



# **An Introduction to AISA and Abu Dhabi**



## ABOUT US



The American International School in Abu Dhabi (AISA) is one of eight schools in the Middle East managed by Educational Services Overseas Limited (ESOL), a family of Lebanese educators who have worked in international education for over thirty years. AISA was established in 1995 to provide the local and expatriate students in kindergarten through grade 12 with a high quality American education, based on American standards and an international curriculum. AISA received its first accreditation from the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges (MSA) in October of 1997 and from the Council of International Schools (CIS) in January of 2010. AISA 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 for the IB Primary Years Program (PYP). In keeping with local regulations, grades six through twelve are 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. The development of Saadiyat Island's cultural District, which will house an extension of the Louvre, the Guggenheim Museum, new concert halls, and theaters will make Abu Dhabi a destination for art lovers from around the world. 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 and boat cruises along the coast. With events scheduled year round, there is something for everyone here in Abu Dhabi and the UAE.



*“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, founder of the UAE

## **Our Mission**

Developing a challenging curriculum in a safe, multicultural environment that inspires globally-minded, critical thinkers to take responsibility for their society.

## **Our Vision**

Becoming global providers of future leaders ready to conquer life's challenges and grasp its opportunities.

## **Our Values**

We strive for all members of our community to be...

thinkers.

principled.

open-minded.

knowledgeable.

inquirers.

risk-takers.

reflective.

balanced.

caring.

communicators.

## **Our Commitments to Student Success**

AISA teachers are committed to...

- holding students to high curricular standards.
- planning collaboratively to deliver a guaranteed and viable curriculum.
- using assessment for student success.
- using different types of data to differentiate by readiness, interest, and learning style.
- professional growth and participation in learning opportunities.
- being positive members of a vibrant community dedicated to the development of the whole person.



## Our Campus

AISA enjoys the benefits of a fairly large campus compared to other schools in Abu Dhabi. We are located in the Embassy area, approximately 10 kilometers from downtown Abu Dhabi. The school is well-equipped and includes a library, cafeteria, art studios, computer labs, science labs, two gymnasias, a grass soccer field and a swimming pool. All buildings are air conditioned and each classroom has a computer and Smartboard to enhance instruction.

## Accreditation and Affiliations

AISA is:

- ◆ fully accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) and the Council of International Schools (CIS).
- ◆ fully approved and licensed by the UAE Ministry of Education.
- ◆ a fully authorized International Baccalaureate World School.
- ◆ a member of the European Council of International Schools (ECIS), the Council of International Schools (CIS), the Near East South Asian Council of Overseas Schools (NESAS) and the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS).
- ◆ a member of the OASIS Activities Conference and the Emirates Athletic Conference (EAC)



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



## Faculty & Staff

AISA has an excellent and 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 seventh year as AISA's director, the school is supported by a team of outstanding administrators and counselors.



Gareth Jones,  
AISA's Director



## Our Students

Our student population is approximately 30% local and 70% international. They are success-oriented students who are 100% college bound

AISA prides itself on its cultural diversity, with students coming from over 80 countries around the world.

## Academic Program

The AISA curriculum is based on the Common Core State Standards for Math and Literacy and the American Education Reaches Out (AERO) Standards for Science and Social Studies. In addition to these standards, the IB Primary Years Program framework is in place in kindergarten through grade 5 and the IB Diploma Program is offered as an option for motivated students in grades 11 and 12. Students graduate from grade 12 with either a high school diploma or an IB diploma.



## Academic Calendar

There are 190 days of instruction each school year. School is closed for a winter break, spring break and other local and government declared holidays. In addition, there are several early release days spread throughout the year to provide teachers with time for professional development activities.



## TEACHING AT AISA

Teachers at AISA view planning, teaching and assessing as an interconnected process. We work in a professional and collaborative environment to develop curriculum and lessons based on standards, using backwards design in planning units. We use a range of developmentally appropriate teaching and assessment strategies to address the needs of students with different levels and types of abilities.

AISA teachers create an environment of respect and rapport, actively engaging students in their own learning. We build on what students know, using pre-assessments to help guide instruction and involving students in planning their own learning and assessment. We communicate positively and clearly with students so that they have a clear understanding of the expectations, learning goals and success criteria. We facilitate open-ended inquiry using a variety of resources and provide students with time to self-assess and reflect on their learning. Teachers also maintain current and accurate records of student achievement and progress and provide prompt, regular, and appropriate feedback to students and parents.

At AISA, we provide a safe environment for all students. We celebrate multicultural origins and teachers lead by example in demonstrating the positive attitudes of tolerance, respect and integrity. We support the moral, social and emotional development of our students and apply fair and consistent discipline. We commit to lead one extra-curricular activity each year and provide academic help to our students after school hours, at least one day per week.

### **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
- Settling –in allowance
- Tuition support for the children of teachers
- Ongoing professional development including a yearly stipend
- Transportation to and from work for teachers in school provided housing
- End of contract indemnity payment
- Attendance bonus
- Compassionate leave
- School pays 100% of annual insurance premium (does not include optical)



## Professional Development

Each member of the AISA faculty and staff is encouraged to establish an ongoing dialogue with a member of the administrative team to discuss personal and school-wide professional development 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 invited workshop leaders. In addition to school provided PD sessions and workshops, each teacher receives an annual allowance to use towards professional development of his or her choice.

## Housing and Accommodation

Housing in Abu Dhabi is relatively costly. AISA provides furnished accommodation for overseas hired teachers. Teaching couples are provided with an apartment and single teachers in their first year share a two bedroom, two bathroom apartment 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 after their first year in Abu Dhabi.

Apartments are furnished and kitchen equipment and basic bedding are provided. Electronic appliances are not included, but are available quite inexpensively. Transportation by bus is provided between the school and school-provided accommodation. In addition, the school pays half of the electricity and water expenses in school-provided accommodation, with the other half being deducted from the teachers salary. Gas for cooking and telephone/internet charges are the teacher's own responsibility.

## Building Community

Teachers are welcomed at AISA with a series of orientation events, including multiple social opportunities to meet new and returning AISA faculty and staff. In addition, the AISA Social Committee plans events for faculty and staff to get together, relax and interact outside of work hours. There are a variety of events planned throughout the year, such as happy hours, holiday parties, camping trips, boat cruises, potlucks, bowling and more!



## Teaching in the Elementary School

coeducational • class size of 20 • 5 classes at each grade level

### AISA Elementary teachers...

- Use a constructivist, inquiry based approach to teaching and learning
- Develop curriculum based on adopted standards and benchmarks and plan lessons collaboratively in grade level teams
- Use assessment for, as and of learning
- Maintain accurate and current records of student achievement and progress
- Use differentiation to meet students where they are and help them progress on their learning journey
- Complete standards-based report cards on a trimester basis, including individualized comments about student achievement and progress
- Map curriculum using the Atlas Rubicon web-based program
- Take daily attendance, keep records and write report cards using Synergetics, our electronic database
- Integrate technology in the classroom, including the use of an interactive whiteboard (Smartboard)
- Take part in preparing for visits from outside agencies, such as the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), IB, MSA or CIS
- Manage behavior positively
- Use data from assessment, particularly Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), to guide instruction



### AISA Elementary Programs:

- IB Primary Years Program
- Letters and Sounds Phonics Program (K1 & K2 only)
- Reader's workshop, including guided reading groups and running records
- Writer's workshop
- Six Traits Writing
- Everyday Math
- Kagan Cooperative Learning
- Host Country/Home Country—a unique program celebrating the history, culture and traditions of the UAE as well as the home countries of our students

## Teaching in the Secondary School

gender segregated • class size of 15-20

### AISA Secondary teachers...

- Integrate technology into classes across grade levels and subject areas as part of a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) community, where each student brings his or her own device to every class, every day
- Collaborate with department members on curriculum standards and instructional planning and assessment
- Map curriculum using the Atlas Rubicon web-based program
- Post weekly lesson plans online for students, parents and administration to access
- Use data from assessment, particularly Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), to inform instructional practices
- Use assessment for, as, and of learning
- Maintain accurate and current records of student progress and achievement
- Take daily attendance in each class, keep records and write report cards using Synergetics, our electronic database
- Manage student behavior in a positive manner
- Use differentiated instruction to meet individual learner needs
- Participate in a secondary school committee,
- Teach with passion and model life-long learning



### Middle School:

- Team teach with one teacher teaching mathematics and science and the other teaching English language arts and the humanities
- Teach one class of girls (120 minutes) and one class of boys (120 minutes) each day
- Daily common planning time across the middle school
- Attend assemblies twice each month

### High School:

- Average teaching load: 5 classes and 3 preps
- Teach both boys and girls classes
- 70 minute classes
- Departmental common planning time during the school day

# LIVING IN ABU DHABI



## Geographic Location and Climate

Abu Dhabi is the largest of seven Emirates in the UAE, ruled by 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 continually growing population. It 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 (79°F), although nights can be relatively cool, between 12-15°C (54-59°F). Summer temperatures are typically in the mid 40s C (approximately 113°F), but can be higher. Rainfall is sparse and usually occurs during the winter months. 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. Over the past decade, infrastructure, business, and academic institutions have been growing rapidly alongside new residences, shopping malls, and satellite cities. 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 in the city of Abu Dhabi and are efficient and inexpensive. They can be flagged down on the street or pre-booked by telephone. An average trip within the city will cost between 15-20 dirham and to or from Al Ain, Dubai, or Sharjah will cost around 200 dirhams.



Buses are another alternative and the bus system in Abu Dhabi continues to grow and improve. There are regular routes transporting passengers around the city for just a couple dirhams. Buses are also available from the main bus terminal to various cities in the UAE, such as Dubai and Al Ain.

Driving can also be a solution for getting around. If you wish to hire, or rent, 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 license into a valid UAE license without difficulty. Purchasing a car is also an option and, due to the turnover of expatriate families, quality used cars are fairly easy to find.



## Shopping

There are several supermarket chains with a presence in the UAE, including Lulu, Carrefour and Geant, that offer a large variety of groceries, health & beauty products, electronics, appliances and household items. In addition, there are some smaller grocery store chains, such as Abela, Waitrose and Spinney's, that cater to the expat population that stock a larger variety of products from the US and UK and offer pork products for non-Muslims.

Malls seem to be popping up everywhere in Abu Dhabi and you will never be more than a short taxi ride away from name brand stores from around the world. Most malls offer a large variety of stores from the US, UK, and elsewhere, along with large food courts, restaurants, cinemas and sometimes even a gym! If you rather shop from the comfort of your home, the popularity of online shopping is also growing in the UAE and you are likely to find just the item you are looking for

## Entertainment & Activities

A variety of entertainment options are available in Abu Dhabi. Cinemas are located in malls around Abu Dhabi and show the latest English, Arabic and Hindu movies. Sporting events, such as soccer and cricket are available throughout the year. If you are looking for something more active, Ferrari World, an indoor theme park, and Yas Waterworld, a waterpark, can be found on Yas Island. You can also find opportunities for bowling, paintball, go-karting, water sports, ice skating, and playing sports at various venues around the city. There is definitely something for everyone here in Abu Dhabi!



## Food

Restaurants are everywhere and vary from fast food to local eateries to five star establishments. In neighborhoods, you will find “local” restaurants serving delicious and inexpensive Arabic, Indian, Lebanese, Thai or Chinese food. Many mid-range restaurants, including international chain restaurants, such as Chili’s, Nandos, T.G.I.Friday’s, can be found in malls. While at hotels you will find more sophisticated and expensive international cuisines and alcoholic beverages.

## Nightlife

Bars, pubs, and clubs are only located in hotels, as legally hotels are the only places permitted to serve alcohol. You will find a variety of styles, music and levels of formality to suit any taste from very casual English pub to trendy night clubs with visitors dressed to impress.



## Outdoors

As Abu Dhabi is an island, beaches are a popular outdoor destination when the weather is appropriate. There are public beaches on the Corniche, Saadiyat Island and Yas Island as well as private beaches accessible to guests of hotels or beach clubs around the city.



In addition, parks are available in various parts of the city with green space, walking paths, and playgrounds. Often you will see families and groups having picnics on the weekends.

Many members of the UAE community spend weekends desert camping. It's easy to find someone with an SUV or rent one to get away from the city for a bit and enjoy the peace of the desert. For something a little different, Oman is a short drive away and offers hiking and camping options.



## Special Events

There are also a variety of special events held in Abu Dhabi and the UAE each year. The most popular special events include the Abu Dhabi Formula 1 Grand Prix, the Abu Dhabi Film Festival, various concerts throughout the year, the HSBC Golf Championship, theater performances, Dubai 7s Rugby Tournament, and many more!

