

Annual Report 2025-2026



Experiencing
the future, today.





INTERNATIONAL SPORTS OF NEW YORK
BEARS

INTERNATIONAL SPORTS OF NEW YORK
BEARS



NEW YORK
BIG CITY BLUES
HOCKEY TEAM

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Table of Contents



FOREWORD	4
Welcome from the Director	4
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	5
Letter from the AISZ Board of Trustees	5
AISZ Leadership Team	7
AISZ Academic Leadership Team	7
ABOUT AISZ	8
Key Facts	8
Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles	9
Financial Review	10
SCHOOLWIDE FOCUS	11
60 years of excellence and our work towards the future	11
Celebrating our Past - Planning for the Future	11
LOWER SCHOOL AT AISZ	18
Lower School Learning	18
UPPER SCHOOL AT AISZ	19
Upper School Learning	19
IB RESULTS	21
2025 Summary of IB Results	21
GRADUATE PLACEMENT	22
Letter from the College Counselor	22
Destination Class of 2026	23
ATHLETICS & EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES	24
TRANSITIONS	26
Arriving & Leaving Faculty	26
Farewells	27

Welcome from the Director

Dear AISZ Community,

As I reflect on the past academic year, it is with immense pleasure that I present our Annual Report. At the American International School of Zagreb (AISZ), we view education as a journey of discovery that extends far beyond the confines of textbooks. This year, our community has once again demonstrated its commitment to our vision: Experiencing the Future, Today.

Celebrating 60 Years of Excellence

This year, AISZ proudly celebrated its 60th anniversary, marking six decades of excellence with a series of landmark events that honored our heritage while looking toward the future. The festivities were anchored by a spectacular Anniversary Gala that brought together alumni, parents, and staff, and the inauguration of our History Wall, a permanent campus installation that chronicles our journey since 1966. In the spirit of our community values, we launched the "60 Acts of Kindness" initiative, engaging students in service projects that made a tangible impact across Zagreb. We also modernized our digital presence through a comprehensive website redesign and the debut of our official web store, allowing the community to wear their AISZ Bear's pride. Together, these celebrations served as a powerful reminder of the enduring legacy and vibrant spirit that define the American International School of Zagreb.

AISZ Strategic Plan Revision

As we look to the future, we are officially revising our strategic plan for the coming years to ensure our goals directly reflect the needs and aspirations of those we serve. This critical process is deeply rooted in your feedback, drawing essential input from both the recent director's listening tour and our comprehensive, community-wide survey. Your input highlighted several key priorities that will guide our focus, including a steadfast commitment to academic excellence, cultivating a vibrant community, culture, and spirit, supporting teaching excellence, and enriching our sports and after-school activities. Our team is currently reviewing all of this valuable data, and we will soon share a draft version of the strategic plan for public comment before finalizing it at the start of next year. We sincerely appreciate all of the input from parents that is helping us forge our next path.

Looking Ahead

In closing, this upcoming year promises to be a milestone chapter for AISZ as we proudly join in celebrating the 250th birthday of the United States, honoring a legacy of holistic education and innovation that inspires our learning every day. This celebration will go hand in hand with the launch of our new strategic plan and usher in a new chapter to our tradition of excellence at AISZ. Guided by our shared vision and strengthened by our incredible community, the future for AISZ has never been brighter.

With warmest regards,

Dr. Darin Fahmey

Director, American International School of Zagreb



Letter from the AISZ Board of Trustees

Dear Members of the AISZ Community,

The 60th anniversary of the American International School of Zagreb provides us an opportunity for gratitude, reflection, and recommitment. Gratitude, for the strengths of our school and the hard work of those who have built it these past sixty years. Reflection, on where we are now and where we want to go. Recommitment, to providing the best opportunities we can for our kids.



This is my first year at AISZ both as a parent and a member of the board; it has given me a lot to be grateful for. I am pleased with my own children's progress and am truly grateful for the thoughtful care they receive from their teachers and other school staff—I hope you are too. I am consistently impressed by the school facilities. I have also found quiet assurance in the sound state of AISZ's finances. The board is committed to seeing every euro go back into improving the experience for our kids.

Reflection always leads me to start with the fundamentals. At AISZ, that means the core mission: educating our kids. At the end of the day, that is the metric to measure success—how well is AISZ preparing children to be happy, successful, contributing adults? No school can replace parents in the fulfilment of this responsibility, but AISZ's role in this effort is nonetheless critical. That must be our benchmark.

Reflection also makes perfectly clear that this mission will not accomplish itself. Institutions do not build themselves. AISZ is what it is because of the good efforts of many people over many years. We cannot take the current strengths of this school for granted. It is incumbent upon us as parents, board members, faculty, administrators, and students to act. Let us recommit to carrying AISZ forward and making it better over the next sixty years.

The year ahead is exciting. The 60th anniversary of AISZ coincides with the 250th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, providing fantastic opportunities to showcase the “American” portion of AISZ's identity. We will use the year to strengthen core values such as service, merit, innovation, and civic responsibility. More details to come.

I want to thank Dr. Darin Fahrney and congratulate him on his first year as AISZ's director. His kindness and thoughtfulness exemplify well an approach that is grateful, reflective, and committed. Congratulations are also in order for Doreen Garrigan for her first year as Lower School Principal. We bid a bittersweet farewell to Stephen Dexter in his last year as Upper School Principal and welcome Katherine McMullen to fill that role. Thank you too to the other members of the governing board, whose steady leadership has so long benefited our community. I look forward to continuing our close collaboration in the year ahead.

Most importantly, thank you to all our teachers and staff. You are on the front lines of delivering on AISZ's core mission: educating our kids. Thank you for your professionalism and your care. The best is yet to come.

Warm regards,

Jarek Buss
Chair of AISZ Board of Trustees

AISZ School Board Comprises:



Dr. Darin Fahrney
Director, Ex-officio



Jarek Buss
Board of Trustees Chairperson



Evgeniya Herrera
US Ambassador Appointee



Goran Turkić
Parent Representative



John Gašparac
Board Appointee



Joanna Katzman
US Ambassador Appointee



Graciela Arroyo Nava
Board Appointee



Ivan Jandrić
Parent Representative, Treasurer

School Leadership

AISZ Leadership Team

This group oversees all functions of AISZ beyond the schoolwide curriculum.



Dr. Darin Fahney
Director



Stephen Dexter
Upper School Principal



Doreen Garrigan
Lower School Principal



Katherine McMullen
US Associate Principal



Hana Sekanović
HR Manager



Martina Ožir
Admissions & Alumni
Manager



Neven Sorić
ICT Manager



Tatjana Turza
Business & Operations
Manager



Oliver Mando
Communications
Manager

AISZ Academic Leadership Team

This group oversees the planning, coordination, and implementation of all things associated with schoolwide teaching and learning.



Dr. Darin Fahney
Director



Stephen Dexter
Upper School Principal



Katherine McMullen
US Associate Principal



Doreen Garrigan
Lower School Principal



Nadine Dickinson
Upper School
Curriculum Coordinator



Sara Kirby
Lower School
Curriculum Coordinator



Erin Henkels
IB Coordinator



Key Facts

- 60 YEARS OF EXISTENCE (opened in 1966.) • 23958 m2 CAMPUS AREA

369
Students
(for the whole year)

353
Students
(current - end of the year)

127
Lower School

226
Upper School

75
Class of 2026 College
Acceptance

263
Families

42
Nationalities

40
Class of 2026

7
Croatian
Young Leaders
Scholarship

- EMPLOYEES
- TEACHING FACULTY

90
Total Employees

10
Nationalities

58
Faculty Members

44
Teachers with
Masters degrees

38
Teachers with more
than 10 years of
experience

- STUDENT NATIONALITIES IN 2025-26

- American
- Australian
- Austrian
- Azerbaijani
- Belgian
- Bosnian or Herzegovinian
- British, UK
- Bulgarian
- Canadian
- Chinese
- Croatian
- Czech
- Dutch, Netherlandic
- Egyptian
- Estonian
- Finnish
- French
- Georgian
- German
- Greek, Hellenic
- Hungarian, Magyar
- Indian
- Irish
- Israeli
- Italian
- Japanese
- Lao, Laotian
- Macedonian
- Malaysian
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Russian
- Serbian
- Slovak
- Slovenian
- South African
- South Korean
- Spanish
- Swedish
- Turkish
- Ukrainian
- Uzbek



Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles

With a sixty-years connection to beautiful and culturally rich Croatia, the American International School of Zagreb provides an excellent internationally focused education.

OUR MISSION

We believe in all of our students. We believe that the future our students have before them is filled with remarkable opportunities. We believe that the attributes of a successful international citizen are empathy, the making of ethical choices, a service-minded attitude to others, a concern for our environment and resources, a commitment to integrity, and the personal resilience to learn from disappointments and failures.

mission

['mɪʃn] noun

1. a task or journey that is very difficult and takes a long time to complete
2. particular work that you feel it is your duty to do

We develop skills and character for futures rich with promise

vision

['vɪʒn] noun

1. an idea or a picture in your imagination
2. a dream or similar experience
3. the ability to see, think about or plan the future with great imagination and intelligence

Experiencing the Future, Today

OUR VISION

The American International School of Zagreb offers an academically rigorous international curriculum from Early Childhood to Grade 12. Our learning engagements are future-oriented, focused on acquiring the interdisciplinary skills and character dispositions necessary for a successful future in the age of innovation. We look to what is to come and ground our actions on the belief that learning is for now as well as the future. We also believe that balance and fun should always be present.

OUR LEARNING PRINCIPLES

At AISZ we believe:

- We can all learn and have a right to do so.
- Learning is a personal and social, as well as emotional and cognitive activity.
- Learning environments have a significant impact on our learning.
- Transfer of learning happens best in rich and relevant contexts.
- Common learning cultures need to construct common meaning through a common learning language.

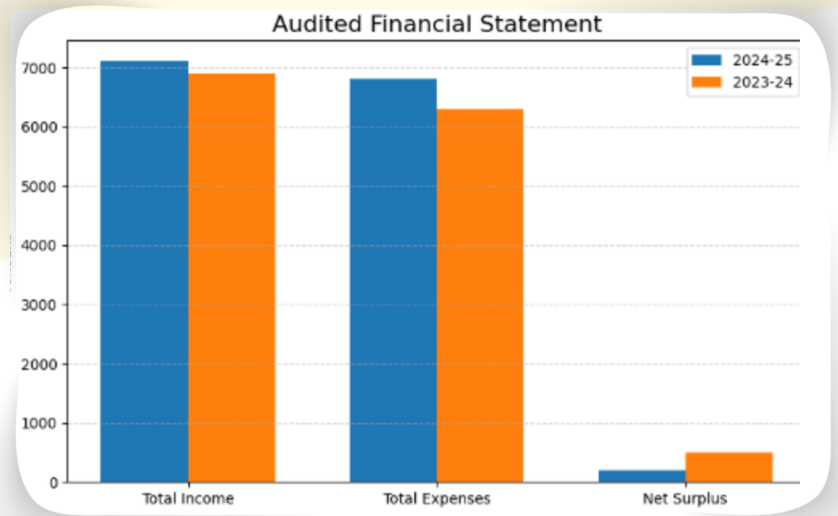
Key Strategic Initiatives

- A school community united around our Mission and Vision and more connected to the local and global community.
- Create learning opportunities indicative of a concept school for the future.
- Facilitate each student's growth through personal, self-directed, and authentic learning.
- Become a place that provides opportunities for emotional, physical, and psychological balance.

Financial Review

HISTORICAL: 2024-2025

The 2024/2025 academic year concluded with a strong financial performance, underpinned by disciplined management and stable enrollment. Audited figures show total revenues reached €6.87 million, a 2% increase over the previous year. While operating expenditures rose by 8.4% to €6.5 million, reflecting necessary investments in staffing and enriched student programming, the school maintained its fiscal health. After accounting for €70k in net financial expenses, we achieved a net surplus of €250k, ensuring a solid foundation for continued AISZ growth.



CURRENT: 2025-2026

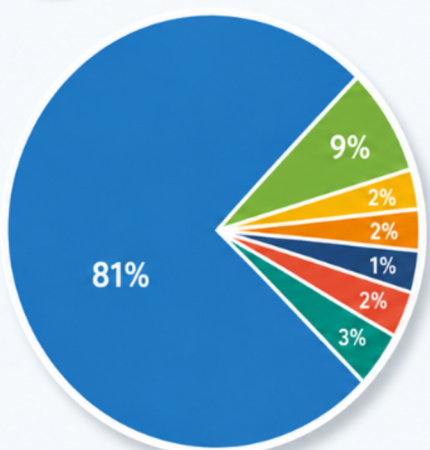
The total number of students enrolled during the year exceeded the budgeted enrollment of 361 students, showing stable growth during the past few years. Total revenues are expected to be on a planned level of €7.1m and Tuition and Capital fees represent 90% of our total income. The majority of our operating expenditure relates primarily to personnel expenses (68%) and other educational support. Total Operating expenses are expected to be €6.9m, and Financial expenses €182k.

We are again expecting to have another strong and healthy financial year with a surplus that will enable AISZ to continuously invest in facility improvements, student activities, and strengthening the curriculum.

The Finance and Facilities Committee, along with the AISZ Board as a whole, is committed to serving the AISZ Learning Community and providing the best possible educational experience for our students.

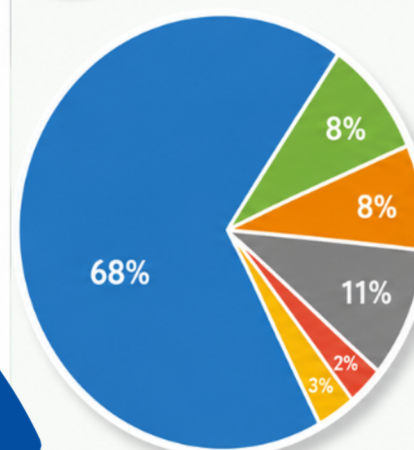
FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2025.26

INCOME 2025.26



Tuition Fee	81%
Capital Fee	9%
Application Fee	2%
Misc. Income	2%
Grant	1%
Other Fees	2%
Financ. Income	3%

EXPENSES 2025.26



Personnel	68%
Depreciation	8%
School Operation	8%
Educational expenses	11%
Technology	2%
Financ. expenses	3%

Schoolwide Focus

60 Years of Excellence and our work toward the future

CELEBRATING OUR PAST



HISTORY WALL

The development of the AISZ History Wall provided a lasting tribute to the school's rich legacy. Thoughtfully curated and visually engaging, it tells the story of our journey over the past 60 years. This installation will become a meaningful focal point on campus, connecting students, staff, and visitors to the proud history that continues to shape our future.

AISZ 60TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

The 60th Anniversary Gala stood as a centerpiece of this milestone year - an elegant and memorable evening that brought together the entire AISZ community. It celebrated six decades of excellence, honored our shared history, and looked ahead with optimism and ambition. The Gala was not only a celebration, but a testament to the strength and unity of our community.



60 ACTS OF KINDNESS

The 60 Acts of Kindness initiative brought the spirit of AISZ beyond campus and into the heart of Zagreb. Through a series of thoughtful and impactful actions, our students, staff, and families actively gave back to the city, contributing to causes and communities across Zagreb. This initiative powerfully reflected our commitment to service and global citizenship, strengthening our connection with the local community and demonstrating that the AISZ spirit extends far beyond our walls.

These are some of the thoughtful actions our school had the honor to be a part of:



VISIT BY THE CHILDREN FROM THE ORPHANAGE

Our school had the pleasure of hosting eleven children from the Sv. Terezija orphanage. The visit was organized by the Merci Club, with the support of two enthusiastic Grade 8 students. Together, they planned a fun and engaging afternoon filled with activities for our young guests.

The event began with a lively icebreaker game that helped everyone get to know each other and feel comfortable.

This was followed by a scavenger hunt around the school, “Build the Snowman,” and several other exciting games that kept the children energized and smiling throughout the visit.

To make the day even more special, Merci Club members baked delicious treats, provided juice, and prepared small gifts for each child to take home. Their hard work and kindness helped create a warm, welcoming atmosphere and ensured that our visitors had a memorable experience.

VOLUNTEERING AT A SOUP KITCHEN

An AISZ student volunteers regularly at Sveti Duh soup kitchen, helping twice a month or during school breaks. She assists with sorting fresh produce, serving hot meals, and ensuring that everyone receives food efficiently. On busy days, she works closely with other volunteers to manage large groups while staying calm and organized.



DONATIONS FOR THE ANIMAL SHELTER

The HS Merci Club once again collaborated with Noina Arka, a local animal shelter in Zagreb that cares for abandoned dogs and cats.

Students donated toys, blankets, and other much-needed supplies to support the animals’ comfort and well-being. The collected donations were personally delivered to the shelter by the students. During the visit, they also had the opportunity to walk the dogs and spend time playing with the cats.

HONORING OUR PRESENT

Every year at AISZ is defined by a deep commitment to honoring the present, recognizing the importance of creating meaningful experiences, celebrating achievement, and nurturing the relationships that make our school community thrive. Guided by our core values of Responsibility, Resilience, Kindness, and Respectfulness, we continued to strengthen a culture where students, staff, parents, alumni, and partners all play a vital role in shaping the life of the school.

Across this year, AISZ invested intentionally in the growth and well-being of our educators through ongoing professional development opportunities designed to enhance teaching and learning. Our faculty continued to collaborate, innovate, and reflect on best practices to ensure students are challenged, supported, and inspired toward academic excellence. This dedication to continuous improvement was reflected not only in the classroom, but also in the many opportunities created for students to explore leadership, creativity, athletics, service, and personal growth.

Community engagement flourished with the exciting rebirth of the School Community Organization (SCO), whose energy and involvement helped reconnect families and strengthen school spirit. The SCO played a central role in bringing the community together through initiatives and celebrations such as Around the World Thursdays, showcasing the rich diversity of our international community and the much-loved Teacher Appreciation Day, where faculty and staff were celebrated by parents, students, and community partners. The event was further enriched through the generous in-kind support of the US Embassy and the thoughtful contributions of parents who prepared a wonderful assortment of homemade sweet treats, demonstrating the warmth and appreciation that defines the AISZ community.

Throughout the year, AISZ continued to create spaces for connection. New school merchandise helped strengthen school pride and identity, while events such as the Alumni Basketball Game, Community BBQ, staff celebrations and student-led traditions including the Prom and Middle School Dance brought together different parts of our community in joyful and meaningful ways. These experiences reinforced the importance of shared traditions and collective celebration in building a vibrant and connected school culture.

The celebration of learning remained central to school life. Students demonstrated curiosity, teamwork and intellectual engagement through activities such as the return of the Battle of the Books, an initiative that reignited excitement around reading, collaboration, and academic challenge. AISZ also proudly continued one of its most valued traditions - the Unity Trips - which provide students with transformative experiences that build resilience, independence, empathy, and lasting connections with peers and teachers beyond the classroom walls.

As a school committed to growth and reflection, AISZ also strengthened its culture of listening and continuous improvement. Through initiatives such as the AISZ School Survey and the Director's Listening Tour, students, staff, and parents were invited to share their perspectives, experiences, and aspirations for the future of the school. These initiatives reflected our belief that strong communities are built through open dialogue, shared responsibility, and a willingness to learn from one another.

The stories highlighted throughout this annual report - many also celebrated in the AISZ News section during the year - reflect a community that values both achievement and connection. Whether through academic success, service learning, community celebrations, student leadership, athletic participation, or everyday acts of kindness and respect, AISZ continues to embody an educational experience that prepares students not only for the future, but also to meaningfully engage with the present.

Together, we continue to build a school culture where excellence is pursued with compassion, each person is celebrated with pride, and the community is empowered to contribute with responsibility, resilience, kindness, and respectfulness.

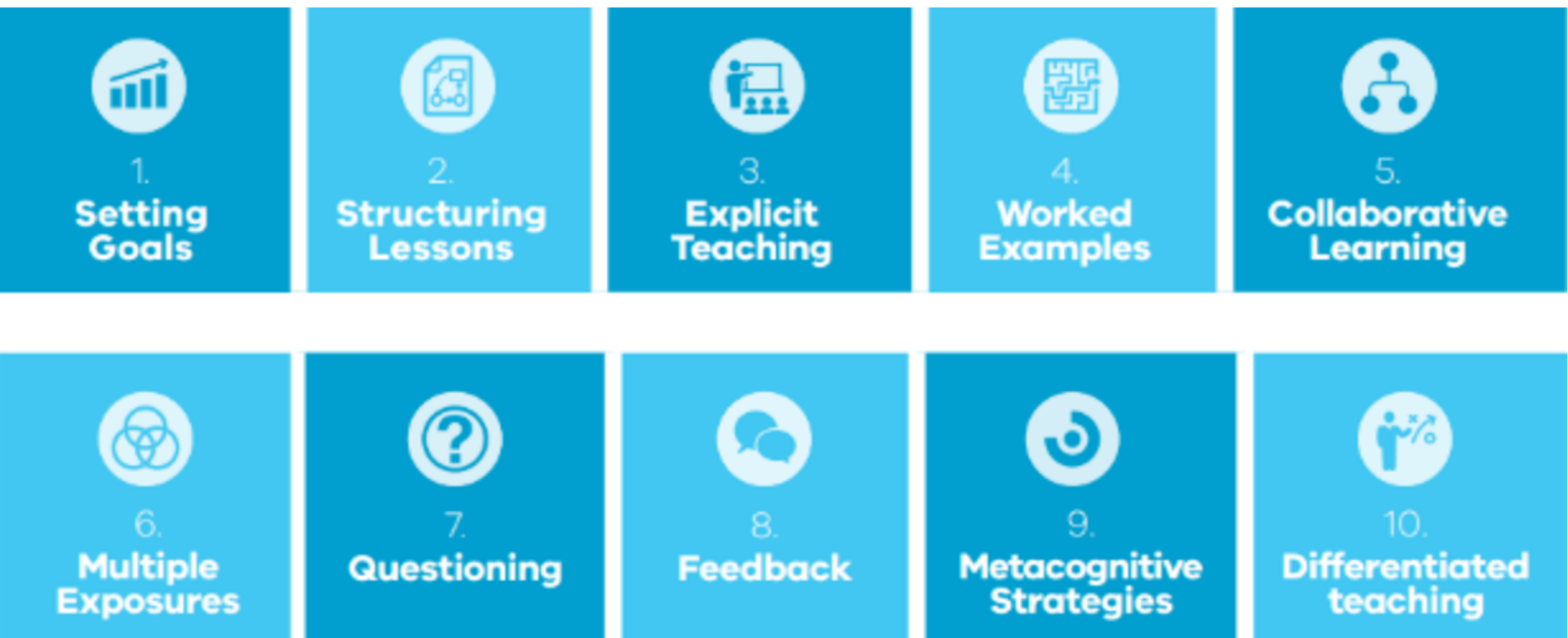
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

HITS AT AISZ

High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS) form a central pillar of teaching and learning at AISZ. HITS are a set of ten evidence-based instructional practices, internationally recognised as some of the most reliable strategies for improving student learning outcomes. Early in the year, these strategies were clearly introduced, defined, and unpacked with staff to build a shared understanding of how they can be intentionally applied to support student progress, engagement, and wellbeing.

Throughout the year, teachers engaged in ongoing professional learning focused on HITS, working both individually and collaboratively to deepen their practice. Recognizing that not all strategies are used in every lesson, teachers identified two to three HITS as a specific area of focus, allowing for sustained inquiry, experimentation, and reflection. This approach supported teachers in embedding practices such as setting clear learning intentions, using explicit teaching, providing timely and actionable feedback, and fostering metacognitive thinking thus helping students to better understand and take ownership of their learning.

Teachers were provided with opportunities to trial strategies in their classrooms, gather evidence of impact, and engage in professional dialogue with colleagues. These conversations, grounded in shared experience, enabled staff to refine their approaches, respond to student needs, and build consistency across classrooms while maintaining professional agency.



By embedding HITS into everyday practice, AISZ continues to strengthen a culture of reflective, evidence-informed teaching. This work ensures that learning is purposeful, structured, and responsive, while empowering students to develop the skills, confidence, and self-awareness needed for futures rich with promise.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT (MTSS): ENSURING EVERY STUDENT IS KNOWN, SUPPORTED AND ADVOCATED FOR



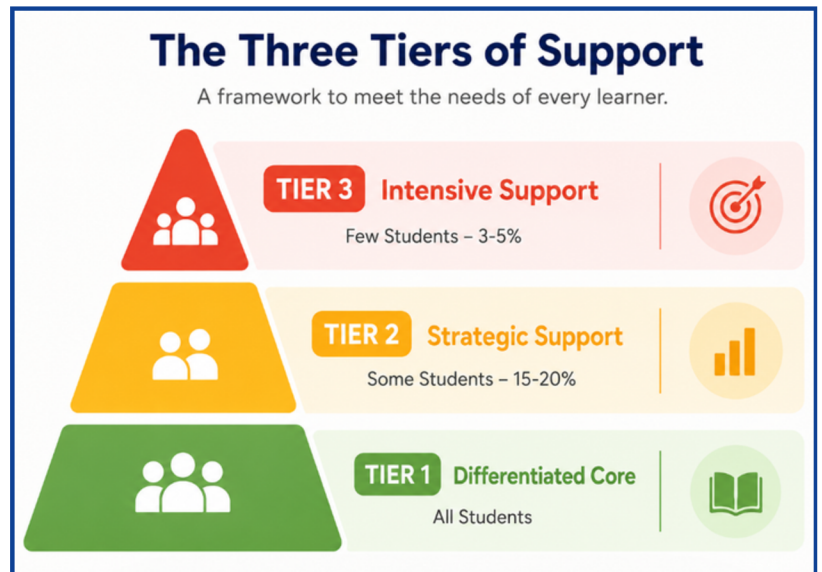
OVERVIEW OF INCLUSION

The MTSS framework at the American International School of Zagreb is designed to provide a comprehensive support structure for all students. It addresses three critical questions to ensure an inclusive environment:

- What supports should **every** student get?
- What extra supports might **some** students need?
- What intensive supports might a **few** students need?

THE THREE TIERS OF SUPPORT

The MTSS model utilizes a tiered approach to deliver targeted interventions:



Tier 1: Differentiated Core (All Students)

- **Goal:** Research-based instruction accessible to all students.
- **Features:** Core curriculum is aligned with standards and includes enrichment for students exceeding benchmarks. Instruction is differentiated for those on, below, and above grade level.

Tier 2: Strategic Support (Some Students - 15-20%)

- **Goal:** Targeted interventions for students needing additional help.
- **Features:** Standardized delivery of evidence-based practices provided in addition to Tier 1 programming. Includes increased practice and feedback on targeted skills.

Tier 3: Intensive Support (Few Students - 3-5%)

- **Goal:** Individualized, high-intensity interventions for at-risk students.
- **Features:** Interventions are adapted to individual data-based needs and delivered by specialized staff in optimal group sizes.

THE MTSS CYCLE

The continuous improvement process follows a four-stage cycle across all domains:

- **Screen:** Identify student needs.
- **Respond:** Implement targeted support through Grade Level, Subject Level, or Student Support Teams.
- **Monitor:** Track progress and data.
- **Improve:** Refine strategies based on monitored results.

US IMPLEMENTATION EXAMPLES

Academics

- **Tier 1 (All):** MAP Growth screening and Subject Level Team response.
- **Tier 2 (Some):** IXL Diagnostic and Student Support Team intervention.
- **Tier 3 (Few):** DIBELS® and intensive writing support and/or math.

Social-Emotional

- **Tier 1 (All):** Character Strong curriculum managed by Grade Level Teams.
- **Tier 2 (Some):** Character Strong Tier 2 and Check In/Check Out systems.
- **Tier 3 (Few):** Individualized Wellbeing Action Plans.

Behavior & Attendance

- **Tier 1 (All):** ManageBac tracking and Grade Level Lead Team oversight.
- **Tier 2 (Some):** Parent meetings, restorative conversations, and behavior reflections.
- **Tier 3 (Few):** De-escalation plans, individual behavior plans, and outside referrals.

LS IMPLEMENTATION EXAMPLES

Academics

- **Tier 1 (All):** MAP Growth and Acadience screening and PLC Team response.
- **Tier 2 (Some):** Diagnostic assessments and intervention.
- **Tier 3 (Few):** Learning Support pull out intervention.

Social-Emotional

- **Tier 1 (All):** Morning meetings in the homerooms, social-emotional learning lessons led by the school counselor
- **Tier 2 (Some):** Small groups, parent meetings, individual counseling
- **Tier 3 (Few):** Outside referrals, well-being plan, professional consultations

Behavior & Attendance

- **Tier 1 (All):** Schools tracking
- **Tier 2 (Some):** Parent meetings, restorative conversations, and behavior reflections.
- **Tier 3 (Few):** De-escalation plans, individual behavior plans, and outside referrals.

CONCLUSION

At the American International School of Zagreb, the MTSS framework ensures that "We know. We support. We advocate" for every student in our care.



REFRESHED SCHOOL BRANDING

This year marked a defining moment in AISZ's visual identity with the launch of our refreshed school branding. Rooted in tradition yet designed for the future, the updated look unified our communications and strengthened our presence across all platforms. The new branding not only elevated how we present ourselves externally, but also deepened our internal sense of pride and belonging by giving our community a bold, modern identity that reflects the spirit of the Bears with a new athletic font, a strong emphasis on the Catalina blue color dominance which has been the main color of this school for decades now and a freshened up array of both corporate logos and the athletic logos.



ROAR & STORE MERCHANDISE LAUNCH

The launch of the Roar & Store marked an exciting new chapter in school spirit and community engagement. Offering fresh, high-quality AISZ merchandise, it brought “merch” to life in a way that energized students, staff, and families alike. The store quickly became a hub of pride and identity, allowing everyone to wear and share their Bear spirit.



NEW AISZ WEBSITE (UPCOMING LAUNCH)

Looking ahead, the upcoming launch of the new AISZ website represents a major step forward in how we connect and communicate. Designed with user experience at its core, the platform will showcase our refreshed branding while providing a dynamic, accessible space for our community and prospective families. This initiative reflects our commitment to innovation and positions AISZ strongly for the future. The planned website launch is at the start of the next school year 2026 / 2027.



ENTRANCE WALL - 'HOME OF THE BEARS'

The new “Home of the Bears” entrance wall transformed the arrival experience at AISZ. Bold and welcoming, it immediately communicates school pride and identity to all who enter. This visual statement reinforces a sense of unity, reminding everyone that AISZ is not just a school, but a true home for its community.

Lower School at AISZ

NURTURING EXPERTISE, CARE, AND IMAGINATION

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

This year, we moved beyond the curriculum to ensure every student holds the match—becoming true experts in their own unique way of learning. By weaving together rigorous data-informed instruction with a deep sense of community, we ensure that our youngest learners are not just students, but developing experts and dreamers.



Expertise: Empowering Independent Learners

Our focus this year was to sharpen our mathematical inquiry and early childhood foundations. We successfully launched the **IM360 Math Program**, supported by continued expert consultation with international consultant, Megan Holmstrom. To ensure no student is left behind, we integrated new **Number Sense assessments**, allowing our faculty to use precise student learning information to drive our **"Tip Top" interventions** in both Literacy and Mathematics.

In Early Childhood, we have raised the bar by implementing **GOLD Objectives in PreK**. Our educators attended specialized professional development in Frankfurt, Germany, ensuring student developmental milestones align with global best practices. We look forward to sharing this refined progress reporting with parents in the coming 2026-2027 school year.

Extraordinary Care: Known, Advocated for, and Supported

At the heart of our division is the belief that a child who feels known is a child who learns. This year was defined by **"Fabulous Fridays"** and the creation of new traditions that celebrate our diverse, welcoming community. From the **International Day of Peace** to the **International Day of Mother Language**, and **Earth Day**, we celebrated the unique identities of our community and came together to take action.

One of our proudest moments was the **"60 Acts of Kindness"** initiative in April 2026, which encouraged students to turn empathy into action. Through these celebrations, we ensure that advocacy and support are not just intentions, but a lived daily experience.



The Imagined: Pursuing Dreams and Personalization

We believe in a school where students can pursue their passions and see their "imagined" goals come to life. This year saw the much anticipated return of the **Battle of the Books**, sparking a competitive love for literature across grades 3- 5.

In the arts, we were honored to host the **AMIS Music Festival** for Grades 4 and 5. Under the leadership of Cynthia Campbell, this event brought together young musicians from across the region, proving that our students can thrive on an international stage.

By blending data-informed intervention with extraordinary care, we aren't just teaching subjects; we are teaching children to understand their own potential. The progress we have made this year is merely the floor, not the ceiling. We enter the 2026-2027 year with a clear map and a passionate team ready to guide every student toward their own version of excellence.

Upper School at AISZ

Think - Winnie The Pooh, when faced with a difficult problem, would sit on his thoughtful log or walk around, tapping his head saying think, think, think until something came to him.

I am proud to be part of Gen X, the last generation in humanity that lived in a pre-internet and cell phone age. I am not proud to be part of a generation overwhelmed by an existential crisis in learning. When we introduced “experience the future, today” at the beginning of my eight year tenure in 2018, there was a lot of excitement around leveraging everything from innovative practices in personalized learning and choice to technology.



Yes, we have designed four diploma pathways.

Yes, we have built a strong foundation for socio-emotional learning through advisories and the grade level focus.

Yes, we have designed the math hub and a revitalized co-curricular program to enhance the AISZ experience.

Yes, we have leveraged the PLC model to enhance specific strategies to guarantee academic success in core subject areas.

But for the first time since my pre-internet days, experiencing the future, today is more daunting than ever. Think, think, think.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) conducted a recent study that identified several concerns related to the superthinking learning tools that now define our future (and affect our brains). From cognitive debt to memory degradation and mental passivity, the news is not great for the next generation of learners.

Thanks to our professional team of teachers and staff, we're on it. We are building systems of support and interventions, techniques that reduce mental passivity and promote creativity. We are courageously supporting the needs of students immersed in this overwhelming age. Think, think, think.

Thank you again for the honor of educating your children.

AISZ BRIDGES PROGRAM

The Bridges program had another successful year in the Upper School. We were delighted to welcome back a Bridges graduate for a Work/Study year focused on vocational development and increasing independence. Her return has been instrumental as we grow and refine Bridges Post-Secondary programming. Balancing a full schedule of individualized academics, including English, mathematics, social studies, science, Spanish, and French in the Bridges classroom, alongside work experiences as a supported staff intern, we have developed a truly comprehensive and meaningful school year. The student is beaming with confidence, shows consistent responsibility and increases in communication and independence each week.



This year has been an important step in strengthening its role as a post-secondary, college-preparatory pathway towards inclusive universities. We are proud to share that the first Bridges graduate will be attending an inclusive university next year, a testament to her hard work and the program's impact.

We are looking forward to the future of Bridges program and the potential growth that lies therein.

Beyond academic and vocational commitments, the Bridges program has taken on the role of the Sunshine Committee to help shape school culture and promote staff wellness. These moments of community connection through initiatives such as celebrations, teacher treats, and the much-loved coffee cart have been a great way to practice social skills and contribute to the faculty. We have researched and supported a number of awareness campaigns and fundraisers for staff and students, including breast cancer awareness month and Movember for men's health, helping to foster a sense of care and engagement across the school. Additionally there have been key initiatives such as the International Day of Peace, the annual holiday toy drive, Black History Month, Neurodiversity Week and World Down Syndrome Day, as well as Earth Month. A particularly exciting development this year has been the launch of the Best Buddies club, dedicated to promoting belonging and raising awareness about inclusion for people with disabilities. AISZ successfully established a Croatia chapter and has over 20 high school club members.



2025 Summary of IB Results

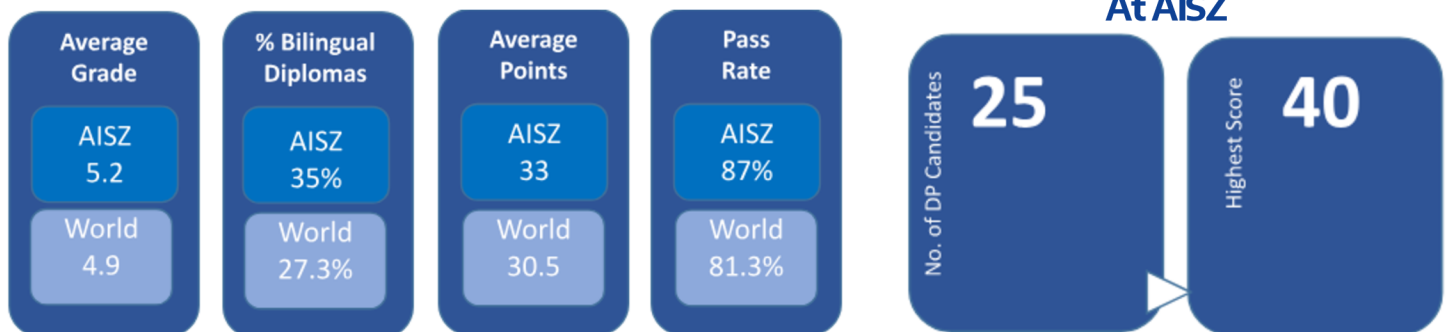
CURRICULUM

AISZ is an inclusive school. AISZ offers AERO Standard based learning up to high school. We offer learning support and English language support for identified students. In Grades 11 and 12, students can participate in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, AISZ High School Diploma or the AISZ Honors Diploma. All graduates earn the AISZ American High School Diploma.

The full IB Diploma is open to all AISZ students. Full IB Diploma students choose from six subject groups that include a broad range of courses with three at standard level and three at higher level. In addition, students must take Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course, complete and Extended Essay, and fulfill Creativity, Activity, and Service (CAS) commitments outside of class time.

The AISZ Honors Diploma represents the pinnacle of academic achievement, offering a unique and rigorous pathway for students to deeply engage with their passions, from the arts to sciences, athletics, and entrepreneurship. This distinguished program combines a robust academic curriculum culminating in a comprehensive senior project, presented and defended before a panel of AISZ educators and external experts, ensuring each graduate has met the highest standards of scholarly and professional excellence.

IB at a glance



Range of IB Scores

Score Range	24-29	30-34	35-39	40-45
Number of Students	8	9	6	1

Results from the last three years. May 2019 is included as it seems a more accurate comparison than looking at results from 2020-2022. May 2023 was still impacted by COVID modifications.

Year	Cohort size (cert + DP)	% Diploma	% Bilingual Diploma	Average score	Highest score
<u>2025</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>40</u>
2024	31	92	46	31	41
2023	31	93	52	33	41
<u>2019</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>94</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>36</u>

Letter from the Academic & University Counselor

It's so exciting to see the Class of 2026 identifying their next steps beyond AISZ! I wanted to take a minute to provide an update on the university admission process thus far. Please keep in mind that our admissions data is still a "work in progress." Our students are applying to such a wide variety of universities all over the world, so everyone is on a slightly different timeline.

While many of our Grade 12s are already celebrating their first round of good news, and some have even made their enrollment choices, others are still waiting or are just about to start their specific regional application cycles. It's also important to remember that most of the acceptances we're seeing now are conditional offers. These won't be fully finalized until July, once IB Exam results are in and all the final university requirements are met.



Think of this report as a snapshot of a very exciting, dynamic journey!

HIGHLIGHTS

Total Applications Submitted and Pending: 190

38 Members of the Class of 2026 have submitted or intend to submit 190 applications.

Offers of Admission: 75

36 students have already submitted applications, 22 of whom have received at least one offer of admission.

Geographic Distribution of Applications/Acceptances:

Members of the Class of 2026 have submitted or intend to submit applications to universities in over 20 countries, with the top recipient countries being:

- US: 25%
- UK: 22%
- Netherlands: 12%
- Croatia: 9%
- Italy: 6%
- Spain: 6%

Other Destinations: Members of the Class of 2026 have also submitted or intend to submit applications to universities in the following countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Lebanon, Malta, Poland, Singapore, Sweden, and Switzerland.

The largest percentage of acceptances have come from the following countries:

- UK: 38%
- US: 18%
- Spain: 13%
- Netherlands: 10%
- Ireland: 4%
- Italy: 4%

Most Applied for Programs of Study:

- Business/Finance/Economics: 40%
- Engineering: 18%
- Psychology: 10%
- Health Sciences: 6%
- Law: 5%
- Liberal Arts & Sciences: 5%
- Political Science / International Relations: 5%

Students Pursuing Alternate Paths in the Coming Year:

- Gap Year (3)
- Performing arts at a professional level (1)
- Performing arts within a conservatory setting (1)
- Athletic training/competition (1)

CLASS OF 2026 AISZ UNIVERSITY OFFERS

Institutions in Blue = Planned Matriculation

*Institutions = First acceptance(s) in at least five years

Austria

Webster University Vienna

Belgium

KU Leuven*

Canada

Acadia University*

Croatia

Rochester Institute of Technology
Croatia

France

National Institute of Applied
Sciences (INSA Lyon)*

Ireland

Trinity College Dublin
University College Dublin
University of Limerick*

Italy

LUISS Guido Carli University*
Politecnico di Torino*
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*

Netherlands

Leiden University
Maastricht University
Tilburg University
University College Utrecht
University of Groningen

UK

Birkbeck, University of London
Bournemouth University*
Buckinghamshire New University
City St George's, University of
London
Durham University
King's College London
Liverpool John Moores University*
London Metropolitan University
Nottingham Trent University*
Queen Mary University of London
Queen's University Belfast*
University of East London
University of Edinburgh
University of Exeter
University of Nottingham
University of Reading
University of St Andrews
University of Warwick
University of York*

USA

Bentley University*
Christopher Newport University
Florida International University*
James Madison University*
Lynn University*
Pace University
Penn State University-Behrend College*
Pepperdine University*
University of Tampa*
University of San Diego*
University of San Francisco*
Virginia Commonwealth University*

Spain

IE University
Saint Louis University Madrid
Universidad Católica de Murcia*
Universidad Europea de Madrid

Lebanon

American University of Beirut*

Switzerland

Les Roches*



Athletics & Extra Curricular Activities

This year, Activities and Athletics continued to expand across all divisions, offering more than 75 after-school opportunities for students from Pre-K through Grade 12. Student engagement remained exceptionally strong, with 968 registrations recorded and approximately 80% of students in Pre-K to Grade 11 participating in at least one sport or activity during the school year.

AISZ also strengthened its competitive and experiential programming through 15 travel opportunities for representative teams and activities. In addition, the school hosted six major regional and international events, welcoming students and schools from across the region. Highlights included the Middle School Badminton Tournament with more than 100 participants, the Elementary AMIS Junior Honor Choir Festival with 120 student musicians, the Croatian FLL Robotics Championships hosting over 180 participants, the HS Knowledge Bowl competition featuring eight teams, and the annual AISZ Basketball Local Team Tournament.



Athletics achieved several significant milestones this year. The Middle School Boys Basketball team captured CEESA gold, becoming the first AISZ CEESA championship team since 2017-18. AISZ also fielded its largest number of full CEESA roster teams ever, with nine teams competing throughout the year.

Competitive sports programming continued to grow through the establishment of pre-season and multi-weekly in-season training opportunities across all major sports. The school also launched its first-ever Middle School badminton team, attracting 30 student participants, while professional coaches worked alongside teacher coaches in volleyball, basketball, and football programs to further strengthen athlete development.

In 2025–26, overall, AISZ has had teams of competitive groups of students, including MS Girls and Boys Badminton, MS Boys Football, HS Girls and Boys Football, MS and HS Boys Basketball, MS Girls Volleyball, and HS Girls Volleyball.

Student activities and music programs also experienced strong growth and achievement. AISZ hosted its first Elementary AMIS Junior Honor Choir participation event, while the HS Rock Band represented the school at the AMIS Rock Band Festival in Budapest. Model United Nations participation doubled this year, with AISZ students led by Grade 12 leaders participating at FloMUN in Florence. The MS/HS Choir program continued to expand, and the Math Teams competed at ISMTF in Vienna. The FLL Robotics Team advanced to the regional championship hosted at AISZ, while the HS Knowledge Bowl teams earned impressive 2nd and 3rd place finishes at CEESA competitions.

Unity Trips were also redesigned to strengthen experiential education and student development. The Grade 8 trip moved to Papuk National Park, where students focused on forest survival skills, trekking preparation, and enhanced geographical learning experiences connected to future Grade 9–10 adventures. Beginning next year, the Grade 9 trip will transition to Istria, emphasizing kayaking and water-skills development as part of a continued progression of outdoor education experiences through Grades 10 and 11.



Transitions

Arriving Staff

We welcome our new Faculty, arriving in August 2026.



Brandon Barron
Upper School Associate Principal



Sarah Roberts
Kindergarten Teacher

Departing Staff

The end of the year always brings mixed feelings. In June, we say goodbye to some of our faculty and staff. We wish them all the very best in their future endeavors and look forward to seeing them either online or in person at one of our alumni functions. Our entire AISZ Community says thank you for your contributions.

Once a Bear, always a Bear.



Stephen Dexter
Upper School Principal
(8 years)



Morgan Miller
Kindergarten Teacher
(2 years)

Farewell to our Upper School Principal Stephen Dexter, Jr.

As we approach the end of this academic year we prepare to say farewell to a remarkable work of longtime principal, Mr. Stephen Dexter, a journey that began here in 2018. His tenure has been defined by a period of immense growth and change, transforming the very fabric of our school.

When Stephen arrived in 2018, AISZ occupied a leased hospital wing in Voćarska, our school's home for 18 years. At that time, the Upper School comprised 135 students and 26 teachers, operating with limited specialized resources.



By 2026, the landscape of AISZ has been fundamentally reimagined under Stephen's leadership. We have transitioned to a state-of-the-art, purpose-built campus near Bundek park, now serving 226 students with a dedicated team of 36 Upper School teachers. Every position that was once shared or missing—from a full-time Activities and Athletics Director and Curriculum Coordinator to an Associate Principal and dedicated administrative assistants—is now fully staffed, ensuring our students receive unparalleled support.

Beyond the physical campus, Stephen has strengthened our academic core by introducing the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) model, formalizing our advisory program, and designing a distributed leadership framework that empowers subject and grade-level leads.

Stephen's leadership was perhaps most visible during our greatest challenges. He steered us through a three-month pandemic shutdown, completely redesigning our timetable from a complex 10-day cycle to a virtual-friendly 4-day block schedule to ensure learning never faltered. Even as we survived an earthquake in the midst of the pandemic, his focus remained steady.

Throughout every system highlight and structural milestone, Stephen's North Star has always been the student experience. He understood that building a great school requires having the right people in place at the right time, and he has certainly achieved that here.



Stephen Dexter leaves behind a school that is larger, stronger, and more resilient than the one he found. We thank him for his vision, his steady hand during times of crisis, and his unwavering commitment to our students.

The community wishes Stephen the very best in all his future endeavors.

With heartfelt appreciation, The AISZ Community



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