The American International School in Abu Dhabi
AISA

About Us

The American International School in Abu Dhabi is a member of the Educational Services Overseas Limited (ESOL) group of schools. AISA was established in 1995 to provide the local and expatriate residents of Abu Dhabi with high quality American education, based on American standards and an international curriculum. AISA received its first accreditation in October 1997 from the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges (MSA), and in January 2010 was accredited by the Council of International Schools (CIS). AISA offers education from Pre-School to Grade 12. It was the first school to offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma in the UAE and later became the first school in Abu Dhabi to be authorized to offer the IB Primary Years Program (PYP). In keeping with local regulations, the Secondary School is gender segregated.

Abu Dhabi is a dynamic, safe and beautiful city which is making rapid strides to become a cultural center of the Gulf Region. It already offers much in music and the arts. The development of Saadiyat Island Cultural District, which will house an extension of the Louvre, the Guggenheim Museum, new concert halls, and theatres will make Abu Dhabi a destination for art lovers from everywhere. Architects such as Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Tado Ando and Jean Nouvel will create an extraordinary environment. The Louvre is expected to open in 2015.

There are equally attractive possibilities for outdoor pursuits, with the Rub Al Khali (the world’s largest sand desert), the Omani mountains and miles of beaches all within easy reach. Many of our teachers enjoy regular camping trips to the desert.

Our Mission

“Our mission is to produce reflective, responsible, independent and respectful students, who possess strong global citizenship, integrity and an appreciation for lifelong learning. Through our academic and extra-curricular programs we strive to provide a quality education that gives students the ability to reach their full potential, both academically and personally, and to make a worthwhile contribution to society.

The American International School works in partnership with parents and the local community to achieve this mission”.

Quote from the Founder of the United Arab Emirates

“The real wealth of a country is not its material wealth, it is its people. They are the real strength from which we draw pride and the trees from which we receive shade. It is our firm conviction in this reality that directs us to put all efforts in educating the people”

Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan

Academic Program

- Students in Kindergarten to Grade 5 follow a U.S. standards-based curriculum drawing upon the transdisciplinary framework provided by the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP) and using inquiry-based instructional methods.

- The Middle School Curriculum is U.S. standards-based, taught with American and international textbooks and materials. Transdisciplinary studies continue with students having two main teachers – an English-Humanities and a math-science.

- The American High School Diploma Program runs from Grade 9 to Grade 12. In Grade 10, students can apply for International Baccalaureate Preparation (IBP). The International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBDP) runs through Grades 11 and 12.

AISA students are well prepared for admission into universities in the USA, Canada, Europe, the Middle East and other regions. The language of instruction in all classes is English except in Arabic, French, Spanish and Islamic Studies classes.
Accreditation

AISA is:

- fully accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Philadelphia, PA. and the Council of International Schools (CIS).
- fully approved and licensed by the U.A.E Ministry of Education.
- a fully-authorized International Baccalaureate World School.
- a member of the European Council of International Schools (ECIS) and the Council of International Schools (CIS), the Near East South Asian Council of Overseas Schools (NESA) and the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS).
- is a member of the International Schools Activity Conference (ISAC).

Campus

AISA enjoys the benefits of a fairly large campus compared to other schools in Abu Dhabi. It is located in the Embassy area, approximately 10 kilometers from the downtown. The school is well-equipped and buildings are air conditioned. Facilities include a library, cafeteria, art studios, computer labs, science labs, two large gymnasia, a grass soccer field, and two swimming pools.
AISA has an excellent, diverse faculty. Our faculty and staff come from over 30 countries around the world, ranging from the USA and Canada to Britain, Australia and South Africa. Headed by Mr. Gareth Jones, now in his fifth year as AISA’s Director, the school is supported by a team of outstanding administrators and counselors.

Teaching at AISA

In the co-educational elementary section, class sizes do not exceed 20. Specialist teachers are responsible for Computers, Physical Education, Arabic, Islamic Studies and Arts. The classroom teacher is responsible for all other subjects.

In the middle and high school, the average class size is 15. The middle school timetable for core teachers is broken into two 2-hour blocks per day with the remainder of the day set aside for common planning time between teachers. The high school timetable is split into 4 periods averaging 84 minutes each, with a
A normal teaching load of 14 periods per week. Middle and high school students write exams twice a year. Teachers are responsible for preparing and grading all exams. In addition to teaching responsibilities, teachers are required to supervise during student breaks each week and to sponsor a club or after school activity once a year. Many teachers also choose to coach a sport for which they are paid a small stipend.

**Specific Features of Teaching at AISA**

As in all schools, AISA runs some specific programs and uses particular software. If you take up a position in the **elementary school**, you will be expected to:

- Use a constructivist, inquiry-based approach to your teaching.
- Plan your teaching in collaboration with other members of your grade team.
- Map your curriculum using the Atlas Rubicon web-based program
- Follow a balanced literacy program (one component of which is Guided Reading which requires teachers to deliver running records)
- Use the Six Traits Writing approach to writing instruction
- Teach mathematics using the program Everyday Math
- Use a variety of methods of assessment of student learning
- Use data from the MAP (Measurement of Academic Progress) testing to drive instruction (in Grades 2-5).
- Take attendance, record grades and write report-cards using an electronic database.
- Use the interactive whiteboard (Smartboard)

If you take up a position in the **secondary school** (grades 6-12), you will be expected to:

- Plan your teaching in collaboration with other members of your team.
- Map your curriculum using the Atlas Rubicon web-based program
- Use data from the MAP (Measurement of Academic Progress) testing to guide your teaching (in Grades 6-10).
- Take attendance, report grades and write report-cards using an electronic database.
- Use a variety of methods of assessment of student learning
- Teach two subjects and integrate them with other subjects (in Grades 6-8).
- Use the interactive whiteboard (Smartboard)
- Use the Six Traits Writing approach to writing instruction.

Also, please see the **AISA Teacher Job Description** at the end of this brochure.
Benefits of Teaching at AISA

- Competitive tax-free salaries
- Allowances for extra responsibilities
- Credit for approved post graduate degrees
- Increments for teaching experience
- Furnished housing or a housing allowance
- Annual round trip airline ticket each summer to home and return
- Settling-in allowance
- Tuition support for teachers’ children
- Support for professional development
- Transportation to and from work
- End of contract indemnity payment
- No/Low absence bonus
- Compassionate leave

In addition to the above mentioned the school pays 100% of the annual premium for global medical coverage (optical insurance not included). Teachers are paid in local currency directly into their local bank account. The UAE Dirham is linked to the US Dollar at 3.67:1 and it is freely convertible. Banking in the UAE is excellent and it is easy to arrange for money transfer abroad.

There are also some other benefits that teachers experience when they come to AISA:

- Working with 30% local and 70% international, success-oriented students who are 100% college-bound.
- Experiencing cultural diversity by teaching students coming from over 70 countries around the world. Recognizing the importance of that diversity and ensuring that every student feels included and valued.
- Collaborating with excellent teachers in a team-focused environment
- Teaching within clearly defined curricular goals and expectations
- Knowing that all staff contribute to extra- and co-curricular programs
- Celebrating the achievements of our students and staff
Professional and Personal Development

Every teacher at AISA is encouraged to establish an ongoing dialogue with a member of the administrative team to discuss personal and school-wide professional growth priorities. Many teachers attend local or regional workshops, courses and conferences. There is also an increased emphasis on in-house training, using the expertise of individual staff members or of invited workshop leaders. Professional development days provide opportunities for workshops that allow both the faculty and staff to acquire additional knowledge and skills.

The location of Abu Dhabi makes it easy to travel to the Mediterranean and Europe, Africa and Asia, and the entire Middle East. Most teachers take full advantage of this while they are here.

Trips are often organized on a purely social basis as well, such as weekend excursions to resort hotels, desert camps with camel rides, arts and craft fairs. Our teachers are avid travelers; it is not unusual that someone would visit Jordan, Kenya, Nepal, Greece and Oman within a two year contract period.

Academic Calendar

There are 36 weeks (180 days) in the school year.

Accommodation and Housing

Housing in Abu Dhabi is scarce and expensive. AISA provides furnished accommodation for overseas-hired teachers. Teaching couples are provided with an apartment. Single teachers in their first year share two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartments with a colleague. After the first year, single apartments, if available, are assigned on a seniority basis; however, many teachers choose to take the housing allowance and find their own accommodation.

Transportation by bus is provided between the school and the school-owned accommodation. Apartments are furnished and kitchen equipment (dishes & cookware) and bedding are provided. Electronic appliances (e.g. TV, VCR, DVDs,
stereo, and microwave) are not included, but are available in Abu Dhabi quite inexpensively. The school pays half of electricity and water expenses and teachers are responsible for the other half (deducted from salary). Gas and telephone/internet bills are the teacher’s own responsibility.

**Living in Abu Dhabi**

Abu Dhabi is the largest of seven Emirates in the UAE Federation ruled by President Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The city of Abu Dhabi is the capital of the UAE and hosts almost 1.8 million residents with a continually growing population.

**Geographical Location and Climate**

Abu Dhabi is located along the southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. The city is usually warm and sunny in winter and hot and humid during the summer months. Winter daytime temperatures average a very pleasant 26°C, although nights can be relatively cool, between 12–15°C. Summer temperatures are in the mid-40s, but can be higher. Rainfall is sparse and sometimes does not happen for a year or more. In most years it rains during the winter months, usually in February or March, but occasionally earlier. Some years are totally dry and it is only through the regular formation of dew that vegetation can survive.

**The Economy**

The United Arab Emirates in general and Abu Dhabi in particular have experienced a huge boost in their economy. Even in the present economic climate, infrastructure, business and academic institutions are growing rapidly. New residencies, shopping malls and satellite cities have opened up over the past decade. Prices have risen as well, but the standard of living for expatriates is good and the cost of living is not high compared to Europe, North America or many parts of Asia.
Transportation

**Taxis** are readily available, offer an efficient, inexpensive service and are often the best way to get around. They can be flagged down on the street or pre-booked by telephone. Taxi drivers are usually familiar with the main souks, shopping centers, hotels and major landmarks. All taxis are metered, and you should expect to pay Dh5-10 (up to 3 dollars) for an average journey in the city. Long-distance taxis can also be picked up near the main bus station in Abu Dhabi, close to where the minibuses are located. A taxi in which you are the sole occupant will cost approximately Dh150 to Al Ain, Dubai or Sharjah, whereas a shared taxi (5–7 people) will cost approximately Dh30 per person – luggage extra. The taxi leaves when it has sufficient passengers.

**Buses** – a city-wide public bus service also exists as well as long-distance buses available from the main bus station on the East Road. They are air conditioned, clean, efficient and overall very comfortable for passengers. Mini buses with an average capacity of 14 passengers are also available at the bus station and travel to the same destinations.

**Driving** can also be another solution for getting around. If you wish to hire a car in Abu Dhabi, arrange to get a driver's license as soon as you arrive. Most North American and European Nationals can convert their home countries' local driving licenses into a valid UAE license without having to undergo any driving test.

Many teachers at AISA buy cars (often 4-wheel drive for off-road driving) while they are in Abu Dhabi. With the turnover of expatriate families there are always very good used cars on offer.

**Shopping, Leisure and Entertainment**

As mentioned earlier, Abu Dhabi has grown tremendously over the past decade. This growth was partially a result of building new malls, cinemas and theme parks and developing existing leisure facilities. Well-known shops and international brands operate in these malls. Large supermarkets exist for all grocery needs. Most shopping centers are open all week between 10 am and 10 pm. Some shops are closed on Friday mornings when the Friday prayer takes place.
Further tips of what to do and where to go:

- **Cinemas** - most cinemas are located on the top floor of shopping centers displaying the latest English, Arabic and Hindu movies.

- **Restaurants** - vary from fast food outlets located all over Abu Dhabi to superb and inexpensive “local” Arabic, Indian, Lebanese, Thai or Chinese restaurants, to sophisticated international places in hotels. The hotels do serve alcohol.

- **Bars** – are only located in hotels since it is against the law to serve alcohol except in restaurants and bars of hotels.

- **Parks etc.** – Ferrari world on Yas Island, Khalifa Park, Abu Dhabi Ice Rink, Yas Water World.

- **Swimming** – Enjoy the beach and make use of the beautiful warm and sunny weather of Abu Dhabi. Many ex-pats have memberships in hotels to be able to use the beach, pool, water sports facilities and the gyms. However, there are also free of charge public beaches.

Please make sure you visit our website for additional information: [www.aisa.sch.ae](http://www.aisa.sch.ae)
At AISA each teacher is accountable for implementing the AISA Mission and Philosophy every day, namely to encourage the development of reflective, responsible, independent and respectful students, who possess strong global citizenship skills, integrity and an appreciation for life-long learning.

Teaching, Planning and Assessing:

- Viewing planning, teaching and assessing as interconnected processes
- Planning collaboratively, based on agreed curriculum framework, standards, and instructional goals.
- Creating learning units with the end of mind (backward design)
- Creating an environment of respect and rapport, engaging students actively in their own learning.
- Communicating clearly and positively, showing flexibility and responsiveness
- Using a range and balance of teaching and assessment strategies to address the needs of students with different levels and types of ability
- Utilizing developmentally appropriate instructional strategies
- Using a variety of resources for pursuing open-ended inquiry
- Building on what students know and their cultural heritage
- Maintaining constant awareness of the needs of second language learners
- Involving students in planning their own learning and assessment
- Maintaining accurate records including lesson plans and marks
- Communicating prompt, regular and appropriate feedback to students and parents by maintaining appropriate records for each student
- Using technology to optimize learning

- Assessing the levels of student’s current experience and understanding before embarking on new learning
- Enabling students to see assessment as a means of describing their learning and involving students and colleagues in the assessment process
- Involving students in shared reflection during and at the end of each unit
- Making sure students fully understand how their grades are determined
Classroom Atmosphere and Management:
- Providing a safe environment for the student at all times, in and out of the classroom
- Efficiently carrying out supervision responsibilities
- Supporting the moral, social and emotional development of each child in our care
- Ensuring calm and sensible behavior at all times through the application of fair and consistent discipline
- Demonstrating positive attitudes of tolerance, respect and integrity by example
- Celebrating multicultural origins and national identities in our community
- Seeing that equity is observed in our school and not allowing gender or social status to intrude
- Gaining insight in students through communication and partnership with families and colleagues

Professional appraisal and staff development:
- Participating in opportunities for professional growth, both school-directed and teacher-chosen
- Through working closely with administrators following the Charlotte Danielson model of appraisal, reflecting on planning, teaching, classroom management and professional development to ensure growth

Complementing the above, teachers are also responsible for willingly sharing ideas and good practice with others in constructive collaboration with colleagues in the curriculum development and review process:

Teachers also accept responsibility for extra-curricular activities, and/or tutoring, as agreed in the contract or as assigned by the administration.

In order to fulfill their responsibilities, teachers must be prepared to perform additional duties required by the administration and also consistent with the purposes and responsibilities contained in this job description.