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Name Change and Merger

In 2020, we changed our name to Silicon Valley International School (INTL), to better reflect our location and our growth into an international school with a global reputation and reach. In 2021, Alto International School merged with INTL, united under the same name – Silicon Valley International School – with full combined operations beginning the 2021–2022 academic year.

International Baccalaureate (IB)

Silicon Valley International School is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, authorized to offer the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP) and DP (Diploma Programme). IB World Schools share a common philosophy – a commitment to high quality, challenging, international education that the Silicon Valley International School believes is important for our students. For further information about the IB and its programmes, visit http://www.ibo.org.

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Save the Date for our Annual Alumni Reunion!
Friday, June 4th @ 5pm
More details TBD

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Welcome to Silicon Valley International School!

In June, International School of the Peninsula’s name changed to Silicon Valley International School (INTL – pronounced “international” – for short).

This exciting change reflects both the school’s evolution from a small French school at our founding in 1979, but also our current path, including a merger with Alto International School, to provide multiple language programs from preschool to high school, with a global reputation and reach. Our name also better reflects our location in the heart of Silicon Valley – one of the most dynamic, innovative, and diverse areas in the world.

A stylized image of the globe has always been a part of every logo refresh we’ve done since we added our Chinese Program in 1996, and was at the forefront of our new design discussions and iterations. Our new logo is made from overlapping circular elements – the blue representing water and the green representing land – intersecting to create a third color and an abstract representation of the globe. In another nod to our planet, our logo is also tilted at 23.5 degrees; the Earth’s current axis.

The intersecting circles are a metaphor for a bilingual education – two different languages and cultures coming together to create a harmonious whole – an education that opens up the world for your child.
From Head of School

Angie Bergeson

This year, in our community and around the globe, we have faced countless changes and challenges. We have become accustomed to new types of interactions and ways of collaborating. The partnership between school and home has taken on a different meaning altogether with distance learning in the mix. Through all of these changes, I am heartened by the truths that have endured, keeping our community united and strong.

We still seek beauty, inspiration, and wish to uplift each other. We still want to connect and show compassion and caring to others. We still value integrity, hard work, and ingenuity.

Of all these values, I want to highlight compassion. First, because it is ranked a great virtue by all major philosophies and religions, and second, because it’s woven into the fabric of the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile.

If we look at the etymology of compassion, we may find it does not mean what we think it does; the Latin roots explain. Originally, “cum” was an affix meaning “with” while passion’s definition is “to suffer.” The saying, “love hurts” comes to mind. Therefore, compassion literally means to “suffer with.” This type of empathy leads us to want to take action to alleviate the suffering of others as if it were our own.

This year, we have seen and experienced suffering, particularly with the loss of International School of the Peninsula’s/Silicon Valley International School alumnus, Max (Maxi to some of his friends) Lenail and beloved Peninsula/Silicon Valley International School alumnus, Max (Maxi to some of his friends) Lenail and beloved

We still seek beauty, inspiration, and wish to uplift each other. We still want to connect and show compassion and caring to others.

helpers in our community, whether it’s in terms of processing grief, or in relation to what’s happening in the world today.

There are family members who are on the pandemic front line, battling COVID-19 in hospitals, in their general practices, or through their scientific work. There are faculty members, showing up to campus to work with our children daily, despite their own initial fears. There are administrators who have worked tirelessly to adapt schedules, ease parent and teacher fears, and implement practices that keep everyone safe. There are examples of helpers everywhere we look – and that truth endures.

When I walk down the hallways at Cohn or Cowper, I see our maintenance staff working diligently to implement additional cleaning practices, and set up numerous room configurations, adapt materials for teaching and learning outside.

I see teachers, masks on, using new technology, adapting the way they usually teach to accommodate distancing, zooming, and new desk arrangements. Even without being able to see the smile on their faces, it is obvious that they are enthusiastic and they care deeply for their students.

I see students helping their teachers out by following new guidelines on campus, being responsible “zoomers” from home, attending weekly nasal swabbing, eating lunch spread out from each other, being considerate to others in the hallway while waiting at a distance for the bathroom.

Beyond even our own doors, I see countless medical staff around the globe collaborating tirelessly to get a vaccine out to all of us. The entire planet is united in the pandemic, showing just how really connected we are – united in eradicating the virus, to stop the suffering. I also see people around the world united in eradicating hate, racism, and divisive practices that do harm in communities. Compassion for others drives this unity.

At INTL, I have been impressed this year by the lived values I see in our community. Dr. Jill Biden said, “Education teaches us compassion and kindness, connections to others.”

This certainly is true at INTL where students are encouraged to connect with others, to collaborate and create across cultures. Our school environment of teaching through language and culture cultivates an open mind and an open heart, leading our students to take action locally, nationally, and globally.

I also want to point out the open-mindedness and open-heartedness of the Alto International School community, with whom we are blending to form one diverse international community with shared values and a shared mission. Change requires an abundance of openness, and I want to thank the German Program and Upper School English Track faculty, staff, and families for their hard work, patience, and support during our schools’ merger process.

So, in this first inaugural edition of our newly named GLOBE newsletter, I am pleased to report the unwavering compassion – patience and wisdom; kindness and perseverance; warmth and resolve exhibited in our shared community throughout this unique and unpredictable year.

When I am older, and greyer, I will look back on my first year joining INTL with awe; not because of my own journey adapting to extreme circumstances, but because I am truly amazed by the way our community has responded to all the changes and crises we have faced together and the examples of compassion that inspire me every day.

*Silicon Valley International School changed its name in 2020 and was formerly known as International School of the Peninsula (ISTP). Prior to 1996, ISTP was known as Peninsula French American School (PFAS).
It has been a year of growth for our school. Alto International School merged with us, Angie Bergeson began her first year as Head, all while adapting to the effects of the pandemic. What has remained constant throughout is our mission: an unwavering commitment to bilingual education and an international mindset.

As the premiere bilingual IB school on the West Coast, and the only one to offer preschool to 12th grade in multiple languages, our current and future students will have more opportunities than ever to take full advantage of enhanced programs and offerings.

We would like to thank everyone from the community for their support and give special recognition to Angie, Drew, and their teams who, supported by the Board of Directors’ merger task force, have worked tirelessly to bring this merger to fruition. They have managed this merger efficiently, while dealing with the impact of a global pandemic, and shown great dedication, and the board is grateful for their exceptional accomplishments.

We would like to thank the faculty and staff who have been working diligently to make sure our children receive continuous education while pivoting from both platforms of teaching online and in person.

At the end of this academic year, we will say goodbye to Drew Alexander, as he enters the next chapter of his journey and moves back to be with his wife and family.

Angie will remain Head of INTL. Her strong leadership abilities will help us grow and strengthen our academic programs, social emotional development, and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, while continuing to guide our community through the challenges of this pandemic.

Next year, the Board will focus on formulating our new strategic plan, providing a roadmap for our school’s growth. This process will include our community’s valuable input and insight, via focus groups. This will help us to determine what our key areas of focus will be for the next 4-6 years.

This is an exciting time at Silicon Valley International School. While this past year has been challenging to say the least, and we’ve had to be patient, flexible, vigilant, and resilient, our school has risen to meet these challenges and found new opportunities for growth. We would like to thank the entire community for all your support through this past year, and we are excited to embark on this new era of growth together.

We wish Drew and his family all the best as he embarks on his next adventure!

Thank You Drew!

Drew Alexander brought to Alto a wealth of experience as an educator in the U.S. and internationally in public and private schools.

Although Drew only spent two years at Alto, he made a significant contribution with lasting positive effects for our community. Almost from the beginning of his tenure, Drew was an integral part of the merger process with INTL and guided Alto parents, staff, and students through the transition with humor, patience, and grace.

Throughout these challenging and turbulent times, Drew has remained a beacon of positivity and hope and we are so grateful for this outlook and his leadership!

When he departs this summer, Drew will leave our community stronger and more sustainable with all of his efforts. As we move to our next chapter, our children and families will forever be in his debt.

We wish Drew and his family all the best as he embarks on his next adventure!
Humans are complex and dynamic beings. A person’s nationality, race, gender, sexuality, culture, religion, ability, and language are just a few of the large factions that we align within to create a unique social identity. Each one of these memberships carries nuances and differences that interact with societal structures worldwide. One very interesting and often under-examined social identity for children revolves around what it means to be a member of a cross-cultural community or family. This is particularly interesting in regards to students who are educated in an international and multilingual school or home environment. To be cross-cultural means that a person may have membership in two nationalities, two languages, two cultures, or even more than two overlapping identities.

There are many well-researched benefits for students who grow up exposed to more than one culture and language. They develop a broader perspective on the world and a greater capacity for communication in multiple languages. Additionally, they are usually more open-minded and compassionate toward others due to their increased travel opportunities and exposure to differences. While cross-cultural competency should be a goal for future-minded parents and educators, it is important to also note how students who straddle two different worlds may find that they do not fit completely in either, potentially leaving a feeling of strangeness or confusion regarding their own home or country.

As educators, it is important to recognize that students bring their own personal and social identity to our classrooms. Students around the world are asked to adapt to the norms of their school’s culture, which may or may not match their home or national or linguistic culture. Sometimes, this can cause conflict within the student’s formation of identity as they develop a new way of being and seeing the world. For instance, friction may arise between parents with one cultural lens and their children who now see the world with multiple perspectives that do not always align with the home views. Therefore, parents and schools should validate and recognize the impact this complex cross-cultural identity has on student’s social-emotional lives.

As noted, the benefits of an international and multilingual education far outweigh the challenges. In fact, the challenges are exactly what make students with cross-cultural competencies more prepared for a global world and workforce. Research done by experts in the field of sociology assists us in honing our understanding of identity development in international students. In their book, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, David Pollack and Ruth Van Reken describe in detail the impact of being educated as a Cross-Cultural Kid (CCK). They define a CCK as ‘a person who is living or has lived in – or meaningfully interacted with – two or more cultural environments for a significant time during childhood.’ With this definition in mind, we can assume that many students may go unidentified as Cross-Cultural Kids beyond the obvious expatriates in many school settings.

Thus, to help students navigate the intricacies associated with being a Cross-Cultural Kid, schools should empower and support all students’ social-emotional health as they develop their personal and social identity in an ever-changing and global world.
Outdoor Learning in the Early Years – “The Environment is the Third Teacher”

By Jacqueline Cody, INTL EYC Interim Principal + PYP Coordinator and Carol Ferrieri, Alto Preschool Principal

“There are three teachers of children: adults, other children, and their physical environment.” – Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education

At Silicon Valley International School, our Early Years approach takes inspiration from both the International Baccalaureate and Reggio Emilia philosophies, which emphasize imaginative play, inquiry, and the development of the whole child as part of a wider school community.

A Reggio learning environment – “the third teacher” – is aesthetically pleasing and filled with natural materials that facilitate discovery and the directed, creative play that is so important to bilingual learning in the Early Years.

Last year we began an initiative to develop our “outdoor classrooms,” and this year we used the new guidance for operating under COVID-19 to be even more intentional about developing these learning spaces. On both Cowper and Willows Campuses we are fortunate to have ample outdoor space for running, dancing, exploration, building, and creative play.

When invited to reflect on the transition to outdoor learning, teachers have noted a marked increase in student creativity and immersive dramatic play in the natural environment, which is ideal for encouraging bilingualism. Outdoors, teachers have observed students building creative and critical thinking skills as they continually reinvent and reimagine materials and spaces through play. They have also noted a renewed and shared sense of well-being due to the extra time spent in fresh air and immersed in the natural environment.

Here are just a few of our Early Years outdoor pedagogical areas, and the ways teachers have utilized them.

**Immersive Dramatic Play:**
Chinese Program Preschool/PreK students participated in an outdoor “market” where they practiced both their language and math skills by “buying and selling” vegetables and flowers, in immersive dramatic play. The students negotiated prices, “wrote” menus and built oral language and math skills as they ran their market.

**Loose Parts Play:**
For the German Program Preschool unit “How We Organize Ourselves,” students focused on how children arrive at school and other modes of transportation. In the outside area, they researched how they could build their own form of transportation. Through loose parts play they thought about what they could use for different parts of their vehicle and communicated about where they were going.

**Exploring Natural Materials:**
In Preschool/PreK French and Chinese, students gathered leaves, pine cones, rocks, and more from the natural environment around them and then transformed their finds into “Land Art.” They used their oral language skills to share what each piece represented and its meaning.

**Moving Our Bodies:**
In Preschool French, when exploring forms of expression, students began a “circus inquiry” where they moved their bodies, worked on their fine and gross motor skills, and explored their senses.

**Experimenting with The Elements:**
The Preschool/PreK Chinese program students have been exploring earth, water, and how the two interact, in their “mud kitchen.” They have used the garden beds as “pumping stations,” conducting their own “scientific experiments” by inquiring into the world around them.
Bilingual Development During Distance Learning

This year, as many of our students adapted to Distance Learning, our teachers worked incredibly hard to continue to nurture the heart of a Silicon Valley International education – bilingualism. Teaching remotely in two languages presents unique challenges, such as how to foster a language-rich environment outside of the classroom. However, our teachers went above and beyond to develop creative lessons and projects that nurtured students’ French, Chinese, German, and English skills from afar – from Chinese dramas performed over Zoom, to connecting with snail mail pen pals in Germany, to Zoom science fair presentations in French, and so much more.

Each of our Academic Deans – French, Chinese, German, and English – have chosen one stand-out Distance Learning project to give you a glimpse into our exceptional bilingual Distance Learning program.

Early Years Chinese Pre-Reading + Pre-Writing
Yihui Chen, Preschool/PreK Chinese Teacher

"Teaching over Zoom can be especially challenging in the Early Years, but our highest priority has been to cultivate an engaging virtual Chinese learning environment for our youngest students. This year, Preschool/PreK Distance Learning teacher Chen Laoshi has gone above and beyond to come up with creative ideas for Chinese language learning from afar – from songs and stories told in her enthusiastic and engaging style, to thoughtfully preparing age-appropriate off-line activities and materials for each unit to be sent to parents.

At the Preschool/PreK level, students are working on their pre-reading and pre-writing skills, and one off-line activity she designed was tracing the outlines of Chinese characters with small objects such as beans or beads. This activity not only helps students learn to recognize characters (pre-reading), it also helps them strengthen the fine motor skills they will need to eventually be able to write these characters as well (pre-writing).

– Cindy Chiang, Chinese Academic Dean

2nd Grade German Sock Puppet Stories
Rahel Kohler, 2nd Grade German Teacher

"The 2nd graders focused on stories in German told through different media: poems, picture books, videos without any words, songs and more. Students studied those stories and identified the characters and the settings. They learned that all of the stories follow a pattern that can be represented using a story mountain.

With this knowledge, the students invented their own stories. They gathered characters and places that they wanted to be part of their project and came up with a story, including a problem and its solution. They crafted sock puppets and created a story board which helped them rehearse their sock puppet show. In the end, they presented their virtual sock puppet shows on Zoom to the school community.

In the process, the students broadened their story vocabulary and practiced creating meaningful dialogues in German.

– Julia Neumann, German Academic Dean (in collaboration with Rahel Kohler)
4th Grade EdPuzzle Interactive French History
Léna Laurent and Sylvie Hocquet,
4th Grade French Teachers

At INTL, we have a meaningful approach to the use of technology, always using it as a tool to enhance a lesson and facilitate a richer and more engaging learning experience for students – a philosophy we maintained throughout Distance Learning.

One example of this approach is the use of a platform called Edpuzzle to teach French history and develop French language at the same time in 4th grade. Edpuzzle allows teachers to transform a typical video watching session into an interactive and engaging experience, by embedding questions of comprehension and interpretation.

For example, when students watched an episode of “Secrets d’Histoire” (a popular documentary series on French television) about the Renaissance, the video automatically pauses at specific points selected by the teacher, and asks questions such as “What was the emblem of king François I?” Students can work at their own pace, viewing the video multiple times to better understand the content if necessary, promoting active and engaged learning from a distance.

– Olivier Monteil, French Academic Dean

5th Grade English Persuasive Writing
Rizwana Shujathali, 5th Grade English Teacher

In 5th grade English with Ms. Rizwana, students were engaged in a unit of inquiry about the concept of empires, discovering and analyzing key knowledge about the American Revolution. Alongside these inquiries, students were also developing their understanding of a new genre of writing – persuasive writing.

Students were tasked with selecting a leader from given revolutions to conduct further research on. They creatively decided that their persuasive writing piece would be written from the perspective of their chosen leader, with the aim of convincing their audience that they were most deserving of the “Revolutionary Award.”

Ms. Rizwana provided prewriting and planning tools and frameworks to support her students in scaffolding their thinking, empowering students to break down the task into manageable parts, set thoughtful goals and use strategies to effectively organise their ideas. This was an incredibly rewarding unit for our students, made even more remarkable by the fact that it was all done over Distance Learning.

– Liz Evans, English Academic Dean
Social Justice in an International Context:
Update on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at INTL

By Laura Johnson and Joanna Monfort-Torres, DEI Facilitators

As a bilingual IB school, we have a mission to raise globally conscious and internationally-minded students. Embracing differences is paramount in the bilingual international school context. This fall, we started as Silicon Valley International School's inaugural DEI facilitators, forming an innovative and original team who strongly believe in social justice and acknowledge the continued urgency to promote diversity in the halls and curriculum of our evolving school.

DEI is an acronym for the values that INTL believes in and is working diligently to promote: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Already during the 2020–2021 school year, the DEI team has been able to build upon the foundation of awareness amongst faculty and staff by conducting additional trainings to help teachers become aware of, embrace, and understand differing views and experiences. Through our personal experiences and convictions, we have worked to illuminate ideas that deserve our attention, focusing this fall on the unique state of diversity affairs in the United States.

Fostering a sense of international-mindedness teaches our students how to see their interconnectedness with all people across cultures and borders. Therefore, it is critical that our students learn about issues from both a personal and worldwide perspective by fostering an understanding of their own identities as well as others.

We also partner with teachers to help them expand their teaching practice to promote a more multicultural and multi-faceted approach. The DEI facilitators guide lessons, offer lesson ideas and suggest alternative diversity angles. They empower teachers to value the diversity of identities and world views, and encourage them to make an effort to learn more about them. Here are some examples of the impact of INTL's DEI program on both teaching and learning during this 2020–2021 scholastic year:

- Modeling lessons for teachers on how to teach sensitive issues that deal with race and to gain confidence to do so; modeling lessons in PSPK and 1st grade on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Conducting a Kindergarten grade-level training on stereotyping
- Allying with teachers to add a broader diversity lens to a 3rd grade unit on indigenous communities
- Encouraging the integration of a DEI perspective in 2nd and 3rd grade math by introducing the campaign to put Harriet Tubman on the US $20 bill
- Initiating a drive to integrate the IB Learner Profile traits to commemorate Black Heritage Month on the Early Years campus.
- Collaborating with the Media Hub Librarian to expand the collection of books that teach DEI principles
- Conducting ongoing Zoom presentations during weekly faculty meetings to create community-wide awareness about current issues relating to bias, identity, and diversity.
- Presenting during regular Middle School Advisory meetings to help faculty further understand the concepts of DEI work.
- Providing monthly instruction and activities for Middle School Advisory focusing on DEI themes.
- Creating safe and brave spaces for class discussions on topics of identity, race and gender.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Statement:

Silicon Valley International School (INTL) strives to empower students, alumni, faculty, staff, and parents to understand, value differences and celebrate diversity. Through an environment of respect, the INTL community is committed to inclusion, acceptance, and belonging, so all may live in a better and peaceful world.
Middle school is a place for growth, change and opportunity. Students in middle school start asking bigger questions, challenging their past understanding, and thinking more deeply and critically about the world around them. It is the perfect time to start trying new things, and exploring new interests, as students grow into their unique, individual selves.

For me, middle school was where my passion for the sciences was ignited. I was lucky to have been exposed to an approach to learning that emphasized the interconnectedness of all sciences, providing me with a well-rounded way of applying my understanding in the real world.

At Silicon Valley International School, through the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) framework, our approach to teaching the sciences is integrated. Students are encouraged to investigate science by formulating their own questions, and finding answers to those questions through the lens of multiple scientific fields: biology, chemistry, physics and earth sciences. This is done through research and experimentation, enabling students to develop skills and a way of thinking that they can use to make practical connections between their studies and the world in which they live.

For example, in one of our middle school classes this year, the students engaged in a structured inquiry focused on the elements of biology, chemistry and physics that power the process of breathing. From learning about gas properties (relationship between pressure, volume and temperature) and concentration gradients, to the structures and their function within the respiratory system, students were able to develop research questions that allowed them to apply their conceptual understanding. Through their interdisciplinary inquiry, they deepened their understanding of the breathing process that we so often take for granted, yet without which we would cease to exist.

In a world filled with complex challenges, such as COVID-19 and climate change, it is incumbent upon us to tackle these multifaceted issues from a variety of perspectives. Through an integrated approach, we can deepen our understanding and discuss potential solutions to these complex challenges. Through structured inquiry, students can explore questions such as:

- What is a virus?
- What is a vaccine?
- How is it developed?
- Who has access to it?

In arriving at their answers, students are encouraged to appreciate and respect the ideas of others, apply ethical-reasoning skills, and consider their responsibility as local and global community members.

As an educator, I am passionate about the integrated approach to scientific inquiry we begin in the middle school years, as I know we are helping students cultivate the skills that will help them solve the many problems facing the world today, and into the future.
Here, four of our current 10th grade students explain the Personal Projects they are pursuing this year and why they decided to explore these topics.

Duncan T.
For my Grade 10 Personal Project I am attempting to answer the question, “Using knowledge of language and linguistics, how does one effectively teach a language’s grammar to someone through the form of a book?” To do this, I am creating the first two chapters of an in-depth guide to English grammar for Spanish speakers. I chose this question as it fits well with my passion for language and linguistics that I exercise both in and out of the classroom. With my project, I hope to look at English, a part of my identity as a native English speaker, from a new perspective. Looking at English through an analytical lens and attempting to relearn it myself so that I can teach it to others will require me to take a step back and reflect on their learning as it happens over the course of several months.

Zoë M.
The central question of my Personal Project is “How has the world’s past exploration in spacecraft development and space travel affected the world today, and what connections can be made by investigating the history, impact, science, and functionality of various spacecrafts?” I chose this topic because science and engineering is really interesting to me, specifically when it applies to space and how it can directly affect our achievements by allowing us to discover new things.

Grify S.
My personal project is PariKat, pronounced Parry Chat, a free online communications service. This entails creating and setting up the necessary infrastructure, design, and scripts in order to make a website. For this project, I’ve had to set up a custom database and server system for relaying information between clients via the server and database using a brilliantly useful technology called WebSockets. The main question I’m looking into is, “How do major online services structure themselves and develop/operate large, scalable, resilient internet infrastructure to ensure their internet presence?” I chose this because it is a very interesting concept, not very well known, and because it is very useful to me.

Yara G.
I have always been interested in crime shows and unsolved mysteries, which is why I decided to focus my Personal Project on what makes a person become a serial killer. More specifically, "How does a serial killer’s background affect their psychological reasoning behind committing murder?" My final product will be a podcast consisting of two episodes that are each approximately 20 minutes in length. The first episode will cover general information about what a serial killer is, their background (childhood, schools, family, friends, etc.), types of serial killers, and psychopathy. In the second episode, I will use Ted Bundy’s life as a case study, as he was one of the most well-known serial killers of all time.
Imagine you decided that from now on you would call your car a house and your table a bed.

By switching the names of objects, you can create a whole new language. This raises the question: what is language?

A language is made up of symbols that are put together to form words. When these words are placed together they form sentences, and these sentences can then form texts. The purpose of this is to communicate ideas. Language is a medium to convey ideas from a messenger to a receiver. Humans use language to express what they are thinking and to share this with other humans.

The concept of language is based on the image we think of when we hear a word and vice versa. For example, when you hear the word ‘house’ you think of a house. However, if another person were to always call their house a car, after a certain point they would think of a car when they hear the word ‘house.’ This is because language relies on the interpretations and connotations that humans have tied to specific words in order to have a complex system for communication.

When groups of people get separated by time and distances, the words start to change as they evolve to fit the new location better. This results in different dialects, and over time new languages. For this reason, there are many different languages around the world, but many of them are related in their roots.

As an international school, we have the opportunity to dig deeper into these linguistic roots. Whether these are our German, English, French or Chinese roots – through the study of language it is possible to explore the similarities and differences of cultures around the world.

In our German Language and Literature Class, we took our philosophical investigation of language a step further and analysed the statement:

“We don’t live in a country, but in a language.”
– Elias Canetti

This statement proposes that real living does not depend on the country one is in, but rather which language, or how many languages one speaks. Your language isn’t necessarily the national language of the country, simply one that is used to express oneself and is understood by others. This shows that the country isn’t the determining factor, but it is language and how you use it to communicate, form connections, and live with others. This can especially be seen through the progression of language throughout time and the globalization of certain languages.

We all know from the languages that we speak, that through time words and phrases will shift in meaning, or take on influences from other cultures. This often is seen as something negative, as when you travel to a foreign country you expect to only see the language that they originally spoke there. However, in non-English speaking countries, you will see languages, especially English, take over aspects of life such as advertisements, sometimes suppressing native language and culture.

This begs the question if the shift in language through globalization is something that should be viewed positively and supported, or if it should be looked at negatively and should be discouraged.

Looking through the lens of a student at a multilingual, international school, we believe that we need to focus on keeping different cultures and languages alive and active. It is so important to keep diverse languages alive because otherwise we will lose the culture that goes hand in hand with the language.
Introducing the Silicon Valley International School DRAGONS!

We are so excited to introduce our new merged school mascot – the Silicon Valley International School DRAGONS!

Alto International School adopted the Germanic dragon as their mascot in the 2017–2018 school year, and it has become a beloved figure across all grades, as well as a powerful symbol of school spirit.

The dragon symbol is found in cultures around the world, and is resonant in the cultures of all three of our language programs – French, Chinese, and German. So, we decided the dragon would be the perfect symbol to embrace as we come together as a single school community!

Our new mascot design is a mixture of visual elements from both the Asian and European dragon, representing the mixture of cultures in our beloved international community.

We look forward to sporting the INTL DRAGON on spirit gear in the future, and will hold a mascot naming contest for all students later this year.

Stay tuned for more details, and GO DRAGONS!

Follow Us on Social Media!

Get a glimpse into daily school life at our campuses! Learn about upcoming events and hear perspectives and expertise from our incredible community of international, bilingual educators – on our social media accounts.

@SVINTLSchool
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Silicon Valley International School
Dear Silicon Valley International School and Alto Families,

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce our respective parent associations (INTL’s PT A and Alto’s APTO) to our newfound community. Our two associations began working together several months ago, and we were thrilled to find that we already have so much in common. Both our communities value diversity and the growth mindset, and both our Parent Teacher Associations strive to have a positive impact on our whole school community. Even though we are finding new ways to show our staff and teachers the appreciation they deserve, our efforts have been limited compared to past years due to the pandemic.

However challenging things may be, our two organizations also share a positive outlook on life, and the spring season is upon us to remind us that this is a time of rejuvenation and new beginnings. We will begin this new era of our merged schools with the announcement that INTL’s PT A and Alto’s APTO will naturally merge into the one and only Silicon Valley International School’s PT A!

For the remainder of this school year, we will have a combined virtual Kaffeeklatsch: Coffee & Conversation hosted by Erich Sonnberger (every first Friday of the month starting in March), and of course, we would love to bring our communities together in person. Therefore, a potluck is on the top of our wish list, and we have tentatively scheduled this event for before the summer break. We will keep our fingers crossed that by then we will be able to get together in person again (per county guidelines).

The combined and renewed PTA will release the updated PTA bylaws to our communities and send out information about volunteer opportunities – we aim to present the calendar of events for the 2021–2022 school year well before the summer break. Please stay tuned!

We are all excited for all the small and big new beginnings we will experience together from now onward!

In sincere partnership,
PTA and APTO
(Soon to be Silicon Valley International School’s PTA)

Letter from Chief Advancement Officer Patricia Colin

Over the years, I have seen our community evolve and grow in ways I never could have imagined when I first came to Silicon Valley International School as a French teacher 29 years ago. One big change came in 1896, with the addition of our Chinese program, moving us from being a French school to an international school, and enriching our community in countless ways.

As INTL and Alto prepare to fully merge operations in the 2021–2022 academic year, I know that the addition of German and the partial immersion track will even further strengthen our school. Every day, our students will learn and play alongside friends from even more diverse backgrounds, and we will all have new cultural celebrations to learn about and share as a community.

In January we held our first merged (virtual) community get-together in the form of INTLin, our twice-yearly community networking event. Although we were ostensibly there to network, we could not help but move into conversation about our schools and our excitement about coming together (especially in combining INTL’s love for fine wine with an appreciation of good German beer!). I was struck by how similar each school’s parents already are, all dedicated to developing thoughtful and caring citizens of the world through our rigorous bilingual education.

In the coming months, we will have multiple opportunities for INTL and Alto communities to get to know each other across French, Chinese, German, and partial immersion programs!

Monthly Kaffeeklatsch
The joint INTL/Alto PTAs will be holding weekly virtual Kaffeeklatsch meetings the first Friday of each month at 8:30am, where parents can drop in to get to know each other better. In German culture, a “Kaffeeklatsch” is an informal gathering for coffee and conversation.

Annual Gala and Auction
All INTL and Alto parents are invited to our annual Gala and Auction fundraising event, a beloved Silicon Valley International School tradition that the whole community looks forward to each year. This year’s theme is “Fly Me to the Moon AND BACK!” reimagined for a fun virtual event!

I hope to see you at one or all of these upcoming events, and I look forward to this next exciting chapter for the Silicon Valley International School community!
Honoring Susan Brooks – An Extraordinary Teacher

This February, the International School of the Peninsula*/Silicon Valley International School community was devastated by the loss of Susan Brooks, a beloved elementary school teacher. Before retiring in 2014, Susan made a profound impact on generations of students.

Her students and colleagues have countless fond memories of their time with Mrs. Brooks, a few of which we are able to share with you here.

“While I did not have the privilege of working with Susan, I have heard numerous stories of how much she impacted our students and school and how much she will be missed. Stories of her paint a picture of what educators all hope to become in their careers. She inspired so many in her time at school – teachers and students alike, and her passing is felt deeply within our community.”
– Angie Bergeson, Head of School

“Our community has lost one of its pillars. Mrs. Brooks was an inspiring teacher and colleague. She was so warm, full of life, compassionate, creative, and energetic. Everyone who knew her benefited from her kindness and enthusiasm for teaching and learning. My heart aches for her family and for all of us who have lost someone so dear.”
– Philippe Dietz, former Head of School

“I’ll find comfort in knowing she had a positive impact on the lives of everyone lucky enough to cross her path. My alumni cohort has had nothing but fond memories to share about her and our time in that 3rd grade class. I’m sure she was a lot of things to a lot of different people, but to us, she’ll always be Mrs. Brooks: the 3rd grade teacher who cruised around in her batmobile and taught us how to let that little light we all have inside shine bright as can be.”
– Ariel Arsac Ellison, ISTP* 8th grade class of 2005

“Her complete dedication to the students, her kindness, helpfulness and her love made her an exceptional person.”
– Kate Conway, Former ISTP* Assistant Head, Current Head of School, Island School Hawaii

“Chance made Susan and I colleagues, but the fun and laughter we shared made us really good friends. Susan’s humor and friendship will be incredibly missed.”
– Hayat Saba, former ISTP* teacher

“Susan Brooks is in my opinion the best teacher I ever had the chance to meet. I had the amazing chance of working with her for about 9 years and she was always there for me and the students. Her complete dedication to the students, her kindness, helpfulness, and her love made her an exceptional person.”
– Vincent Moreau, former ISTP* teacher

“A very high percentage of my best childhood memories are concentrated in that wonderful year that I was in Mrs. Brooks’ class. She created such a happy, healthy environment for us to learn in. Whenever I get together with my friends from ISTP* we always think back to Mrs. Brooks’ class with great fondness and joy. I work in education now and I can only hope to make my students feel as loved as I felt loved by Mrs. Brooks.”
– Jeremy Rossmann, ISTP* 8th grade class of 2005

Susan Brooks was a blessing to every life she touched, whether inside or outside the classroom. We have her husband Phil, her sons, and grandchildren in our thoughts during this difficult time.

*Silicon Valley International School changed its name in 2020 and was formerly known as International School of the Peninsula (ISTP). Prior to 1996, ISTP was known as Peninsula French American School (PFAS).
In Loving Remembrance of Max Lenail

beautiful smile in our hearts. Son magnifique sourire restera à jamais dans nos coeurs.*

― Anne Vanhove, INTL teacher and Thomas Marigne, former ISTP* teacher

"Max had so much left to share with the world. There are a lot of capable people and a lot of caring people, but not many are both. Anyone who spent more than an hour with Maxi knew he was one of the few. Au revoir mon frère."

― Nathan Zeidwerg, ISTP* 8th grade class of 2013

"Max had so much to give this world and was bound to do it so beautifully. I will miss his energy, his light, his giggle, his tough questions, his hiking suggestions, and his endless love for the rest of my life. I love you forever my beautiful, extraordinary friend."

― Keishi Foecke, ISTP* 8th grade class of 2013

In late January, beloved International School of the Peninsula*/Silicon Valley International School alumnus Max Lenail was taken from the world far too soon, in a tragic accidental death at the age of 21.

Max was a special and unforgettable student during his more than a decade at our school, graduating in the 8th grade class of 2013. Our hearts truly ache for the Lenail family – he is survived by his parents, Ben Lenail and Laurie Yoler, and brother Alex.

Max’s friends, loved ones, teachers, and classmates from his time at our school have shown a great outpouring of grief and shock, but also appreciation for the positive impact this kind, talented, and thoughtful young man had on their lives. We wanted to let them speak for themselves about Max, and the ways he touched their lives and their hearts.

"We had the chance to have Maxi two years in our class in PreK and K. His enthusiasm in life, joy, and kindness will never fade. We will always have his

"I will never forget Max! He was an extremely athletic and bright student, who was always looking to have fun. I remember that he had the cheekiest smile and demeanor, and he was always looking for an angle to just enjoy the moment. He always brought that fun spirit to my classes and brightened everyone’s day."

― Tara Speed, former ISTP* P.E. teacher

"Reading all the posts [on Facebook] have made it clear that Maxi wasn’t just a smart, funny, bubbling young kid; he was a brilliant, generous, adventurous young man whose spirit does not seem to have changed since I knew him all those years ago. I have been in awe at how many people’s lives he touched, without even knowing it."

― Saira Yusuf, ISTP* 8th grade class of 2013

"I will always remember Maxi as a profound and genuine adolescent with such a great sense of humor, a true understanding of fraternity with all his classmates and a unique mature soul. We will never forget your wonderful smile and great personality. On ne l’oubliera pas Maxi!"

― Arnaud Cabanel, INTL Media Hub Specialist

The world will never be the same without Max. He had a profound impact on our school community, and we will cherish the memories we have of the special light he brought to all those who had the fortune to know him.

"You pushed me to think harder, to question things, and to be more confident during a time in my life when I seemed to have none. I wish I could thank you for these things – you were the person I was looking forward to hearing from most at ISTP* alumni reunions. I hope you’ve moved onto bigger and better things beyond our mere mortal life on earth, and I hope you feel all the love we are sending you."

― Polina Lissin, ISTP* 8th grade class of 2013

*Silicon Valley International School changed its name in 2020 and was formerly known as International School of the Peninsula (ISTP). Prior to 1996, ISTP was known as Peninsula French American School (PFAS).
This year’s Alumni Rising Star, Matthew Colford, is an incredible example of how an international education imparts both a passion for learning about the world and the skills to work to change the world for the better.

In his young career, Matthew Colford (ISTP* 8th grade class of 2006) has already built an impressive resume centered around service both here and abroad. After graduating from Silicon Valley International School, Matthew went on to attend Stanford University, where he studied Political Science and Arabic, inspired by an interest in Francophone North Africa that was first kindled in an INTL classroom.

Fluent in both French and Arabic, Matthew then had the opportunity to serve in the U.S. Embassy in Morocco. While there, conducting business everyday in French and Arabic, he says, “I found myself reflecting a lot on my time at INTL, and my experiences being exposed to different cultures and trying to build community and understanding across cultures – growing up in an American family while receiving a French language education, I felt those lessons very acutely. I was able to bring this mindset with me in my work in foreign affairs. In Morocco, because of my perfect accent, people often assumed I was from the French Embassy, which was fun.”

After his service in Morocco, in 2012 Matthew had the opportunity to serve in the White House for the Obama Administration, where he worked in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. In 2014, Matthew again returned to the State Department, working as Special Assistant and Policy Advisor to the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Samantha Power. During his service, he focused on Latin American policy, especially Venezuela, Haiti, and the initiative to reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba.

After his service with the State Department, Matthew decided he wanted to return to Palo Alto from Washington, D.C. (to join his wife who was in graduate school at Stanford). Back home, Matthew worked as a Partner in Policy and Regulatory affairs at Andreessen Horowitz, and as a research assistant at the Hoover Institute in the Office of Condoleezza Rice. In 2018, he was named a Knight-Hennessy Scholar, a program which seeks to prepare a new generation of leaders to develop creative solutions to the world’s most complex problems, a program that funded his next educational endeavor – pursuing a JD at Stanford Law School.

Today, Matthew is working for a local startup, and welcomed a son, James, in 2020. After all his adventures and service, Matthew has still found the time to support INTL, both volunteering his time and supporting the Endowment – a commitment that stands out amongst our young alumni.

Matthew says, “I think the reason I have stayed involved at INTL is that it was such a formative experience for me. I spent 11 years here, from 1995 to 2006, and that 11 year stretch of my life was the single longest amount of time I spent at any educational institution. The friends I made here are still people who are part of my life, so that is why I have always wanted to remain involved. If I think back to how important those early years are, there is no way I can take that for granted, and no way that I can’t want to help create that experience here for a new generation of students.”

Through his service to the State Department and the U.N. Matthew came to recognize more than ever the importance of an international education. “I think Silicon Valley International School’s ambition to strive to create a better and more peaceful world is an incredibly noble one. If you assume that the leaders of tomorrow are the students of today, then it really makes sense to instil those values in children early on...Now more than ever it is so important to focus on understanding and mutual respect.”

It is so gratifying to see our alumni not only learn the lessons of an international, bilingual education, but also to see them feel empowered to live out these values in such a phenomenal way.

We can’t wait to see where his journey takes him next.
Annual Giving Donors

Donations as of January 28, 2021. This list contains both Alto and INTL donors. Alto donors are indicated with an asterisk.

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Alto International School’s class of 2020 (the first high school graduating class): Jakob E., Dana G., Kian G., Emma N., Mia O., Felix W., Karl Y., and Jamila Z.

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* Alto Student Only
** Alto & INTL Student

Where are they going? Colleges + universities list

American University *
Bates College
Boston University
Brunel University, United Kingdom *
California College of the Arts *
California Institute of Technology (Caltech)
California Polytechnic State University, Pomona
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
Carnegie Mellon University (2)
Carroll College *
Case Western Reserve University (2)
Chapman University *
Colorado School of Mines *
Cornell University
Dartmouth College (2)
École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL)
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Foothill Community College
Harvard University
Hawai‘i-Pacific University *
Institut National des Sciences Appliquées de Lyon, France
Juniata College *
Loyola Marymount University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
McGill University (2)
New York University (2)
Northeastern University **
Oberlin College *
Pacific University *
Paris Dauphine University
Parsons School of Design *
Princeton University
Purdue University **
Queen Mary University, United Kingdom *
Queen’s University
San Jose State University
Santa Clara University (2)
Stanford University (2)
Stevens Institute of Technology *
Technische Universität Berlin, Germany *
Temple University *
The University of British Columbia
University of California, Berkeley **
University of California, Davis *
University of California, Irvine **
University of California, Los Angeles **
University of California, Merced
University of California, San Diego (2)
University of California, San Diego *
University of California, Santa Barbara *
University of California, Santa Cruz **
University of Colorado *
University of Denver *
University of Minnesota *
University of New South Wales, Australia *
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of Oregon
University of Rochester *
University of Southern California (2)
University of Victoria
University of Washington
University of Waterloo, Ontario
University of Wisconsin *
Wesleyan University *
Whitman College *
Worcester Polytechnic Institute **
Yale University
Our Mission

Silicon Valley International School educates children through a rigorous, collaborative, bilingual curriculum that promotes active engagement and responsible international consciousness.