



AARHUS
INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL



EVALUERING AF ARBEJDET MED DEN PÆDAGOGISKE LÆREPLAN 2023

EVALUATION OF WORK WITH THE PEDAGOGICAL CURRICULUM 2023





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Early Years Programme

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International Baccalaureate (IB) Mission Statement

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

www.ibo.org

Purpose of the Strengthened Pedagogical Curriculum

According to the Ministry of Children and Education, Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet, "The pedagogical curriculum supports teaching staff and management in creating a nurturing pedagogical learning environment for, and with, the children (2018). The Pedagogical Curriculum plan defines the framework and the shared vision of the pedagogical work which supports each individual child's development, and which is based on a foundation of play.

All kindergarten programmes in Denmark are required to develop and maintain a written pedagogical curriculum plan based on the provisions of the Day Care Services Act (dagtilbudsloven). As an international kindergarten running the recognised International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP), Aarhus International School (AIS) implements a play-based programme which strives to lay the foundation for future learning. The Early Years Programme at AIS is focused on developing each young learner's individual interests and is built on the premise that young children are constantly and actively constructing their own meaning. This provides a framework which supports the development of inquirers, whilst nurturing their basic skills and needs, thus providing a sound beginning to the continuum of learning that goes on throughout the Primary Years. In this spirit, the Pedagogical Curriculum Plan is a living written curriculum plan, which meets the requirements of Day Care Services Act (dagtilbudsloven) and is in alignment with the shared philosophy within Aarhus

Kommune. It represents collaboration between teaching staff, parents/guardians, and the Pedagogical Leadership team at AIS. Through this document we strive to create a clear connection between the Early Years Programme at AIS and how we reach and facilitate an understanding of the shared pedagogical approach which is required by all Danish kindergartens and which adheres to the recommendations within Aarhus Kommune. The Pedagogical Curriculum Plan will be reflected upon, adjusted, and updated on an ongoing basis.

A Culture of Evaluation

"Lederen af dagtilbuddet er ansvarlig for at etablere en evalueringskultur i dagtilbuddet, som skal udvikle og kvalificere det pædagogiske læringsmiljø."

"Med evalueringskultur i dagtilbuddet forstås, at lederen har ansvar for, at det pædagogiske personale og ledelsen løbende forholder sig reflektivt til, hvordan de pædagogiske læringsmiljøer understøtter børnegruppens trivsel, læring, udvikling og dannelse."

Den styrkede pædagogiske læreplan, Rammer og indhold, s. 50-51

"The leader of the day care is responsible for establishing an evaluation culture in the day care center to develop and qualify the pedagogical learning environment."

"With the evaluation culture in the day care offer, it is understood that the leader is responsible for the fact that the pedagogical personnel and management continuously relate reflectively to how the pedagogical learning environments support the well-being, learning, development and formation of the children's group."

The Strengthened Pedagogical Curriculum, Framework and Content, pgs. 50-51

At Aarhus International School, to be Reflective is one of the IB Learner Profile qualities that we admire most as an IB World School; this is a mindset and practice which we implement in our daily work. As such, the Early Years Team regularly meets to reflect upon and adjust practice and curriculum outcomes in accordance with the needs of the children in the programme.

In practice, the written Pedagogical Curriculum Plan, and all documentation published by Aarhus International School, are living practices. We reflect, evaluate, and adjust our teaching and learning on an ongoing basis to reflect the latest best practice in the field of early childhood education and with the International Baccalaureate, while at the same time striving to meet requirements set forth under Danish law. At AIS we are very familiar with an environment focused on reflective practice, and we adhere to the evaluation guidelines and formal evaluation processes of the IB. The Primary Years Programme at AIS successfully completed its most recent evaluation in October 2020, maintaining our status as an internationally-recognised IB World School.

The Kindergarten Leader/Administrator is responsible for maintaining, updating, and following through a formal evaluation process for the Danish Pedagogical Curriculum, in alignment with local and national expectations and laws. The IB Primary Years Programme Coordinator is in place to play a supportive role in this process. At AIS we regularly maintain a wide range of documentation related to the development of both the written curriculum, but also with respect to the individual child. The documentation in relation to the evaluation of the Pedagogical Curriculum is expanded upon below.

This document has been prepared in the unique spirit of the IB Learner Profile and the core values of Aarhus International School. The development of this document is directly linked to the AIS mission statement and values:

<i>Our Mission</i>	<i>Our Values</i>
<i>AIS provides a high-quality international education, which enables students to become socially and environmentally responsible citizens, enthusiastic inquirers and lifelong learners in a challenging and nurturing environment.</i>	Responsible Caring Respectful

Evaluation of the Pedagogical Curriculum

What parts of our pedagogical learning environment have we particularly focused on over the last 2 years?

We have had specific areas of focus over the course of the last two years, as AIS has continued to grow and develop as an internationally recognised IB World School. Throughout the last two years, the Early Years Programme at AIS has focused in particular on the development of the Approaches to Learning skills (ATL Skills), and procedures for kindergarten to school transition (PYP3 to PYP4 / børnehave til skole). We are continuously reviewing and reflecting upon our practices and have also worked on additional areas throughout the past two years. We have focused on analysing and improving our pedagogical learning environments in particular our outdoor learning spaces. The team has worked diligently on expanding learning resources (materials, toys and books) to improve the quality of the learning spaces which are now more accessible to all our students.

It has been an ongoing focus to develop and implement shared strategies and language to support students in solving their own conflicts. Throughout the Early Years Programme, these areas have been reflected on and explored in team meetings, and all members of the teaching teams have actively contributed to the process with renewed insights, thoughts and ideas.

Continuing to remain a point of particular interest has been our ever-expanding practices within the area of Inclusion. At the Early Years Programme, we have an increasingly number of young students who have challenges or special learning needs, who need further support in order to develop and grow within our Early Years Programme setting and access the IB PYP curriculum. Unfortunately, we no longer receive financial assistance from the Municipality to support these students but, the school recognizes the circumstances that this has created and as a result, has endeavored to put extra support in place to bridge the gap. We continue to investigate further initiatives of how to aid both the students and the staff in the Early Years Programme. Inclusion remains a core component of how we approach and address students with learning needs, and the updated school's Inclusion Policy takes the Early Years Programme into consideration. More information and the Inclusion Policy can be found on the school's website.

How have we organised our culture of evaluation?

At AIS, a culture of evaluation is a natural part of the way we approach teaching and learning at all levels. In the Early Years Programme, there are ongoing and regular collaborative meetings which focus on reflecting on our day-to-day practice, along with the overarching school curriculum and policies. We use known frameworks for collaborative discussion, and we regularly look for opportunities to strengthen and develop our practice, and ultimately our work with the students.

Regular meetings take place with the Early Years Administrator across all staff groups – homeroom teachers, teaching assistants, After School Activities (ASA) instructors, and one-to-one (OTO) support staff. As a part of these meetings, there is ongoing reflection about the organization and flow of our day-to-day life in the Early Years Programme. Every second week, formal curriculum collaboration meetings are held with the PYP Coordinator to more closely reflect on and evaluate the progress of the written curriculum, both from an IB perspective, as well as with respect to the Danish pedagogical curriculum. In planning of our written curriculum, teachers use the Toddle platform for ongoing development and documentation. As a whole school, we meet frequently throughout the course of an academic year to discuss, debate, and reflect upon our practices across the areas of teaching and

learning. This ongoing forum for reflection drives the development of our school as a whole and allows us to address important issues such as inclusion, differentiation, Universal Design for Learning, assessment, language development, etc. At Aarhus International School, a culture of reflection and evaluation lies at the core of the way we operate, and therefore is a natural part of our practice.

How have we involved the kindergarten/day care board in the work with the pedagogical curriculum?

The local written curriculum document has been presented to a variety of stakeholders including the Pedagogical Leadership Team and the Early Years staff groups; it has also been made available to AIS parents at all levels. As such, the AIS School Board (bestyrelsen) and all its members have had the opportunity to review the pedagogical curriculum. At School Board Meetings every second month, an update for each part of the AIS programme (Early Years, PYP4-8, MYP), is shared in detail – both in writing and in discussion.

We have successfully managed to establish an Early Years Parent Council, consisting of parents and staff representatives from the Early Years school community and together they are actively participating in formal parent meetings. Each school year, elections are held at the start of term to establish the Early Years Parent Council (forældrerådet). One of their initial tasks is to familiarize themselves with the status of the pedagogical curriculum and also provide an open forum in which the process and development of this documentation is reviewed and reflected on.

Evaluation & Documentation of the Pedagogical Learning Environment

At the Early Years Programme at AIS, we have a variety of methods and platforms to document our work with students, across all areas of the curriculum. We use the Toddle platform for parent communication, and planning of the written IB curriculum, which includes the Units of Inquiry. We use the Seesaw Digital Portfolio platform for sharing student photos, videos, learning experiences, and work samples. The student portfolio and related documentation is a key component of our assessment strategy and documents the growth and learning over time of each individual student. We communicate with families every second week through a classroom newsletter from the homeroom teacher, which details what is happening in the classroom and the development of the Units of Inquiry.

As a part of our culture of evaluation, we prioritise parent collaboration and offer a variety of regular meetings including the settling-in meeting six weeks after a child joins AIS, the Parent/Teacher Conferences twice per year and the Student-Led Portfolio Conference where the child shares their learning with agency, in their own voice, language and unique style. At the conclusion of each Unit of Inquiry, parents receive a written report which details their child's development across academic areas of the programme, and also in the areas of the Approaches to Learning (ATL) – social skills, communication skills, self-management skills, etc. We are always willing to take on extra parent meetings, if necessary and as needed. Students often participate in EY-wide assemblies, where they share songs, stories, and performances to highlight their learning in class; parents are included and invited to attend when appropriate.

At AIS, student development (børnegruppens trivsel og læring) is at the forefront of our work every single day. The core values of the school, along with the IB Learner Profile guide us as we keep our focus on developing young learners who have the tools to contribute to the world around them. Especially for international families who are just settling in Denmark, the Early Years Programme at AIS provides a safe haven, where they know their child will be met with developmentally appropriate care

and a well-balanced learning experience.

We also focus on supporting children who are at-risk, in vulnerable situations, and have known or suspected special educational needs (børn i udsatte positioner). Transitioning to a new country, new system, and new language, while at the same time establishing new friendships and relationships can mean that many of our students face extra challenges and stressors, especially during the settling-in period. We have identified structures of support in school and a close collaboration with Aarhus Kommune to ensure that we have the tools necessary to guide families to further systems of support outside of school, if needed.

All students at Aarhus International School are multi-lingual, and for many students, English is a brand-new language when they step into the building. As such, students are in various stages of the language acquisition process and are supported in this important area of development (tosprogede børns trivsel og læring). At AIS, the common language of instruction and communication is English, although our community is made up of families from more than 35 different countries, who come to us with mothertongue (home language) languages from around the world. Most students in the Early Years Programme join us with little prior exposure to the English language, and therefore are thrown into an immersive process of language acquisition. Teachers and support staff are models in this process and provide students with the necessary scaffolded supports to be able to survive, and eventually thrive, in an English-language environment. Students are also exposed to an increasing amount of the Danish language and Danish mothertongue (home language) students are encouraged to use this language as they feel comfortable, although it is not a formal requirement at AIS that students use Danish as a functional language, until they reach school age where it becomes a required subject area in PYP4.

Every child in the Early Years Programme is seen as a unique learner who is in his/her own process of development (det enkelte barns trivsel, læring, udvikling og dannelse). Learning experiences are adapted to the relevant age and development level of each student and take into consideration the child's language competencies. We strive to see each child on an individual basis and support the many areas of development that are ongoing throughout the early years. We provide individual guidance and ongoing follow-up with students and families to ensure that each student is developing in a well-balanced and healthy way. At AIS, we focus heavily on helping students become internationally minded and open to new cultural experiences.

In the evaluation of our practices at AIS, we listen closely to feedback from our students, to understand how they are coping and developing as learners. For example, an event like the Student-Led Portfolio Conference, where each child uses agency to share about their growth and learning throughout the course of the school year, gives us an indication of how the child is relating to elements of the IB PYP curriculum and the pedagogical curriculum.

Next Steps

Which areas of our pedagogical learning environment will we focus more on going forward?

Going forward, we will continue to strengthen our collaboration with our parent community. Our Early Years Parent Council, as mentioned earlier, has been successfully established and we will continue to strengthen this partnership. It will continue to be one of our priorities to ensure the participation of an active guiding group for the Early Years programme and to ensure its growth and development.

AIS has secured funding for a One Campus Project and the construction of a new kindergarten is well under way. Brand-new purpose-built kindergarten facilities will be on the same campus as the main school in the centre of Aarhus from August 2024. During the current construction phase of the project,

efforts will go into planning for the pedagogical learning environments while we physically remain at our current site in Højbjerg.

Furthermore, we aim to organize more field trips and an active involvement in the community related to our teaching and learning. We are recognizing this as an important part of creating authentic learning experiences to fully engage our young learners.

A continuous focus will be placed on language development. Students and teachers are exploring and strengthening ways to improve and support language and communication strategies. The teachers have participated in an enriching professional development course “Language Based Content Learning” which has provided our staff with insightful knowledge and competencies. We have recently reviewed our AIS Language Policy for accuracy and effectiveness in practice. All members of the teaching teams have been invited to actively contribute to this process.

As is the process at AIS, all areas of the programme including policies, practices and routines will be reflected upon on an ongoing basis and adjusted as necessary to ensure that the children in the programme experience an enriching and well-balanced programme.

How will we adjust the organisation of our evaluation culture?

We feel strongly that our reflective approach to evaluation is currently working well. We expect these types of procedures to continue as a regular part of our programming, and to meet the requirements and expectations as an IB World School. This does not mean we are complacent; we will continue to be open to feedback, guidance, and reflections to ensure that we are continuing our forward growth and development as an organization.

On the basis of this evaluation, how have we changed and/or adjusted our written pedagogical curriculum?

On the basis of this evaluation, and with consideration that there will be adjustments due to our relocation to a new campus in August 2024, we do not anticipate any significant changes to the written curriculum document at this time. The Pedagogical Curriculum 2021 will remain an important guiding curriculum document for the Early Years Programme and will be updated and refined on an ongoing basis to reflect changes in our practices, both in general and as a result of more formal structures of evaluation. We expect that small adjustments may be necessary once the Early Years Parent Council has had the opportunity to review and comment on it.

References:

Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet, Danmark. (2018). *Den styrkede pædagogiske læreplan: Rammer og indhold.*

