



# **COLUMBIA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF JAPAN**

## **INTERNATIONAL INTERIM**

## **PROGRESS REPORT 2023**

**Columbia International School  
153 Matsugo, Tokorozawa  
Saitama, 359-0027  
Japan**

**Accrediting Commission for Schools  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges**

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### I: General School Data

Columbia International School  
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Principal: Barrie McCliggott

Enrollment: 298

### II: School Description

The school is located on an acre and a half campus in the midst of suburban Tokyo. Tokorozawa, Saitama (population 342,939), is located in the west of Tokyo with convenient access to central Tokyo. The nearest station is Higashi-Tokorozawa on the JR Musashino-line (48 minutes from Tokyo station, 37 minutes from Shibuya station, 64 minutes from Yokohama).

The school is in a mixed residential and business (mostly industrial) area. However, the school does not serve its immediate geographical location; students commute from outside areas, therefore, there is no relevant demographic data to identify certain student profiles at Columbia International School.

Columbia International School (CIS) is an overseas-inspected private school; a member of the Association of Ontario Overseas Schools, accredited by the Ontario Ministry of Education of Canada and by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in the United States.

CIS uses the curriculum of the Ontario Ministry of Education. The Ontario Ministry of Education and Training inspects annually to certify that the high school is in compliance with the rules and regulations of the Ontario educational system. The Junior High School also uses the Ontario curriculum as the core of the academic program but with a greater Asian focus. The Ministry of Education in Ontario, Canada issues the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) to graduating students. The OSSD is recognized and accepted throughout the world. In order to obtain an OSSD, each student must earn 30 credits of which 18 credits are compulsory and 12 are electives. The compulsory and elective subjects include English, Math, Science, Geography, History, Humanities, Arts, Health and Physical Education, Computers and Business studies.

Students are required to complete a minimum of 40 hours of voluntary community work as a graduation requirement. Students are required to pass the Ontario Ministry of Education Literacy Test for graduation.

The school is a proprietorship school whose owner with the support of an advisory board delegates the operation and management of the school to the Principal. The school continues to be in a robust financial position.

The school was founded in 1988 and established as a high school to provide a preparatory program for Japanese students planning to attend universities and colleges in North America. Most CIS students come from upper to wealthy income families; however, the school admits students of any race, color, nationality and ethnic origin. Students may enroll at the school at any grade and at the beginning of any trimester. Students must have a minimal competency in written and oral English for admission to the school being that all instruction is taught in English. The school actively recruits students from the Japanese public school system. Currently, the school enrolls 298 students in grades 1 through 12. There are 149 students in grades 7 through 12. Kinder through Grade 6 there are 149 students. The school is co-educational and students are mainly native Japanese. In 2001, a junior-high division, grades 7 through 9, was added and in the spring 2002, the elementary division (K-6) was added. The school is now accredited by WASC K-12.

### *Senior and Junior*

CIS uses the Ontario, Canada curriculum, which is rigorous academically and includes the Ontario Achievement Chart; the school actively requires focused literacy content in all courses at the secondary level (based on Ontario's Think Literacy Program). The Ontario curriculum and graduation requirements are rigorous. Some teachers use course profiles developed by Ontario and sanctioned by the Provincial government while others develop their own in accordance to Ministry guidelines. Teachers maintain files of student work samples to demonstrate learning. Students are given the opportunity to meet the requirements on the standardized Ontario Achievement Chart. The school updates courses of study when a new curriculum is mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education. Course outlines are revised each time a course is taught. Most students generally take the same course progression. When students do not take the same course progression the alternative courses are equally challenging. Students and parents are made aware of graduation requirements.

### *Elementary*

Columbia International School's elementary program incorporates a positive whole child approach that recognizes the need for each child to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

The small class size and the collaborative nature of discovery learning methodologies allows for the physical, social, emotional and academic development of each individual student. The student-centered approach means purposeful and challenging experiences are designed around ideas, concepts and themes that are meaningful to students. Caring and highly qualified teachers use the latest strategies to support each student's language development in our literacy rich classrooms. In this way each child develops fluency in both English and Japanese.

Columbia also provides students many opportunities to get involved in school life through clubs, social and cultural events, community events and extracurricular activities.

### *Kindergarten*

Columbia International School is proud to offer an English-based kindergarten program that establishes a strong foundation for learning in the early years for students four and five years old. At Columbia International School, each child is entering an environment that values the uniqueness of each child and the diversity of all its learners. In a safe and caring learning environment teachers work to promote the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of every child to ensure he or she is successful at school. Cradled in the “whole child” philosophy, our kindergarten offers a healthy and safe learning environment where each child, while actively engaged in their own learning process, is supported and challenged to reach their highest potential. Caring and experienced teachers provide opportunities for growth in six major areas: Personal and Social Development, Language, Mathematics, Science and technology.

All teaching staff hold a bachelor’s degree in education. Eighty per cent (80%) are certified by the Ontario College of teachers. Twenty per cent (20%) hold teacher licenses in other jurisdictions (Australia, Japan, USA). All teaching staff have prior English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching experience or training before joining the Columbia teaching staff. The majority of Columbia Teachers have been teaching at the school for more than eleven years.

It should be noted that our multi-cycle WASC coordinator Robert Skinner is retiring and we are in the process of transitioning the WASC coordinator position to Chris Lucier. On behalf of the Columbia school community I would like to thank Robert for all the dedication he has put into the WASC process to help make our school a better learning community. Chris along with colleague Darcy Fleming undertook WASC training at the past Earcos teachers conference and are excited to continue the excellent progress under Robert’s leadership. A first step will be to reorganize our focus groups to support our ongoing school improvement.

### **III: Major Recommendations Progress**

#### **Action Plan 1**

Leadership and faculty should prioritize schoolwide improvement processes driven by systematic collection and analysis of data by all appropriate stakeholders in order to effectively guide the work of the school and provide accountability and monitoring of the schoolwide action plan. The school should seek objective standardized measures, in the vein of the MAP and PSAT assessments, to measure the effectiveness of the CIS program. Leadership should work with the faculty to use these measures to inform a regular review of the curriculum and other school programs that involve all relevant staff.

The WASC Visiting Committee of 2020 has identified a need for the school to further expand the scope of data collection to include all divisions and subject areas to reflect the input and needs of all stakeholders in the process. To be more able to focus on student individual needs throughout their learning at Columbia, the school recognizes the benefits of being able to track student achievement to help personalize instruction. In keeping with the desire to connect the divisions and to use data to support decisions for instruction, programs and individual needs, the school needs a system that can be easily used to collect data and be accessible by teachers, staff and students with a protocol for privacy. Although the school collects perception data and percentage data related to some of the support services, the school leadership and staff needs to more frequently review the data regarding impact on learning (e.g., School Survey should be reviewed during staff meetings and / or CC meetings) and use it to drive decision making.

The first step of the action plan was to identify and describe our data sources within the four areas of data (perception, demographic, processes, academic) by the end of the first term 2021. However, this step had been delayed due to the pandemic and the protocols in place to mitigate the situation. Step 1 was completed at the end of first term 2022 via a shared google document for teachers to input the various types of data they collect. At the Elementary level data was restricted to academics with only three grade levels reporting. The Junior division begins Credit Tracking but otherwise did not identify anything that was different from school-wide data including academic achievement in terms of results that are recorded at each grade. The Senior division, in addition to the other common data sources, continues the Credit Tracking and has an English Data Profile which includes a variety of data from each student in the Junior and Senior grades. School-wide data includes parent surveys plus the general academic data. Step 2 is to evaluate our data sources to see how effective they are: Provide enough information, frequency, used to inform decisions about planning; communicating results, staff involvement. This assessment can be an informative tool for Step 3 to determine if the data being collected and used is sufficient and where possible additions can be made. The action plan is a year behind schedule; however, it can be completed by the Spring of 2023.

In Step 3 of the process in 2023 it was determined that the school's standardized data collection is limited to a few specific areas that are done in a structured and consistent manner and in addition, continues to collect data in other forms across subject areas, grade levels and school programs. However, the data at a standardized level does not inform instruction or other areas of

school policy or programs. The conclusions drawn after these observations and evaluations are that a) more standardized data could be collected and b) existing and future standardized data needs to be used to inform instruction, programs and policies.

## **Action Plan 2**

Leadership and faculty should develop processes to regularly review and update written policies, charts, and handbooks that define professional roles and responsibilities for governance, leadership and faculty, operational practices, decision-making processes, and professional growth plans with evaluation procedures

To ensure a smooth operation of all aspects of the school and a shared understanding of practices between appropriate stakeholders, operation documents need to be kept up to date and shared with relevant staff.

The student handbook in both the Elementary and Junior-Senior divisions has been reviewed, updated, and published. The Curriculum Expectations have been reviewed, updated and published. Contracts are a standardized document that is reviewed and updated each year and this continues. All the school health and safety documents have been reviewed and updated and shared with school staff. The documents include heat index for student activities and heat exhaustion protocols, earthquake protocols and drills, fire protocols and drills, intruder protocols and drills

Safeguarding documents have now been reviewed, updated and published and shared with all staff and added to the code of conduct and Teacher handbook. Professional development courses in child safeguarding have been added as a requirement schoolwide. Columbia International School has received recognition from [childsafeguarding.com](http://childsafeguarding.com) and awarded a plaque for our proactive efforts towards safeguarding our students and staff.

Laptop and mobile device expectations and Sports and Activity philosophies are under review with teachers and updated as required.

## **Action Plan 3**

Leadership and faculty should implement a cohesive framework and process for consistent curriculum planning throughout the subjects and the school divisions, providing dedicated time for professional collaboration. This process should generate documentation of the way Ontario standards and practices are translated to the context of CIS.

Through the self-study process and the inclusion of the Kinder and Elementary program, the school recognizes the value of having criteria and the standards that connect programs more meaningfully (i.e., streamline, scaffold).

Meetings for team members of Action Plan 3 have reconvened since school safety measures for the COVID-19 pandemic have subsided. Thus far, team members have reviewed digital documentation (i.e., Google Sheets) that was created to map curriculum spanning from Kindergarten to Grade 12. It is with hope that creating such a framework will eliminate any potential overlap and better meet student needs and interests. Working with teachers in the Elementary Junior Division (i.e., grade 4-6), Action Plan 3 team members have completed the curriculum mapping for the subjects of Language Arts and Math. With the recent release of an updated and sequenced Elementary Language Arts, (September 2023) work will continue with the Elementary Language Arts program to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of our learners. The sciences are the next subjects planned to be mapped. In addition, Action Plan 3 team members are in the process of scheduling meetings with coordinators and teachers in all divisions to bring both current and new staff members up to speed with its initiatives and explain exactly what curriculum data is needed to be collected and organized. As the school year is well underway, Action Plan 3 team members hope to make more significant progress with curriculum mapping in the fall.

### **Action Plans 4 & 6**

The leadership and faculty with input from all stakeholders should develop and adopt a comprehensive child protection policy that includes a code of conduct for the appropriate behavior of adults toward children and children toward other children, reporting procedures, and mandatory faculty/staff training programs to always ensure the safety of students. The school must further develop a policy that will provide our school body with practices and training for staff, teachers, and school community members on issues such as child abuse and how to evaluate our current policies and their effectiveness. Moreover, the school would provide professional development related to counseling for homeroom teachers and consider hiring a full-time personal student counselor.

The WASC process has facilitated the identified need for an improvement and regular review of the Child Protection Policy. Such a policy would meet regulations under the Japanese government, international school regulations, and best practices as deemed necessary by stakeholders (students, parents, community, and school). In addition, this policy should be reviewed regularly in order to stay current with changing needs and various government policies.

The school leadership and principal working in conjunction with the Japan Council of International Schools and Dr. Kato, a child safety specialist, reviewed the school's Child Protection Policy. Areas related to teacher and staff duties, code of conduct, clear reporting procedures, and requirements were edited in the original policy. A draft comprehensive Columbia International School Student and All Staff Protection Protocols and Guidelines was created and vetted with the teaching staff. All teachers were provided a copy of the document which they are required to read and sign each year with the issuing of a new contract. Professional development courses in child safeguarding are now a mandatory annual requirement for license renewal for all Ontario College of Teachers (80% of the teaching staff) with a completion date of August 30, 2022. Teachers and all staff that are not part of the Ontario College of Teachers are required to complete the pre-purchased child safeguarding courses

offered by child safe guarding.com with a completion date of June 30, 2022. Both the Ontario College of Teachers and the Child Safeguarding targets have been met. Columbia International School has received recognition from childsafeguarding.com and awarded a plaque for our proactive efforts towards safeguarding our students and staff. All new teachers and staff will be required to complete either the Ontario College of teachers course or the Child Safeguarding course.

### **Action Plan 5**

The faculty and leadership should develop a curriculum review cycle that considers how to expand or modify CIS's course offerings to align with changing student needs, with particular needs recognized preparing students for science-related fields such as medicine and technology. At present, the school encourages students to take supplementary courses through an online provider, but students and parents have expressed a strong desire for additional on-site course offerings.

During the WASC inspection, it became apparent that some students (families) were not satisfied with the current course offerings, specifically in the fields of science and math.

A recent review of the curriculum against entry requirements from a wide variety of universities globally with a focus on universities in Canada, the USA, and Japan meets most requirements but recognized that some programs require SPH 4U Physics 12 and MCV4U Mathematics Calculus and Vectors. Over the last 5 years, one or two students per year have requested such courses, and these courses have then been offered online through our relationship with Ontario Virtual School and supported by our teachers. Unless we see an increase in demand for such courses we will continue to facilitate delivery through the Ontario Virtual School.

### **Action Plan 7**

Leadership and governance should strive to clarify the role of the governing authority to all stakeholders and provide a more transparent budgeting process was suggested as an area for improvement.

Create an organography that clarifies roles and responsibilities as they relate to decision-making regarding resource allocation and acquisition for all stakeholders.

An updated organography of the duties and responsibilities of the business office and support staff have been created and shared with all employees. Work to expand the scope of the organography to include all teaching staff is ongoing.

Columbia has a robust accounting and budgeting system that meets all the requirements of the Japanese business and education authorities. The school ownership continues to share budget information in relation to resource allocation and acquisition with the principal and members of



the business office. Currently, we are looking at a way to document what areas the school needs to be more transparent. A survey is being developed to see what stakeholders see as areas that need to be more transparent and what is generally understood. We will take steps to make progress in this direction. In an effort to make the policies and procedures more transparent, policies and procedures related to resource allocation and the acquisition will be included in the teacher handbook.

### **Action Plan 8**

Review marketing strategies to promote the school and student enrolment.

After reviewing the Key points of the The 5Rs Partnership consultancy Syndicated Research Reputation Assessor report on reputation and marketing with all teachers and staff. A discussion of our school marketing and recruitment process led us to conclude that nothing is more valuable to parents, students, teachers, support staff and administration than a positive reputation. Therefore, building a strategic and proactive school reputation based on robust evidence about the perception of our stakeholders: students, parents, staff, and the wider school community is critical to ongoing school success.

The first step was to analyze the current state of marketing strategies of school and student enrolment by the end of first term 2021. From this analysis we concluded that the state of school website and media accounts were outdated. The school has since completed the process of updating the school websites to show the current reputation of the school by hiring professional crew to film and edit a promotional video. A new updated website is now in use. Staff have been assigned roles and responsibilities for the development of an online school newsletter. We have begun to livestream school events such as graduation, opening ceremonies, and athletic events such as volleyball, soccer, and basketball games. The second step would be to spread community awareness about the school. Strategies to do this would be community involvement such as; speech contests at various school competitions. Nine regional Kindergartens participated in a speaking performance event that was livestreamed to the greater school community. We need to create a questionnaire to be given out to stakeholders regarding different promotional methods (prioritize most to least important) to understand what methods of promotion are most critical and valuable to increase school promotion and student enrollment.