB class culture based on the strong emphasis on the interrelationship between communication and culture. She stated that:

Promoting or enhancing intercultural communication and intercultural literacy among children in our classroom is probably the easiest part of culture and communication. By that, I mean, we have the most direct contact with our students, and of course lots of time with them to do activities and have

discussions. We do “TRIBES,” a tool that encourages sharing, kindness, and open communication, in classroom.

Apart from the discussion of classroom atmosphere at the ASB in relation to intercultural communication as practiced, these teachers also shared their thoughts about how the ASB culture was manifested in its launching of some outreach programs aimed at promulgating intercultural literacy in the community. Mrs. Zain cited the example of how ASB management and the whole school community cared about communicating the promotion of intercultural literacy – i.e., the annual organization of the event called “The Sukhumvit Fair”. Each year, she explained, the ASB would organize this charitable fair in order to celebrate “cultural diversity,” promote international cohesiveness within the ASB community, and reach out to the greater community to raise funds for Thai or international charitable programs. The fair was capable of bringing together both students and parents, regardless of races and ethnicities, to unite and learn about other cultures. Continuing, Mrs. Zain asserted that: *“For the Sukhumvit Fair, we bring community together among these vicinities. It is in fact the “Integration of Culture”. We want to give back to the community where everyone could care enough to give.”*

Miss Kanitha Pornsipak, the Thai teacher, also voiced her opinion about ASB’s organizational culture as it related to intercultural communication and support from the management. Averring that management was very supportive of the promotion of Thai culture, she went on assert: *“. . . [F]oreign parents . . . are excited and eager to participate in our cultural events and cultural offerings. Both parents and alumni are highly involved in school activities celebrating internationalism, and of course, the host culture, Thai culture.”*

Thus, the “culture in miniature”, as enacted in the classroom context by all teaching staff and as manifested in the overall organizational context at ASB, was in alignment with respect to the promotion of intercultural literacy through intercultural communication.

The Final Perspective: “As Reflected in the Classroom Culture, So the School”

For an international school to be truly engaged in the internationalization process, many factors must be taken into the account -- school leadership;

faculty members' involvement in activities promoting a strong sense of internationalism; and, above all, the degree of openness and responsiveness of the school to building a true international community where cultural diversity was treated with empathy, respect and care. Since internationalization was an ongoing, multidimensional, interdisciplinary, leadership-driven vision that involved many stakeholders working to achieve the vision in the context of the internal dynamics of an institution, it was important for an international school like the ASB to learn to respond and adapt appropriately to an increasingly diverse, globally focused environment.

In order for internationalization to be fully effective, all stakeholders of an international school, as well as the curriculum and activities, needed to be current with impactful cultural elements and willing to learn to adapt to these cultural dimensions. Though its work was not yet complete, the ASB was well on its way toward becoming a powerful example of how an international school could, with vision and mission kept intact, ensure that internationalism permeated the core values of the school. Above all, intercultural literacy, the philosophy encompassing both attitudes and competency that facilitated effective intercultural engagement via strategic communication, remained central to the school's culture.

Exhibit 1: The School Profile of the ASB



The American School of Bangkok School Profile

Sukhumvit Campus
59-59/1 Sukhumvit Road
Soi 49/3 Wattana,
Bangkok 10110 Thailand
Tel: 66 (0) 2620 8600
Fax: 66 (0) 2261 0330
info@asb.ac.th

Green Valley Campus
900 Moo 3 Bangna-Trad Road Km. 15
Bangplee, Samutprakarn
10540 Thailand
Tel: 66 (0) 2312 5660
Fax: 66 (0) 2312 5797
info@asb.ac.th

History

The Sukhumvit Campus of the American School of Bangkok (ASB) was founded in 1983. In 1995 ASB was licensed by the Ministry of Education and was renamed “Didyasarin International School”. In 1997 the Green Valley Campus was officially opened. In the 2000-2001 academic year, the school was renamed “The American School of Bangkok”. Both campuses offer a full Nursery to Grade 12 American curriculum.

Community

ASB is International in its student body, enrolling students from over 40 countries. In the high school, students from the United States, Thailand, Japan, and Korea from the majority of our nationality groups. Parents of ASB students work in business, government, and other professional backgrounds.

School Year

The regular school year has two semesters (from August to December, and January to May). An optional five-week summer school program is offered mid June to mid July. As well, an Intensive English Program is offered from March through May for students outside of the

regular program who would like to improve their English and experience an international school setting.

Academic Program

ASB provides its high school students with a complete university preparatory program utilizing English as the language of instruction. The high school program is designed to prepare students for entrance to universities around the world. ASB graduates receive a certified and accredited North American high school diploma.

Curriculum

ASB employs a United States-based curriculum, offering a PK – 12 program which is tailored to and focused on educating international students.

Accreditation

The American School of Bangkok is licensed by the Thai Ministry of Education, accredited by the Western Association of School and Colleges (WASC), and is a member of the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools (EARCOS).

Administrators

Simon Faulkner

Principal – Green Valley Campus

John McGrath

Principal – Sukhumvit Campus

Daniel Sharp

Assistant Principal – Green Valley Campus

Benjamin Tamte

Assistant Principal – Sukhumvit Campus

Faculty

ASB has over 80 full time staff, primarily from the United States or Canada. All teaching staff have degree in Education, teaching certification, and teaching experience from their home countries. Over half of our staff have advanced degrees in education.

Student Body

Total Student body	800
High School enrollment	420
Boarding enrollment	65
2012 Graduating class	82
Number of different nationalities	41
Percentage of US citizens	15%
Percentage of Thai citizens	35%

Philosophy

The philosophy of The American School of Bangkok centers around promoting excellence in all of its students. It strives to provide for each student a comprehensive education in an atmosphere that is supportive of the individual's identity, talents and creativity.

Dormitory Services

The American School of Bangkok Dormitory is located on the Green Valley Campus. This facility offers modern, comfortable accommodations with cable TV, a recreation room, internet access and qualified dorm parents who monitor the students' day to day dormitory life. Academic support and counseling is also provided. The dormitory currently hosts over 70 students of over 10 nationalities.

Student Activities

For those students interested in athletics, ASB provides a full range of sports teams that compete regularly in the Bangkok International Schools Athletics Conference, a city-wide group of international school which play organized games and tournaments throughout the school year. Performing arts are another important part of ASB's after school program. Students have the opportunity to join our numerous bands and choirs, act in plays and musicals, and express themselves year round through a variety of performances. The American School of Bangkok also offers many activities for our more academically focused students. We are regular participants in the Harvard Model Congress, and the Model United Nations. We are also proud to be participants in the Hong Kong University International Entrepreneurial Competition, which is held annually.

Vision

The American School of Bangkok strives to excel in the international educational community. Our graduates are prepared to be critical thinkers, independent learners, effective communicators, and global citizens.

Mission

The mission of the American School of Bangkok is to foster academic excellence in a caring community, where diversity is celebrated, and mutual respect among adults and students is practiced. We provide the foundation for lifelong learning and the skills and values needed to become responsible leaders in the global community.

Graduation Credit Requirements

High school graduation requirements include the following courses, four English, two Physical Education, one Technology, one Thai language and Culture (for Thai students), one Asian Studies (for non-Thai students), PSAT, college prep, and electives for a total of 28 credits.

Matriculation Plans

100% of our Grade 12 students went on to university or college in the school year 2011-2012. Approximately 50% of our students go on to study abroad in a bachelor degree program in The U.S.A. or Canada.

Advanced Placement (AP) Program

High school students may also enroll in the Advanced Placement (AP) Program. While taking Advanced Placement (AP) Program coursework, our students undergo a battery of rigorous academic assessments, as the AP courses can lead to university level equivalency if students challenge the AP exams. Currently ASB offers:

- AP Language
- AP U.S. History
- AP World History
- AP Comparative Government
- AP Psychology
- AP Environment
- AP Chemistry
- AP Statistics

High School Course Offerings

English	Business
Forms of Literature	Marketing
World Literature	Accounting
American Literature	Finance
British Literature	Entrepreneurship
Creative Writing	Performing Arts
Journalism/Yearbook	Drama
AP Language	Band
Basic Writing Skills	Choir
Social Studies	Music Appreciation
Geography	Design/Technology
World History	Computer Technology
U.S. History	Word Processing
Asian Studies	Skills
Economics	Digital/Graphics
Psychology	Design
Comparative Politics	Digital Photography
Global Issues	Computer
AP U.S. History	Media/Graphics
AP World History	Film Production
AP Psychology	Media Studies
Science	Design & Technology
Science Interactions	Foreign Language
Biology	Spanish 1-2
Chemistry	French 1-2
Physics	Chinese 1-3
Environmental	Thai 1-4
Studies	Physical Education
AP Environment	Values
AP Chemistry	Health
Mathematics	
Algebra I	
Geometry	
Algebra II	
Pre-calculus	
Calculus	
Statistics	
AP Statistics	

English Language Learners (ELL)

The American School of Bangkok provides supplementary English Learning (ELL) support for students who do not speak adequate English as their first language. The basic aim of the ASB ELL program is to assist students requiring English language support to access the school curriculum and help them to progress to the level of English proficiency to which point they can confidently and successfully move into the mainstream academic program.

ELL support is provided in the mainstream classes as well as in special classes organized by the ASB ELL department. ELL students attend these sessions to enhance their language skills and to keep up with the mainstream academic workload.

External Exams

1. Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

The American School of Bangkok uses the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) school wide assessment program as its external testing program for all students grade 2-11. MAP is a computerized adaptive test, which helps teachers, parents, and administrators improve learning for all students and make informed decisions to promote a child's academic growth.

MAP is designed to target a student's academic performance in mathematics, language, and writing. These tests are tailored to an individual's current achievement level. This gives each student a fair opportunity to show what he or she knows and can do. MAP is used to measure a student's to teachers because they let teachers know where a student's strengths are and if help is needed in any specific areas. Teachers use this information to help them guide instruction in the classroom.

2. Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT I)

The SAT is a standardized test for college admissions in the United States. The SAT is owned, published, and developed by the College Board, a nonprofit organization in the United States. The test is intended to assess a student's readiness for college.

The SAT Reasoning Test takes three hours and forty-five minutes to finish. Possible scores range from 600 to 2400, combining test results from three 800-point sections (Mathematics, Critical Reading, and Writing). Taking the SAT is required for freshman entry to many, but not all, universities in the United States.

MEAN SCORE SUMMART			
	Critical Reading	Math	Writing
Class of 2012	534	640	504

3. *Advanced Placement – 2011-2012 Scores*

The Advanced Placement (AP) is a program in the United States created by the College Board offering college—level curriculum and examinations to high school students. American colleges often grant placement and course credit to students who obtain high scores on the examinations.

The AP curriculum for the various subjects is created for the College Board by a panel of experts and college-level educators in each subject. For a high school course to have the AP designation, the course must be audited by the College Board to course is approved the school may use the AP designation and the course will be publicly listed on the AP Ledger.

ASB Students	
Total AP Students	45
Number of Exams	96
AP Students with Scores 3+	66
% of Total AP Students with scores 3+	63.40%
Global	
Total AP Students	2,106,908
Number of Exams	3,714,339
AP Students with Scores 3+	1,295,053
% of Total AP Students with scores 3+	61.50%

General Admissions Information

We welcome all enquiries to any of our programs offered at ASB. You can apply to ASB by e-mailing to info@asb.ac.th or by contacting the admissions officers at each campus:

The Sukhumvit Campus

Mr. Bartek Moakwa
 Phone: 66(0) 2620 8600 Ext.149
 E-mail: bartek.moskwa@asb.ac.th

The Green Valley Campus

Mr. Tom Yates
 Phone: 66 (0) 2312 5660-2 Ext.8
 E-mail: tom.yates@asb.ac.th

New students are usually admitted in July and December. However, applications are accepted throughout the year.

For more information regarding our regular program. Intensive English Programs, or Summer School session, please do not hesitate to contact us. Translations for Thai, Korean, Chinese, or Japanese speakers are available upon request.

Exhibit 2: Mrs. Lakhana Tavedikul's Profile

Name: Mrs. Lakhana Tavedikul

Position: Founder & Director of The American School of Bangkok and also Managing Director of United Communications Co., Ltd.

Education: B.S. Education (1970), Oklahoma State University, USA,
M.A. Education (1975), Nebraska University, USA

Personal Background: Resided in the United States of America for 11 years whilst studying for B.S. and M.A in Education

Experience / Achievements in Education:

1983 - Founded and established Didyasarin International Kindergarten, the first international Kindergarten in Thailand.

1995 - Expanded the international school to include elementary and high school teaching levels, changing the name to "The American School of Bangkok (ASB)". The school, currently with two campuses (Sukhumvit and Bangna), has 900 students from 44 countries. The Sukhumvit and Bangna campuses received accreditation from Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), of the United States in year 2000, and a 'White School' award from the Thai Ministry of Education for being a drug-free school.

Some "Personal Messages" as the American School of Bangkok's Founder and Director:

- The American School of Bangkok strives to excel in the international educational community. The ASB graduates are prepared to be critical thinkers, independent learners, effective communicators, and global citizens.
- The mission of The American School of Bangkok is to foster academic excellence in a caring community where diversity is celebrated, and mutual respect among adults and students is practiced. The ASB provides the foundation for life-long learning and the skills and values needed to become responsible leaders in the global community.

- The American School of Bangkok's motto is "The School of Leaders". We are committed to create distinguished scholars who are innovative, independent, charismatic, confident, creative, responsible, effectual and visionary leaders.
- The American School of Bangkok is licensed by the Thai Ministry of Education, accredited by the Western Association of School and Colleges (WASC) and is a member of the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools (EARCOS).
- ASB employs a United States-based curriculum, offering a Pre-Kindergarten - Grade 12 program which is tailored to and focused on educating international students.
- For Charitable Events Organization/ Recognition: the American School of Bangkok has constantly organized events and fund-raising activities to help different charities throughout Thailand in the last 10 years. The ASB organizes a yearly event - known as the Sukhumvit Fair to celebrate cultural diversity and understanding in the community and provide our students with the opportunity to exercise their skills and qualities as world class citizens, by raising funds for Thai or international charities in a fun and exciting way. The net proceeds generated from prior Sukhumvit Fairs were used to support different causes such as UNICEF; tsunami relief foundations; foundations under the patronage of His Majesty the King of Thailand; the Foundation of Thai Elephant Conservation administered by the National Elephant Institute under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani; the Home for the Blind with Multiple Disabilities at Ram-intra, an institution administered by the Christian Foundation for the Blind in Thailand, under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty the King of Thailand; and, provincial schools under AMCHAM 'Adopt-a-School' programs.

Exhibit 3: Heyward's (2002) Model of Intercultural Literacy

Cultural and Intercultural literacy is a branch of literacy that look at an individual's ability to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences in the customs, values, and beliefs of one's own culture and the cultures of theirs. There is no culture that can live, if it attempts to be exclusive in its own. This emphasizes on the importance of cultural literacy in its varying degrees in the global world. Therefore, as citizens of the global world, it is particularly important that all nations be sensitive to the role the culture plays in the behaviors, beliefs, and values of themselves and others.

According to Heyward (2002), the inter-culturally literate person is able to effectively "read a second culture, to interpret its symbols and negotiate its meanings in a practical day-to-day context" (p. 10). Lack of intercultural literacy, on the other hand, leads to "misunderstandings and intercultural blunders that can be extremely costly to both individuals and organizations". For intercultural learning, the development of intercultural literacy requires the individual to learn what culture is by reflecting on his or her own culture, by learning about other culture, and how to engage successfully with members of other cultures in various social contexts. Thus, intercultural literacy learning takes place through the experience of confronting oneself in a cross-cultural situation. Intercultural learning environments need to be 'designed' in a way that will enable equal participation of members from different cultures, in order to make students aware of their own and foreign cultures, to increase their understanding, to give them the opportunities to develop competencies, to increase their language proficiencies, and to eventually form transcultural or global identities. Here below is the Heyward's Model of Intercultural Literacy.

Dimension	Lowest Level	Highest Level
Understandings	Unaware of own culture or of the significance of culture in human affairs.	Aware of how cultures feel and operate from the standpoint of the insider.
Competencies	No significant intercultural competencies	Competencies include mindfulness, empathy, perspective taking, tolerance, and communication
Attitudes	Assumes that all groups share similar values and traits	Attitudes are differentiated, dynamic, and realistic, and demonstrate an overall respect for integrity of cultures
Participation	No significant participation and unawareness of cultural dimension of contact	Well-established cross-cultural friendships and/or working relationships
Language proficiencies	No significant second language competencies	Bilingual or multilingual understanding and proficiencies.
Identities	Unformed cultural identity	Identities are bicultural, trans-cultural, or global; ability to consciously shift between multiple cultural identities

Exhibit 4: International Education and Internationalism

International Education has come to have a number of different meanings in recent years. According to Hayden (2006), the terms global education, development education, comparative education, and international studies have been used, yet their meanings are significantly different from each other. International education, by definition, requires a crossing of national borders. It is the process of educating people to see themselves as international citizens in other nations. From a scholarly perspective, international education describes educational work that practitioners and scholars undertake in countries other than their own. Global education, as described by Clarke (2004), integrates curricular perspectives, issues of cultural diversity, prejudice reduction, and human rights. It is evident that international education has been described as a new educational vision able to provide global society with an education that meets current cultural and linguistic needs (Burrell, 2006; Gacel-Avila, 2005).

According to Crossley and Watson (2006), reasons to support international education include:

- (1) gain a better understanding of one's own educational system;
- (2) satisfy intellectual and theoretical curiosity about other cultures and their education systems; and better understand the relationship between education and the wider society;
- (3) identify similarities and differences in educational systems, processes and outcomes as a way of documenting and understanding problems in education, and contributing to the improvement of educational policy and practice;
- (4) promote improved international understanding and co-operation through increased sensitivity to different world views and cultures.

Merryfield (1991) stated that although many schools have taken steps to address the need to develop students' global perspectives, lack of teacher preparation is a major obstacle. Heyl and McCartney (2003) stated that there is a way of minimizing and eliminating the gap with regards to international knowledge and the preparation gap for teachers. They suggested that personal exposure and professional development of international activities can be and may be the most influential factors in enhancing international competencies for both pre-service and in-service teachers. Heyl and McCartney proposed that a key role for higher education institutions

must be to graduate future K-12 teachers who think globally, have international experience, demonstrate foreign language competence, and able to incorporate a global dimension into their teaching. This would lead to the internationalism. One of the goals is the development of the educators who can help all students learn and who can teach from multicultural and global perspectives that draw on the histories, experience, and representations of students from diverse cultural backgrounds (NCATE, 2006). All of the above advocate for the conceptualization of a global perspective; providing global content; designing cross-cultural experiences, and developing pedagogy appropriate for a global perspective.

Exhibit 5: Some Advantages for the Enhancement and Promotion of the International School in Thailand

According to the Ministry of Education in Thailand (2000), all international schools are required to be externally accredited to ensure that they meet recognized standards and follow agreed procedures. Accreditation organizations include the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). As an interim measure, the Ministry allows accreditation through the Office of the private Education Commission's Standards of Quality Assurance Procedure. To note, there are many reasons for the enhancement and promotion of international school in Thailand. They are as follows:

First, the main reason is to provide conveniences to expatriates working in Thailand. They could be assured that their children will have a good and qualified place to learn in the Kingdom of Thailand.

Secondly, since the government allows for Thai children to study in the international schools, those Thai parents with the need to send children to study abroad would have some alternatives. To study in Thailand would decrease the expenditures of sending children to abroad. Thai kids would still be able to be raised and taken care of in the families surrounded by beloved parents. This means the reduction of monetary flow of currency to money to abroad.

Thirdly, the Thai government has the policy to develop and improve the potentials of human resources among Thai Youth and Thailand is still shortage of people with strong background in the foreign language fluency. With such policy, Thais who are international students would have a fair chance of receiving such opportunities in equipping themselves with high fluency in foreign languages.

Fourthly, the ownership of the international schools belongs to the private sectors. This help to alleviate the governmental budget allocated to help expatriates working in Thailand.

Fifthly, with the existence of international schools in Thailand has become the catalyst for quality improvement to other public and private schools to keep up with the pace of standardization of the international schools.

Lastly, there come the opportunities to learn about other cultures.

Exhibit 6: The Notions of Culture and Cultural Convergence

Culture is a group's collective meaning system and includes its values, attitudes, beliefs, customs, and thoughts. Goodenough (1964, p. 36) defines culture, not as things or behavior, but rather as "the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them." Geertz (1973) treats culture as an ordered system of meanings and symbols, in which social interaction takes place and develops. Culture is also a socially shared activity, and therefore a property of a group rather than an individual. It is normative and may best be represented as a measure of central tendency of the group mind (Durkheim, 1938). It does not derive from the internal conditions of individuals, but rather from society's social conventions or the shared cognitions called "collective representations". Hence, collective representations do not derive from individual minds, but from the association of minds. That is, collective representations are formed during the process of social interaction. Without general agreement about the meaning of the symbols and other communication rules, social interaction would be impossible. As members of social groups communicate, they negotiate the shared meaning of symbols. As a result, culture is external to the individual. Thus, in order to understand culture, one must take the aggregate into consideration. Put simply, culture can be described as the way of life of a people. Hence, understanding other cultures has two notable benefits: 1) it multiplies our access to practices, ideas, and people that can make positive contributions to our own society; and 2) it helps us understand ourselves more deeply. By understanding a range of alternatives, we become aware of our own implicit beliefs—beliefs so deeply imbedded that we routinely take them for granted (Stigler, Gallimore, and Hiebert, 2000). For the concept of cultural convergence, it is about harmonizing corporate culture in order that the organization's identity and image would be strengthened. Down below is the Convergence and Divergence model of culture in international management (Barmeyer, 2000, p. 38).

	Convergence	Divergence
Contender	The difference will disappear	The difference remains or increases
Consequence	Cultural homogeneity	Cultural heterogeneity
Risk	The negation of culture may cause misunderstandings and conflicts	An over-emphasis on culture can become the principal element of conflict
Management	Management methods are universal and can be transferred and applied in different contexts	Management methods are principally marked by their culture of origin and encounter resistance in their application in other contexts.
Corporate Culture	Cultures will become entangled and be diffused. Consequently, the stronger culture will have more influence and will therefore be applied.	Cultures resist change. Consequently, adjustments and intercultural compromises need to be made.

Exhibit 7: Intercultural Communication Competence

From the broadest sense, intercultural communication may be defined as the exchange of information between well-defined groups with significantly different cultures. For the definition of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC), Kim (2001) defined it as “the overall internal capability of an individual to manage key challenging features of intercultural communication. It means having the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with members of another linguistic-cultural background on their terms. There are five components of competence that influence one’s ability to interact effectively and appropriately in another culture. There are (1) motivation to communicate; (2) an appropriate fund of cultural knowledge; (3) appropriate communication skills; (4) sensitivity; and (5) character. According to Spitzburg (2009), teacher self-reflection is an important dynamic in understand self. By honestly examining their attitudes and beliefs about themselves and others, teachers begin to discover why they are who they are and can confront biases that influence their value systems. Accordingly, multi-culturally competent teachers could: (a) recognize, when planning lessons and other classroom activities, the cultural differences in how students see, know, interrelate with knowledge and the classroom environment, (b) understand how their own culture might differ from those of their students, (c) plan activities that will help students to understand cultural differences, the causes of cultural conflict, and the relationship between cultural differences and social inequalities.

For Crichton & Scarino (2007), students’ intercultural competencies can be seen in terms of enhancing their capacities (1) to work with their own and others’ languages and cultures, (2) to recognize knowledge in its cultural context, (3) to examine the intercultural dimension of knowledge applications, and (4) to communicate and interact effectively across language and culture. According to Crichton & Scarino, this definition focuses on how intercultural awareness is developed, assessed and evaluated at sites of intercultural interaction. Interaction is identified as the language and culture vehicle for developing intercultural awareness and is the key principle in both the practice and development of intercultural competencies. Intercultural competence is a dynamic, interactive and self-reflective learning process involving staff and students with the potential to transform values, skills, and knowledge. It is perceived as a dynamic, on-going, interactive self-reflective learning process that transforms attitudes, skills, and knowledge for effective communication and interaction across cultures and contexts.”

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