

Mexico (Nuevo Leon)

**Nuevo Colegio Israelita de Monterrey, A.C.**

**Integral Education Model (IEM)**

*This Jewish community day school has a small student population aged 2-15. Teaching activities centre on the national curriculum, a Judaic Studies Programme, and an English language curriculum, with a strong focus on character education and collaboration with the community and other schools. Students learn in mixed age groups. Teaching practice is inspired by constructivist theories and best practice as reported by several international organisations, and performance is constantly monitored by means of summative and formative assessment.*

**Main focus of innovation:** CONTENT, RESOURCES

#### General Information

**Name of the ILE:** Nuevo Colegio Israelita de Monterrey, A.C. Integral Education Model (IEM)

**Location/Address:** Canada 207, Col. Vista Hermosa Monterrey, N.L. Mexico

**Rationale**

*Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning challenges?*

It is with great pleasure that The Nuevo Colegio Israelita de Monterrey exhibits and shares its Integral Education Model (IEM), designed for the purpose of helping us to elaborate strategies that focus our students towards the capability of becoming integral citizens in our 21st Century global world through the integral development of knowledge, abilities, attitudes and values that are demanded of them and encompassed within an ever changing framework of mutual know how and multicultural respect. Our challenge is to ensure that our students adopt an active and positive attitude towards learning throughout their lives, develop empathy and respect towards others and the variables found among them, and acquire the tools needed to resolve the problems they will face while ensuring that their competence is not compromised along the entire journey of life.

In our particular case, as a Jewish community day school, the overall objective of this model has been to share our culture and traditions with the society that we live in because an innovative school demands that the outside world be brought into its educational realm in order to promote multicultural dialogue within the community, thus allowing our members to harmoniously live within it and share its array of fruits.

Our theory is that educational centres should be the instigators of dialogue and should trace out the desired goals that will help students to integrally develop their lives in society. It is through the adoption, creation and adaptation of a model that answers to this that our students will be able to respond to these needs in a personal, societal, political, economic and social framework.

By contributing to the development of citizens of today we are also shaping the pluralistic contexts for tomorrow's citizens based on the enrichment of tolerance and respect.

The teaching-learning model usually found in traditional school settings tends to restrict learners to pre-defined, academically sound parameters. While a substantially effective academic level for both teaching and learning must not be compromised, we are very aware of the need to form citizens of today and tomorrow by taking into consideration all the aspects required to comply with the characteristics of a model profile. These include: Be well informed, be reflexive, be of an open mind, be a critical thinker, act with integrity and honour, think equally, be fair, show respect to all, be responsible for yourself, your actions and their consequences, be capable of helping to resolve your society's problems, show a high degree of empathy and ability to positively influence the lives and standards of others, be an autonomous learner and make rational, ethical and quality decisions.

We also consider that the shift in the weighting of academic curricula within the framework of basic education has drastically changed over the past few years: The need to assess the degree of academic input versus formative activity is the obligation of every head, every coordinator, every teacher and every parent of every learner in every school. This shift is extrinsically imposed, but it is up to the entire cast involved in the educational community to intrinsically implement change.

**Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE**

*What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)*

We endeavour to try and fit the objectives and aims of emerging project work and activities into the expectations of the overlying school curricula in order to enrich the general aims and expectations of the annual planning at all levels of the school, linking these objectives, as best as possible, to the values thread of the general school curricula.

Depending on the nature of the project or activity to be undertaken, these aims and/or objectives either 'fit' into the curricula or are autonomous and self-standing; thus, regarding the latter, a general set of objectives are set out for the undertaken project or activity if this is considered to be of sufficient importance to the formative learning goals. In either case, self-standing or integral, these objectives are based on the following set of assumptions and overall goals:

- Capability of providing the required elements for the formation of each student's own Jewish identity based upon a commitment to Israel, the Jewish people, their traditions and institutions.
- Contribute to the successful development of children and adolescents for a highly competitive world, one in which they will be able to position themselves and develop their potential.
- Enable students to base their characters upon human values, namely integrity, honesty, humility, respect and tolerance, among others.
- Provide children and adolescents with an atmosphere conducive to continuous education and a positively memorable school experience.
- Practice and promote respect towards a diversity of abilities, beliefs, and cultures, as well the environment and, in general, the world that surrounds us.
- Be recognized for academic excellence at a national and international level.
- Help students to fluently converse in three languages: Spanish, Hebrew and English upon graduation.

**Learners**

*Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?*

As the only Jewish community day school in the city of Monterrey, our annual intake of students is dependent upon the community itself, and not on advertising or selling the school's standing as a private institution, even though the school is very much open to students from other denominations. Currently, 100% of the Jewish community's children within the age range of basic education attend our school. The alumni for the current school year, August 2008 to July 2009 is broken down thus:

Pre-school (2 to 6 yrs). 27 children in 4 grades (Nursery to 3rd grade Kinder)

Primary: (6 to 12 yrs) 40 children in 6 grades

Secondary: (12 to 15 yrs) 27 adolescents in 3 grades

Total alumni: 94 school children in 13 grade years.

Average across all years: 7.23 students per grade year.

As one school, the intention is to cover all areas with the same learning philosophy, adapting the various projects and activities according to the age ranges of each division.

Nevertheless, the general governing factor that focuses the objective or core purpose of any project or activity remains at the forefront of the procedures to follow regardless of the level that is carrying out the project or activity.

**Facilitators**

*Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?*

School staff consists of the following:

2 Directors (General Studies, Judaic Studies)

3 Academic Coordinators (one per division)

13 Homeroom teachers (one per grade year)

5 Judaic studies teachers (1 at Preschool, 2 at Primary, 2 at Secondary)

14 Specialised teachers (among Sports and Physical Education, Arts (visual, drama, music), IT, English language)

1 On-site school psychologist

(Note: Only 20% of the teaching staff are from the Jewish community).

The minimum professional level of the teaching staff is that of a Bachelor's Degree or equivalent, with many teachers having studied to a Master's level of education specialising in their own field. All teachers and staff undergo a lengthy interview process, through which they are carefully screened by: 1. Coordinators. 2. Directors. 3. the school board. This enables us to ensure that their professional and ethical backgrounds are consistent with the requirements for employment at our school. The major emphasis we apply is on teamwork, team players, and the need for everyone to be joint decision makers. The role the teacher takes in our school is not limited to just that of a classroom teacher. They liaise with students, their parents and the community in all the activities they are involved in at our school, thereby providing a cooperative working environment in which they are able to take decisions beyond the academic issues, in extracurricular, co-curricular, cultural and civic activities. This cooperative working environment is most evident in formal periodic meetings where topics relevant to the daily work at school are discussed. However, of equal importance are more informal meetings that we organise to resolve situations that unexpectedly arise and it is in these where the value of the teachers' freedom to participate in decision-making really comes to the fore. Additionally, each member of the team takes an annual self-appraisal evaluation and interviews with any or all of the three screeners mentioned above.

At this more private interview, the member has an opportunity to air his or her points of view and make recommendations to the directorship for the planning of the forthcoming school year. It is through this process of ensuring that teamwork is prominent throughout the school year that each member feels a sense of belonging as their ideas and innovations are listened to and inevitably taken into account in the planning.

**Organization of the ILE**

*How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?*

Our school is officially recognised as a basic education institute by the Mexican Ministry of Education and through this organism we are required to base our curricula on the National Education Syllabus. As well as complying to this and along with fact that we are a Jewish community school, we have developed a Judaic Studies Programme as a formal part of our student's education and a strong English Language curriculum thread that takes into consideration the needs and demands of today's global world. These three threads work together coherently and flexibly and integrate together transversally and trans-disciplinarily thereby maintaining an effective balance among intellectual, social and personal concepts of learning.

The educational model we strive for is based upon the constructivist theory of learning. This theory highlights the need to base learning on previously taught and learned items and the student's own bank of knowledge. It is these concepts that will help the student to consistently build up his or her own range of knowledge, enriching and adding to this through coherent and efficient inquiry based learning (IBL). This process directs the students towards his or her own critique when developing their knowledge and level of comprehension, as well as enabling them to reflect upon what they learn and the way they learn.

The work carried out in the classroom is centred on teaching that is adaptable to the students' individual needs. This takes in multiple intelligences while taking maximum advantage of each student's personal abilities and, at the same time, promotes collaboration and teamwork. This results in an enriched, balanced and diverse learning environment that is not restricted to the development of work in the classroom alone, but incorporates other areas that convert into active and dynamic learning spaces within our installations, and beyond. It is in these areas that the importance of collaborative learning shines through as students of all ages mingle together to share their learning experiences in what resembles the reality found in the 'real world'.

Derived from the curriculum, specific projects, activities and concepts for learning new items are generated and these are developed and coached predominantly by the teachers over the course of the school year. However, and as mentioned above, during the year other projects and activity emerge from social, community or personal issues and these allow us to organize exchanges of ideas and collaboration with other schools and colleges as well as other communities, along with the help of other people specialised in different areas of knowledge, who are invited to speak at a conference or conduct a workshop for our students, our teachers and even the parents of the students. The curriculum is designed to focus upon the development of knowledge, concepts, abilities, attitudes and values, character education being high on our list of priorities, and these, with an emphasis on practicalities, together drive our students, teachers and parents towards a common goal for actions to take towards others and the school community itself while taking into consideration the world that surrounds us.

It is also common practice for our students to actively participate in the planning and even the evaluation of their own learning in collaboration with their parents who support them through the acquisition of resources and items required to carry out the project or activity.

The teaching staff carries out an important function in all activities, whether in the classroom or in other cooperative learning spaces, by creating dynamic and enjoyable learning environments, full of vitality, that stimulate the students into developing their responsibilities for their own particular style of learning. The teachers facilitate the teaching learning process by coaching and enticing the students into taking the initiative, instead of them waiting for someone else to head up the procedures and processes. All this translates into relationships that are affectionate, cordial, personal, and confident above all, close, among the teachers, the staff in general, the directors, the students and their parents.

### **Learning Context**

*In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?*

As a community school located within a community centre, we are able to draw on diverse areas to facilitate the integral development of our students in physical, intellectual and emotional aspects of community life. Shared physical spaces include a gymnasium, events rooms, swimming pool and green areas. The school installations themselves include fully equipped and technologically prepared classrooms, smart rooms, audiovisual rooms, a library, a science laboratory, arts workshops, a music room, early development centre and a psycho pedagogy department.

The Jewish community in Monterrey enjoys excellent relations with non-Jewish communities in the vast majority of political, social and economic settings. This quality of life strongly favours the value of the enjoyment of living in a peaceful environment while allowing us to share our culture and traditions through diversifying activities with the society in general.

### **History of ILE**

*Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?*

Our school is a community day school operating under the governance of a highly motivated school board chaired and attended by a representation of parents in conjunction with the school's directorship. It takes decisions pertinent to the constant search for a teaching and learning philosophy that strives to continually improve the learning community.

Through this search, diverse educational models have been considered, analysed and decisions taken whether to adopt them in their entirety or just in part. Among these, we discovered that worldwide organizations, such as IBO (International Baccalaureate Organization), AdvancED and the UNESCO Schools Network had much to offer. This analytical process led to our school becoming affiliated to the IBO, based in Switzerland and U.K. For 6 years, we worked within the framework that would lead us towards the accreditation process of the PYP (Primary Years Programme) offered by this organization.

As we progressed along its route, we discovered that the PYP, being the only programme we had seriously adopted at that time, was limiting us as an institution by not entirely satisfying our own goals as well as those externally imposed by its framework, and distorted the focus towards our Institutional Vision and reach that we wanted to provide.

This caused us to re-think the educational model we were trying to follow through the implementation of the PYP in order to address our concerns about wanting to include all the diverse projects and proposals in the educational framework at our school. This re-think was focussed on the ability to satisfy the overall long term as well as short term needs detected through the balancing of the weighting of the planned academic curricula and emerging formative activity, which tended to be restricted when worked entirely within the bounds of one stand alone, governing programme, and the decision was taken to adopt the best practices from the variety of organizations mentioned above, enabling us to offer the learning community a new, cutting edge system that would comply with our continuous improvement process, and reach high quality standards and competencies in education at an international level.

### **Funding of the ILE**

*How is it funded?*

As a small community school, it is difficult to provide sufficient funds for financing activities over and above the annual budgeting for operational costs. Inevitably, we have to look at creative ways to rise funding for minor project work in order to purchase the materials required for developing these projects.

However, we are fortunate to be able to count upon a community who are always willing to donate funds for special projects, technology and outings, through individual donations, larger enterprises owned by members of the community and through various parent groups that operate within the community.

### **Learning Outcomes**

*What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?*

Evaluation is a fundamental and essential tool in the process of teaching and learning and our students play an active role in this concept. At our school, evaluation is both summative and formative: the former provides the parents, teachers and the students themselves quantitative information about what was learned thereby helping teachers to ascertain that the standards and parameters established by the education system that is in place were met; the latter complements the former by focussing the learning community towards qualitative information regarding the learner's performance while monitoring the validity of a set of learning materials and their subsequent improvement. Our school considers it to be of utmost importance to adopt and design tools that effectively deal with this latter concept and that take into account performance across a bandwidth that incorporates the three major threads in the integral model: The National Syllabus, the Judaic Studies programme and the English Language thread.

These tools range from oral interviews and written appraisals, through hands-on, group wide activities in and outside the classroom to student portfolios, and they help us to detect the effectiveness of each stage of the process of learning while enabling the students to better understand what they are capable of doing and, moreover, how to do it. In addition, together they provide us with the ability to constantly monitor our model, help us to develop it further and provide the students with continual feedback and reflection on their own performance across differing learning items.