

Today Decides Tomorrow

How one entrepreneur's dream is educating a new breed of internationally-minded children in Tokyo

By Jonathon Walsh, *Business Grow*



Patrick Newell

Founder & Vision Navigator

Tokyo International School



With the world flattening, globalization and environmental challenges rapidly increasing, consumers requiring innovation amongst an abundance of products, digital replacing face-to-face communication and change occurring at a pace the world has never experienced, education also has to adapt in order for children to succeed in the 21st century.

Tokyo International School (T.I.S.), an international learning institution serving the expatriate and host communities that began in 1997 with 12 students, is one of a new breed of schools that is forging bold new paths to expand the horizons of students. After a decade of continual growth backed up by a ton of effort from the owners and a multi-cultural team of educators, the Tokyo-based T.I.S. is

now providing an education to an impressive 360 students from 45 countries.

Passion for learning

How did the school's founders, American **Patrick Newell** and his wife **Ikuko**, and the rest of the T.I.S. team pull this off? The story began when Patrick first came to Japan in September 1991 to learn more about eastern philosophy and Japanese culture. The keen Californian soon launched a tutoring service supporting over 150 students attending international schools in the Tokyo and Yokohama areas, and, combining that platform with a wish to extend and enhance the international preschool education of the couple's two daughters, they made a decision to launch T.I.S.



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PROFILE: Tokyo International School

Founders: Patrick & Ikuko Newell
Location: Tokyo, Japan
Company Type: Kabushiki-Gaisha
No. Employees: 85
e-mail: tis@tokyois.com

Industry: International Education
Date Established: 1997
Revenue 2006: 6 Oku
No. Students: 360
URL: www.tokyois.com



Patrick with students outside T.I.S.

“We started the school to share our vision for learning with our daughters and others who believed in our idea,” Patrick recalls.

Industry-unique model

One of the first things people will notice in their initial contact with T.I.S. is the intriguing Mission Statement: “To nurture confident, open-minded, independently thinking, well-balanced inquirers for global responsibility.” What does this mean for T.I.S. students?

Patrick explains that the core foundation guiding the school culture is to nurture confidence. The Mission Statement was created with the core idea of determining which attributes management wanted students to have when they leave T.I.S., as well as how children will be guided through their stages of development at the school.

How does TIS prepare students for their futures?

Realizing that simply imparting the school’s curriculum is not enough to meet anticipated future needs, T.I.S. has created an industry-unique system that is best described as nurturing children’s confidence through holistic integration.

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Holistic integration is the continual process of integrating every aspect of learning and human development instead of compartmentalizing subject areas and learning.

An important component of holistic integration is the **Relevant Learning Model**, which Patrick developed in 2006. This model can simply be explained using an interrelated triangle of wiring the brain through the inquiry method to learning, focusing on developing positive human characteristics and attitudes, and empowering students to be active participants in decision making process.

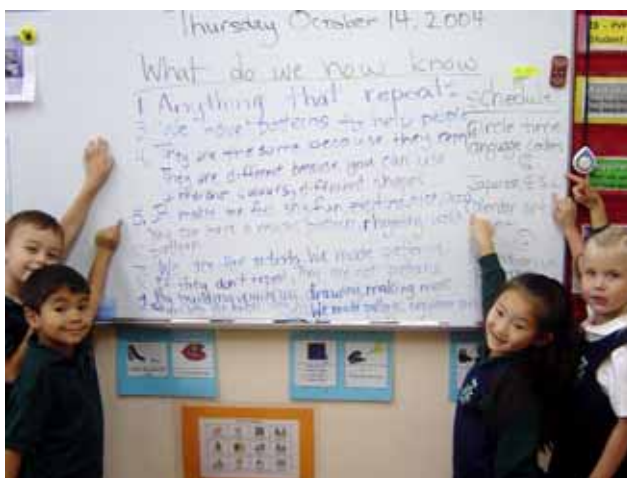
One corner of the triangle focuses on wiring the brain for change through the inquiry process, Patrick explains. Students enter this process by summarizing their current knowledge pertaining to a particular relevant topic. Next, they formulate questions of interest that branch out from the teacher’s key questions.

Students discover the answers to chosen questions through various methods of research, then summarize their specific findings into a central idea. The final stage of the process is a creative presentation of their learning to others.

The second corner of the triangle focuses on developing positive human characteristics and attitudes, and the third zeroes in on empowering people to actively participate in a decision-making process that leads to a high level of motivation, interest and engagement.

The model is relevant because students do not use textbooks; instead they have six core topics related to understanding and problem solving global issues, or related to innovation and design.

Curriculum standards are developed using benchmarks from educational curricula from a range of western



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Mission: "To nurture confident, open-minded, independently thinking, well-balanced inquirers for global responsibility."

countries and students are taught through a trans-disciplinary curriculum that connects individual academic disciplines, including Language Arts, Listening and Speaking, Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Art, Music, Physical Education and Technology.

Cultural melting pot

Most school teachers find that coping with a standard size class in which everyone speaks the same language is a large enough challenge in itself, but this undertaking becomes decidedly more complex when students have different backgrounds, cultures and speak different languages. How does T.I.S. cope with this, and what is the school doing to prepare kids – 80% of whom are from the expatriate population, and 20% who have either one or two Japanese parents – to return to their home countries?

While the main language of instruction at T.I.S. is English, Patrick says this is complemented with Japanese studies three times a week. "Integrated into our Japanese studies are exchanges with local Japanese schools to increase the level of relevance, and we now

have seven mother tongue language programs after school that are also open to the broader community as well."

T.I.S. also has a tailored strategy to assist children who return to their home countries. "Transferability of our students to the 45 countries they represent is a major focus at the school," Patrick says. "We have chosen academic standards that provide the opportunity for students to succeed after they move on to their next school."

To properly serve the needs of this very diverse group, the school has developed rigorous curriculum standards based on models in the United States, England, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to help ensure students can attend their school of choice upon repatriation.

Growing dissatisfaction with education in home countries

How is business going? Well, to put it simply, demand for places is currently outstripping supply. In 2007 alone, T.I.S. has had to decline over 100 new students due to issues mainly relating to capacity.

Patrick's take on the reason for this is a combination of a 10-year proven track record, the Relevant Learning Model, prescriptive admissions guidelines, being extremely mission-driven, and the fact that T.I.S. is truly international. "We are moving forward at an exciting pace that is infectious and can be felt as soon as you walk into the school," he says.

But while T.I.S. continues to grapple with capacity limitations, other issues are waiting in the sidelines, including what Patrick says is probably the biggest challenge facing the international education industry at present – privately owned international schools with mainly host country students who do not have a strong grasp of English. "These schools are feeding off parents who are dissatisfied with the education provided in their country. The number of these types of schools is growing at an incredible rate globally and, sadly, they are not necessarily meeting the needs of their students."

Plans to raise bar

What are Patrick's future plans? "I am perhaps more excited about the next 10 years than the first 10 years," he says. "Much of the first 10 years were focused on developing a strong foundation, culture, mission-driven and learning relevant school. The next 10 years will be about raising the bar in every possible aspect at T.I.S. to fulfill the emerging 21st Century Model School label that we have been given."

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Learning through teaching

Article originally printed in the August 2007 issue of Eye Ai magazine.

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Business Bio: DATA



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