Executive Summary

Thamer International School

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REPORT INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Your ASSIST-Generated Executive Institutional Summary

The Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools (ASSIST) is a new, state-of-the art alternative that allows schools to streamline and enhance their efforts to boost student achievement. Using ASSIST, a school can gain a better understanding of its past successes and opportunities and confidently build a solid, research-based plan for the future.

Every school has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and student learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way school leadership considers how to organize, maintain order, and stay faithful to the school's vision. A description of the level of stakeholder engagement, trends and issues affecting the school, and the kinds of programs and services that the school implements to support student learning also contributes to the overall narrative.

The purpose of the Executive Institutional Summary (EIS) is to give schools an opportunity to tell their story, to describe their context both strengths and challenges so that the public and members of the school community have a more complete picture of how the school perceives itself and what it is deliberating as it engages in the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement.

This report is structured into 4 sections that give context about what the school faces on a day-to-day basis in providing teaching and learning in its community:

Section 1: Introduction

- Describes the community in which the school is located. Identifies the unique features and special challenges of this school community. Provides brief demographic information with regards to both students and staff and the community at large.

Section 2: Student Performance

- Gives a brief description of the school's vision about students and their performance.
- Provides a brief summary of student performance in this school. Identifies the school's goals and how the school will know they have achieved them. Describes the variety of the school's student performance assessments. Identifies how the staff engages in meaningful analysis of student work in order to modify instruction.
- Describes the school's student support programs and services. Identifies the ways in which the school ensures community/parent involvement in the life of the school.

Section 3: Challenges and Opportunities

- Identifies the major challenges the school has faced in the last 3 years and how it has addressed those challenges.

Section 4: Conclusion

- Identifies what the school is most proud of and why.
- Relates other information the school would like to share with the public and the school community.

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DEMOGRAPHICS

Institution

District	
Country	SA
State/Province	
City	Jeddah
Governance	Private, non-charter
Setting	City
Type	Overseas
Grade(s)	Pre-K, Kindergarten, 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12
Religious Denomination	Islam
Gender	Coed
Enrollment	3103

Contact

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EXECUTIVE INSTITUTIONAL SUMMARY

Section 1: Introduction

Describe the community in which your school is located. What are the unique features and special challenges of your school community?

Briefly provide demographic information with regards to both students and staff and the community at large.

Narrative:
Located in Quraish Street, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on a 31,000 sqm plot of land, the school serves as an ideal site for teaching and learning as its location offers the community access to education in the center of the city.

Thamer International School was originally located in Hamra district on a much smaller 8,500 sqm plot of land. As the number of students increased exponentially over time, the school moved to its current location in the academic year 2008/2009.

In fact, when the school got accredited by CITA in the academic year 2004/2005 one of the main recommendations proposed by the CITA team was to improve the school campus and its facilities.

After moving to the new campus and during the past three years, many additional changes to our facilities were made and the school became a full Cambridge testing center for both the written and the practical exams. This is imperative as all T.I.S graduates are required to sit for the IGCSE and A-Level exams in Senior School.

Thamer International School served a student population of around 1000 students in the academic year 2000/2001 when it was first founded. Ever since, it has witnessed a remarkable increase in student numbers to reach its maximum number of students last academic year at 3323 students.

Currently, the student body is comprised of 3091 students, as limiting the number of students to 22 students as a maximum in each class was one of many changes that the new leadership team applied at the school.

The majority of the community includes Arab expatriates who came to the Kingdom seeking better life conditions. The school's community ranges from middle to upper-middle class families and incorporates students from all backgrounds whose parents' main priority is giving their children the best education they can afford.

T.I.S has students from 36 different nationalities, the biggest percentage of which goes to Egyptians, Lebanese, Saudis, Jordanians, Syrians, Yemenis and Palestinians respectively.

Only last academic year, T.I.S, along with eleven other international schools, was granted permission from the Ministry of Education to accept Saudi students. This posed a special challenge for the school as most Saudi students came from Arabic schools that have completely different curriculums and educational standards.

The parents of T.I.S seek an academically strong, educationally sound program for their children. The value placed on education is evident from the levels of education achieved by the parents themselves.

T.I.S currently employs 528 staff members consisting of professional and support staff. Staff consists of a school director, a deputy school director, heads of schools, subject coordinators, teachers, substitute teachers, assistant teachers, social workers, a full-time doctor, a nurse, administrative personnel, accountants, food services staff, facilities and maintenance staff, transportation manager, human resource officer, IT manager, librarians, and custodians. T.I.S has employees from 30 different nationalities, the majority of which are Lebanese (38.45%).

Faculty and staff credentials include 80.77% with bachelors and masters degrees, while 19.23% are not degreed. The majority of not

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degreed employees work in non-instructional or support areas. The school has a higher percentage of teachers with higher degrees today than it had in 2005 when it was first accredited by CITA which was 69% at the time.

The dedication of the staff to T.I.S as an institution is evident through their continued years of service albeit all the changes it went through throughout the years. The total number of staff during the current school year is 528 with 113 new hires in comparison with 93 new hires of 483 total in 2009/2010 and 105 new hires out of 457 total in 2008/2009.

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Section 2: Student Performance

Give a brief description of your school's vision about students and their performance. Provide a brief summary of student performance in your school. What are your goals and how will you know you have achieved them?

Describe the variety of your school's student performance assessments. How does your staff engage in meaningful analysis of student work in order to modify instruction?

Describe the school's student support programs and services. In what ways does your school ensure community/parent involvement in the life of the school?

Narrative:

Our Vision

Thamer International School (T.I.S.) will strive to create a unique academic institution that prepares students to be socially responsible, well-rounded leaders within an international technologically sophisticated community and have access to university education worldwide.

Our Mission

Thamer International School (T.I.S.) is dedicated to educating each of its members to become well-rounded individuals. Committed to its "Students First" motto, T.I.S. respects the individual needs of students; fosters a safe and creative environment; and emphasizes the social, physical, ethical, emotional, civil, intellectual, and aesthetical development of each student.

Teachers, administrators, parents, and the community share the responsibility for advancing the school's mission to function as a community of leaders and learners and share a commitment for continuous improvement.

Our Beliefs

-Student learning is the chief priority of the school.

-Student learning is the primary focus of all decisions impacting the work of the school.

-Student learning is promoted by a safe and a physically comfortable environment.

-Student learning is developed by modern technology, contemporary focused instruction, and latest findings of research and future trends.

-Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process.

-Students learn in different ways and should be provided with a variety of instructional approaches to support their individual learning styles.

-Student understanding of different people and cultures is enhanced in a multicultural environment.

Thamer International School offers a comprehensive, wide-ranging academic curriculum striving for academic excellence, supported by co-curricular and extra-curricular programs to develop life-long learners.

Students from Pre-K till G6 are taught an international curriculum. All books in the Primary and Middle School with the exception of Arabic, Islamic, Social Studies and French are purchased from the United States through well known publishers such as McGraw Hill, Pearson, and Harcourt. The school follows the British National Curriculum starting G7 –G12. English is the language of instruction for all subjects except for Arabic, Islamic Studies, and French.

In the Senior School, students sit for their IGCSE exams in Grade 10, for their AS exams in Grade 11 and for their A2 exams in Grade 12.

The school fully assists students to prepare themselves for exams. Standardized exams results (IGCSE and SAT) show that the students grades are higher than the school expectation levels. Such results prove the reliability and validity of the performance measures which is bias free.

As T.I.S is going through a major re-structuring and improvement phase since its change in leadership at the end of 2009/2010 academic year, our call to action aims at moving towards establishing "a community of leaders and learners" which involves teachers, administrators, parents, students, and all community members alike.

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In doing so, we aim at four main goals:
1.Ensuring Success for Every Student
2.Providing an Effective Instructional Program
3.Creating Productive Partnerships for Education
4.Creating a Positive Work Environment in a Self-renewing Organization

At T.I.S we know that the key to high-performing students is high-performing teachers. Other than parents, they are the most influential and memorable role models in students' lives, now and in the future. Teaching is about opening and offering paths of learning to students, and the teacher's role is to be a guide and an advocate, as well as an instructor. Teachers create environments in which students want to learn and take responsibility for their own learning.

Therefore, they pose problems, ask questions, and facilitate discussions to stimulate and encourage students to investigate and gain knowledge, and be productive citizens.

T.I.S provides a comprehensive assessment system and uses different types of summative and formative assessment instruments and procedures. While Primary School students undergo continuous assessment; homework assignments, projects, presentations, drop quizzes, quizzes, weekly exams, and End of Term exams are strategies used to evaluate the students of the Middle and Senior Schools' students.

To achieve instructional goals, teachers meet with their coordinators weekly to discuss specific issues regarding their students' performance, learning materials, coursework, generate assessments, submit weekly lesson plans to measure learning expectations, and to get the training they need to meet the students' needs.

Parents are informed of the students' results by progress reports (Lower Primary School), report cards (Upper Primary, Middle, and Senior schools), parent-teacher meetings conducted twice a year, and daily follow up (phone calls, communication booklets, agendas...) done by school heads, coordinators or teachers.

Our school's academic program also offers a wide variety of co-curricular activities to supplement formal learning. Students are strongly encouraged to become involved in a co-curricular program. The diversity of the co-curricular program ensures that there is something for all student interests and ability levels. Our students are challenged to use their recreational time in a constructive and fulfilling manner within the general scope of goals set for the school. These include:
•the development of new skills that reflect the specific interests of individual students.
•personal and social development through the provision of experiences that enhance personal attributes such as cooperation, tolerance, self-confidence and respect for others, as well as the environment.
•an appreciation for diversity and multiculturalism.

Co-curricular activities include, but are not limited to, the following activities: Sport Days, International Day, Earth Day, Spelling Bee, Math Competition, Science Fair, Arabic Competition, Hats Day, Open Day, and Art Festival.

In keeping to its mission of educating well-rounded individuals, T.I.S. also considers extra-curricular activities imperative to broadening the students' horizons. Extra-curricular activities are offered for our students on Thursday mornings during our "Thursday Club". UC Mas, Etiquette, Karate, Ballet, Arts & Crafts, Gymnastics, Quraan Rehearsal, French Language, Basketball, Football, and Volleyball are among the activities offered at our Thursday Club.

T.I.S students have access to many available services. Counseling, food services, transportation services, university advising, and health and safety services are all accessible to all students.

T.I.S. Social Workers are dedicated to providing academic, social and emotional guidance and counseling services to students and their families. In addition, comprehensive college and career development counseling is provided to High School students by the University Advisor. One of the school's goals is to assist in the development of the whole child so that students can effectively meet the academic, social and emotional challenges that they are faced with every day.

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A full- time school doctor and a school nurse run the school clinic. Their work focuses on preventive, curative and educative matters alike.

T.I.S also provides bus transportation services for a fee to its students who apply for transportation to and from school. T.I.S. makes every effort to ensure students safety while being transported on a school bus.

To ensure parent involvement in the life of the school, T.I.S devised a new plan that focuses on the establishment and the expansion of partnerships between the parents and the school. This plan is two-fold:

1.Forming a "Teacher-Parents" Committee, consisting of faculty members that have children at school, to reflect the suggestions, recommendations, and concerns of parents at large.

2.Starting a Parent Volunteer Program named “Give Me Five” to involve parents in classrooms, field trips, fun fairs and other co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

T.I.S already uses a wide variety of methods to establish open lines of communication with its parent community. The beginning of this process includes a parents' handbook, outlining expectations, guidelines, and requirements for the upcoming year. For daily issues, the school sends newsletters and memos while teachers and parents utilize students’ daily assignment notebooks as tools for a quick two-way communication, as well as phone calls and face to face formal and informal conferences. In addition to this system, the school website and SMS are used for continuous updated information and progress.

The school administration has an open door policy for our parents where the students’ academic and social performance is revealed to parents and the best course of action is set to help the students at risk.

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Section 3: Challenges and Opportunities

What are the major challenges your school has faced in the last 3 years and how have you addressed those challenges?

Narrative:
Every school has its unique identity, culture, and surrounding circumstances. Along with that, many challenges come across. At Thamer International School, the following challenges were experienced the past three years:

•Organizational uncertainties due to changes in leadership:

In May 2010, Thamer International School underwent changes in its leadership team which resulted in many other changes on the organizational level. Even though the change brought about positive adjustments and amendments, it created some uncertainties for stakeholders at the time as change in general is resisted. However, the new leadership team was able to gain the trust of all stakeholders in a short period of time by effectively communicating with them and addressing their needs. This was evident by the high percentage of student enrollment and teacher retention for the academic year 2010/2011. The new leadership continues to make positive changes and address necessary challenges to make T.I.S meet school improvement goals.

•Teacher and Staff Turnover:

In the past three years, T.I.S had several different heads of schools and administrators. Consequently, this resulted in a lack of continuity and execution of previous plans. The staff experienced a flux of expectations with each new administrator. Regardless, even with these obstacles, teachers were able to continue to provide necessary educational services to students. This is evident in the outstanding results T.I.S achieved in the Cambridge International Examinations in the past 2 years.
In the case of teachers, the problem was more evident in the Boys' section than it was in the Girls' section. The school overcame this by issuing over 15 residency visas and getting male teachers on its sponsorship at the end of 2009/2010. As for the female teachers, the new leadership team developed a positive educational environment and laid down a school plan by which the maximum number of students doesn't exceed 22. This helped attract and retain teachers. Moreover, some personnel policies were modified to encourage commitment like offering 50% discount on staff members' children, upgrading health insurance to 'A' class, and increasing the ceiling of accommodation allowance for male staff. The challenge remains in that the school needs to come up with ways to reward good teaching and try to give job satisfaction in other non-materialistic ways like holding recognition days or ceremonies.

•Students overwhelming growth:

Ever since the move to the campus in the academic year 2008/2009, T.I.S has experienced overwhelming growth in its student body to reach more than 3300 students in the academic year 2009/2010. This growth in itself brought about more challenges like increased traffic, exhausted teachers, and dissatisfied parents. To overcome this, the new leadership team came up with a plan to reduce the number of students from 3328 to 3100 (a maximum of 22 students in each class section) in order to create an environment more conducive to learning.
The plan was discussed with the SET (Senior Executive Team) and approved by the school owners. After the decision was taken, a letter was sent to all parents clarifying the plan and urging those who are keen to stay in T.I.S to register before the announced deadline. All entrance exams for the new applicants were kept on hold until the end of May, and after passing the deadline of registration for old students.
The same procedure will be followed at the end of this academic year where only 3000 students will be considered for the academic year 2011/2012. The 3,000 mark is considered to be a comfortable and ideal number of students for the school to meet.

•Engaging the "whole" community:

Active and on-going participation and decision-making from stakeholders was another challenge for T.I.S in the past years. We recognize that stakeholders play a valuable role in the total school program and their input in decision-making is imperative to establishing a community school. Student participation in decision-making is another challenge for our school. While the focus of our efforts relate to students, too often we don’t include them in the decision-making process. Plans to create a Student Council allowing student representation and a Parent-Teacher Association will assist in developing leadership skills while allowing all stakeholders to

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have a voice. Another challenge is involving these same parents, students, and community members in the process of school improvement. This has been initiated this academic year through involving as many stakeholder groups in the re-accreditation process as possible.

•Limited opportunities to make money:

As a for-profit independent school, T.I.S main revenues come from tuition fees and there is very little room for fundraising. This causes budget restraints. To overcome that, the school came up with some ways to make extra money like renting out the canteens and organizing activities like "Thursday Club" and Spring Fairs. Also, the school rents out its Boys' Fitness Gym in the afternoons.

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Section 4: Conclusion

What is your school most proud of and why?

Is there any other information you would like to share with the public and the school community?

Narrative:
Thamer International School has a lot of accomplishments to be proud of and celebrate. The improvements and accomplishments that took place in Thamer International School in the last three academic years are listed below:

•First and foremost, is the move to our new school which we have occupied since the fall of 2008. The new modern school in Quraish Street replaces the rundown, outdated structures which housed K-12 students in Hamra District. The new school allows for implementation of innovative technology and the convenience of other resources such as full equipped science labs, computer labs, media and e-library, various activity rooms, and a music room to mention just a few.

•Thamer International School achieved five distinguished ranks amongst them the top two ranks in the world in the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) in the academic year 2008/2009.

• Last year, in June CIE , 110 students achieved A* results in more than one subject.

•In the academic year 2009/2010, Thamer International School achieved eleven top ranks in the CIE amongst them two were the top ranks in the world.

•In this academic year 2010/2011, Thamer International School launched the school's website which contains ample information about the school's activities, systems, and management structure and strategies.

•In the academic year 2010/2011, Thamer International School hired a new management team to lead the school into the 21st century and to maintain its leading position amongst other international schools in the Kingdom.

•Also in the academic year 2010/2011, all the staff members were evaluated and appraised in order to better match the qualifications with the assigned responsibilities. In addition, a new crew with various valuable qualification and experience was hired from abroad to join the existing team to satisfy the ever growing requirements for qualified teachers.

•In the academic year 2010/2011, Thamer International School obtained an acceptance from the British Council to become a venue for the IGCSE exams held in Jeddah.

•In the past three years, most of T.I.S graduates pursued higher education in reputable universities. In 2009/2010 98.8 % (82 out of 83) of T.I.S graduates got accepted and attended universities while 91% (61 out of 67) did so in 2008/2009 and 92.4% (61 out of 66) in 2007/2008.

•Students in the Middle School got the first rank in an Art competition in KSA last year.

•Thamer International School received an award from the British Council for a perfect students' registration through its IGCSE coordinator Mrs. Salma Kadri.

•Towards the end of the current academic year, T.I.S will be installing interactive smart boards throughout the 11th and 12th grades classrooms and laboratories. By end of 2011/2012 all classes in T.I.S will be equipped with smart boards.

•For the last two academic years 2008/2009 and 2009/2010, Thamer International School won the Basketball Tournament in the Jeddah International Schools competition.

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