



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

VIRTUAL EXTERNAL REVIEW VISIT

LEAF Academy

Sasinkova 13
811 08 Bratislava, Slovakia

Mr. Matej Sapak
Principal

Mr. Berrin Schofield
Director of Development
Amman Bacalaureate School
Amman, Jordan

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Roster of Team Members

Chair: Mr. Berrin Schofield

Director of Development
Amman Bacculaureate School
Amman, Jordan

Julia Denney

PYP Teacher
International School of Belgrade
Belgrade, Serbia

Ms. Justine Otte

Vice Principal, Primary School
Berlin Metropolitan School
Berlin, Germany

Mike Peller

Assistant Head for Teaching and Learning
The White Mountain School
Bethlehem, NH, USA

Dr. Pauline Younts

Director, International Education
Ashville College
North Yorkshire, United Kingdom

Foundation Standards Update

Foundation Standard 1: Learning Structure

Fully met and implemented.

This standard remains "fully met and implemented." However, some of the important work of formally mapping the curriculum and fully documenting assessment practices is still in the process of being completed and codified.

This is not to say that the institution has been standing still since the Learning Principles Visit. It has invested in Eduplanet21, a platform that holds and organizes the curriculum. While this platform should allow for complete mapping of learning throughout the school, this work has yet to be completed due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Foundation Standard 2: Organizational Structure

Partially met and implemented.

Most of the comments made by the Visitors from the Foundation Standards Visit and the Learning Principles Visit remain true. There is still no standardized self-evaluation process for governance, and the Board continues to emphasize the importance of thinking of LEAF as a single entity, in which LEAF Academy functions as the flagship. Members of the Board talk enthusiastically of the importance of the 15- to 35-year-old LEAF Academy graduates to have a positive long-term impact on Eastern Europe.

Efforts were made to initiate a governance review in the spring of 2020; however, this was postponed as the greater LEAF organization moved to survival mode due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Visitors are, however, confident that this is a highly reflective Board whose members are completely and passionately committed to the Mission of the LEAF organization and future of LEAF Academy.

Foundation Standard 3: Health, Safety, & Security

Fully met and implemented.

LEAF Academy has made significant inroads in addressing some of the shortfalls identified by the Foundation Standards Visit and the Learning Principles Visit. LEAF now has a dedicated medical room at the residence, and while not a full infirmary, it is adequate and appropriately staffed. Despite this being a virtual Visit, the Visitors are satisfied that LEAF is providing a physically safe environment. While the ethos and Mission of the school provide a great deal of freedom to the young adults at LEAF, there are systems and structures in place to ensure the safety and security of the students in its care. Fire evacuation drills are now held early in each academic year for all buildings at the school, including the boarding halls.

Foundation Standard 4: Finance, Facilities, & Resources

Partially met and implemented.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided significant challenges. The LEAF organization, and therefore the Academy, relies primarily on a small number of philanthropic donors. At the start of the pandemic this funding was restricted, resulting in a substantial constriction of available operating cash. Staff were asked to take a 20% to 40% pay postponement. The school has, according to the "staffulty", kept their promise, and this has now been paid. LEAF Academy has emerged from this difficult time, and is in many ways stronger due to the compassionate and ethical way it navigated these difficult conversations. For many staff this has served as confirmation that this is the school they want to be at. This also speaks to Foundation Standard 5.

This episode does, however, highlight the vulnerability of the school's financial model, where only 20% of its income is self-generated through the collection of fees. While this is entirely consistent with the need-blind admission process, and the larger Mission of the LEAF organization as a whole, consideration needs to be given to developing structures which ensure ongoing funding and the generation of alternative income streams, including international

students, to ensure the academy's long-term sustainability. Although the Board is confident that operational funding is secure for the foreseeable future, capital expenditure for development has not been secured at this point, delaying the construction of the Vistuk campus.

In terms of physical spaces, LEAF Academy remains constrained by its non-purpose-built facilities; however, it continues to use what it has to the maximum, and in many ways the quirky nature of the spaces contributes to the sense of community shared by the staff and students. The addition of an art room and science lab are welcome developments and when viewed in isolation may seem less than ideal; however, this is in line with the "do more with less" approach that is evident in the rest of the facilities. There is no doubt that learning is occurring at both the main school premises and student residence.

Foundation Standard 5: Ethical Practice

Fully met and implemented.

This standard remains fully met and implemented. There is little to update other than to commend LEAF Academy for its handling of the financial crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Boarding

Fully met and implemented.

Despite not being covered specifically in the Foundation Standards Visit, the Visitors had the opportunity to "visit" the boarding house on two separate occasions, and they concur with the observations made during the Learning Principles Visit. Student records and movements are tracked and communicated with Veracross. The boarding facilities are similar to the campus in that while the situation is not ideal, the Academy knows this and is doing everything possible to do the best it can with the resources currently available. Students live in a safe, caring environment. The development of a purpose-built boarding facility at the new campus will be a significant improvement, even though it is some way off in the future.

Curriculum Verification

Does the school have comprehensive curriculum documentation that reflects horizontal and vertical articulation?

Yes.

Comments

Leaf Academy offers a four-year High School experience to students. The curriculum in the first two years is unique to LEAF, and this is continued into the third and fourth years in tandem with eighteen standardized Advanced Placement (AP) courses. The core curriculum is made up of the following courses:

- Entrepreneurial Leadership
- Character Seminar
- Central European Studies
- Mathematical Modeling and Statistics (Years 1 and 2)
- Math, Science, and Computer Science (Years 3 and 4)
- National Language
- Slovak as a Foreign Language

The core curriculum was designed at the school's inception, and has been offered since it opened five years ago. Each of its components was carefully derived from the graduate profile of the Academy, using the Understanding by Design protocol.

Initially held on a shared drive, the curriculum is now stored and has been mapped using Eduplanet21, a software tool that enables teachers to see links within and across curricula. The core curriculum is aligned horizontally by year group, and vertically by subject. Where possible, it is also mapped to the AP courses, and the Visitors note the impressive scores earned by students on the AP exams after experiencing the core curriculum in Years 1 and 2.

Furthermore, the curriculum is mapped to the graduate profile. This is the one element of the school that does not change, as it reflects the core Mission of the organization as a whole. This profile contains the 4Es and the 4Cs that form the foundation of all learning that takes place at the Academy; it remains static, and so any tweaks needed to fill gaps in alignment are made to the curriculum rather than the profile.

There is some consternation in the Lower School (Years 1 and 2) pupils for whom the core curriculum is unusual and not in the tradition of a Slovakian school. The teachers describe "unschooling" the new students so that they come to understand the purpose of learning for themselves rather than for a test, and shifting the conversation from using grades as an indicator of successful learning to personal progress and Impact as indicators of individual growth and development.

In addition to the offered curriculum, the Academy also makes provision for students for whom English is an additional language. All students are assessed before attending the Academy, and are assigned to English groups according to their ability. Many students test out of required classes, though some do still request to attend in order to improve their academic language skills. Others take advantage of the opportunity to attend virtual classes through the Global Online Academy.

While LEAF Academy's curriculum is focused and purposeful, it does not fulfill the Slovakian standards for graduation, as the school is not accredited. This means that some students, in addition to a full course load at LEAF, also take exams at their assigned home school.

The school is aware that further work needs to be done on the curriculum itself. Although small changes have been made at the department level based on student need, it has not been completely reviewed since Eduplanet21 was adopted in 2019. The full review was put on hold as the Academy works towards creating a mastery transcript and alternative forms of assessment, as well as implementing online learning during school closures due to the pandemic.

Now that the school is back to face-to-face learning there are plans to revive this work, and the Visitors suggest that this be made a priority as outlined in the Academy's Major Learning Plans.

Does the school undertake periodic review of the written curriculum?

Yes.

Comments

Initially held on a shared drive, the curriculum is now stored and will be mapped using Eduplanet21. The Visitors noted that while some of this work has been delayed due to the "survival mode" so many schools have had to enter due to the pandemic, the school is planning to complete this work in this academic year. Indeed, constant curriculum review has been occurring since the school's inception. This may be common to start-up schools; however, as with so many other aspects of LEAF Academy's work, reflection and constant improvement of the curriculum are core to how they do things at this school. The Visitors encourage the school to maintain and document this review cycle as it transitions from a startup to a growing and mature organization.

School Context

LEAF Academy is a coeducational boarding school located in Bratislava, Slovakia. As part of the LEAF organization, it forms the foundation for the group's larger work. There are few schools which are more closely aligned with their core Mission; indeed, almost everything that happens at LEAF Academy has been deliberately implemented, by design, to live its Mission and support the greater work of the LEAF organization as a whole.

The school returned to face-to-face learning at the start of the 2021/2022 academic year after having to close the previous year due to the pandemic. Currently there are 112 full-time students across four pre-university grades, all of whom board on three floors of a hotel approximately ten minutes via public transport from the school. Their learning and boarding arrangements are supported by 61 staff, 30 of whom are teachers. Three of these teachers serve on the Leadership Team with three full-time administrators.

The Academy's main campus consists of two historic buildings in the center of the city. There are ambitious plans to build a new campus at Vistuk, about 30 minutes outside of the city; however, due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic, these plans are on hold for the time being.

The school was hit hard by the pandemic. The LEAF organization's primary donor's businesses were impacted by a loss of revenue as lockdowns and other health restrictions were introduced. This had a significant effect on the school's funding, in part due to the Academy's fiscal structure.

At the moment, only about 20% of the school's revenue is raised from the collection of fees. This is mainly due to the very generous scholarships that the vast majority of students enjoy. The Academy has a very healthy number of applicants, 400 to 500 per year, both Slovak and international students. The application process is need-blind and rigorous, and the alignment of potential students' values and commitment to the larger Mission and Core Values of the LEAF organization are key. Somewhat unusually, the selection process is also holistic, meaning that each

applicant is not considered only as an individual, but also as part of a bigger picture with the intention of deliberately creating a complementary cohort.

The organization's Core Values and beliefs are ubiquitous throughout all interactions the Visitors had with members of the learning community: staff, leadership, students, parents, and Board members. This is a learning community that knows exactly who they are and why they are doing what they are doing.

Summary Assessment of Learning Principles

Learning Principles	Continuum	Not Evident	Thinking About It	Working On It	Living It	What If...?
1. Learning Goals						
2. Dimensions of Learning						
3. Assessment for, of, and as Learning						
4. Learning Perspectives						
5. Learner Engagement & Autonomy						
6. Research & Reflection on Learning						
7. Inclusiveness of Learning						
8. Governance & Leadership for Learning						
9. Learning Space & Time						
10. Learning Community						

ACE Surveys

The analysis of the survey results was handled with the same attention to detail, honesty, and reflection that is evident throughout the Academy's accreditation journey. There is clear alignment between the learnings from the survey results, the current situation, plans for the future, and the Major Learning Plans. The Visitors agree with the school's analysis and key takeaways and recommendations. Overall there is a high level of satisfaction among stakeholders, and this is consistent with conversations held during the Visit.

Learners/Students

Does the Internal Reflection offer an accurate and insightful analysis of the survey results?

The student surveys were very positive. One point noticed by the Visitors and referenced in the analysis was the question of whether the academic challenge was right for students. Stakeholders talked about the "unlearning" that needed to be done because of the different nature of learning at LEAF; because it feels different, some learners find it hard to express what they think. In conversations with students and staff, it was unclear if the challenge was too great or not great enough. There is general consensus that the learning at LEAF is better than other learning experiences that they have had.

Academic Staff/Teachers

Does the Internal Reflection offer an accurate and insightful analysis of the survey results?

The school and the Visitors identified the same two questions in need of deeper analysis. Both relate to improving practice. The first relates to constructive feedback, and the second to having sufficient time and opportunity to engage in reflection. In conversations with staff, the Visitors heard that at times, due to the nature of the school, its approach to learning, and the fact that it is still new, it can feel like things are constantly in flux. This may have contributed to the high dissatisfaction rating for these questions.

Governance & Leadership

Does the Internal Reflection offer an accurate and insightful analysis of the survey results?

The Visitors agree with the analysis undertaken and the conclusions reached by the Academy, particularly with regard to the need to develop metrics to measure Impact.

Parents

Does the Internal Reflection offer an accurate and insightful analysis of the survey results?

The 70% return rate for parents on this survey is a good response rate, although as identified by the school it is unclear if families returned multiple surveys. The analysis rightly addresses the disconnect between the students' perception of challenge and the parents' much more positive response. It does reinforce the notion that part of the

disconnect is the unlearning of past educational experiences, and then the "shock" of the shift back to a more traditional situation with AP courses in Years 3 and 4.

A - Learning Architecture

Learning Principles	School's Self-Assessment	Visitors' Assessment
<p>#1: Learning Goals Learners demonstrate understandings, competencies, knowledge, dispositions, and values that will allow them to become responsible and successful citizens.</p>	Working On It	Working On It
<p>#2: Dimensions of Learning Learning encompasses creative, moral, social, experiential, and entrepreneurial dimensions.</p>	Living It	Living It
<p>#3: Assessment for, of, and as Learning Assessment measures the effect of learning on the learner. Assessment for, of, and as learning includes qualitative as well as quantitative criteria.</p>	Working On It	Working On It
<p>#4: Learning Perspectives Meaningful learning is extended when learners explore the unfamiliar, consider a range of perspectives, and take informed risks. Mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning.</p>	Living It	What If...?

Learning Principle 1 - Learning Goals

Rating

Learning Communities are Working on it... (Building; establishing the 'how'): A continuum identifying age-appropriate demonstrations of important transfer skills in both disciplinary and transdisciplinary contexts is being developed. Assessment systems are being revised to consider those transfer skills, competencies, values, and dispositions identified by the learning community as essential for success. Curriculum is adapted to allow learners to propose solutions to real-world problems and dilemmas. Instructional methodology is explicitly aligned with the desired Impacts. New approaches to communicating student learning and evidence of desired Impacts are being developed and tested with various stakeholders.

Observations

The 4Es and the 4Cs provide the framework for the graduate profile of LEAF Academy, around which all learning is centered, and from which all curriculum is derived. While documents outlining these skills and competencies are not hung on every wall, or physically visible during a tour of the campus (as one staffulty member said, "that would reek

of propaganda of a bygone era that still stings in some cases"), they are very much embedded in every experience of the learners. This was evidenced through conversations with alumni, observations of classes, and a review of the curriculum. Former students spoke of the critical-thinking skills learned at LEAF that made college easy, students were seen to be applying knowledge across disciplines, and the mapped curriculum showed alignment with all eight skills and strengths. In conversations with the Visitors, current students noted that "making connections between pieces of the curriculum on our own is evidence of learning."

Students are involved in the design of LEAF Week and Term E, planned time in the school year during which students and staffuly engage in service learning outside the Academy that impacts the local community, as well as Central Europe more broadly. During this time, students lead and participate in "experiences with compassion and empathy" (per staffuly in conversation with Visitors) that draw on character education in particular, as well as the LEAF core curriculum skills. The learners make sense of these times through reflection with their advisory groups as they begin to understand the effects of their actions on others and the planet. Parents also noted recognizing growth in their own children after one or two years at LEAF: "I was amazed by the conversations he could have, how he recognized a broader view of the world, and how his own personal code had developed."

The Community Principles Committee offers students an opportunity to see the result of their actions across systems as they begin to understand that "every action has a ripple effect" (per a student leader in conversation with the Visitors). Both the members of the committee and the person standing in front of them draw upon a wide variety of experiences at LEAF and beyond to consider actions and consequences not just in that moment, in that room, but also within the school community and the wider world. A staffuly member noted in conversation that "sometimes all it takes is for the student to talk through their thinking" in order for them to discover the Impact of their actions. Another student said "we just want to understand what they were thinking, and for them to understand the effect of their actions on others." The learning that happens during these processes is then applied across the activities of the community.

After mapping the curriculum to the graduate profile, there were some gaps discovered between the core and the profile, as well as between the core in the Lower School and the AP demands in the Upper School. Staffuly at the Academy are aware of this, and are working on next steps to review and update the core accordingly.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The Academy has acknowledged that the curriculum is a living document that meets current needs, but also needs to be reviewed more often. The plan to overhaul the curriculum to more closely align with the graduate profile and the AP curricula, as well as to include more opportunity for cross-curricular transfer of learning, particularly at the AP level, is noted and commended by the Visitors.

Learning Principle 2 - Dimensions of Learning

Rating

Learning Communities are Living it... (Implementing; defining 'metrics' of success): *The learning community's multi-dimensional learning model, firmly aligned with desired Impacts, is well established, understood, and embraced. There is a common language when community members speak about learning, success, performance, and growth.*

Learners regularly reflect on their learning across academic areas and dimensions of learning; they benefit from regular opportunities to develop desired dispositions, and are able to demonstrate both their proficiency and growth. Assessments include higher-order cognitive and creative elements, and support learners in acquiring a broad range of the skills and dispositional qualities. Learning experiences and instructional approaches reinforce the importance of complementing content-area learning goals with the development of creative, moral, social, and emotional qualities and dispositions.

Observations

Evidence of the application of higher-order thinking skills was evident in the Entrepreneurial Leadership classes observed by the Visitors. Students had designed projects that would immediately impact their local community, providing compassionate yet practical solutions to challenges met by their community neighbors. One team of students creatively worked around a ban on selling goods by offering the goods in exchange for a pledge or donation to the cause. Another team had learned from failure, and reiterated the design of a rain garden when they found that the first was too heavy for the consumer's dilapidated fencing. These examples are few among the many observed by the Visitors and documented in the schools' Internal Reflection that illustrate appropriate levels of balance across cognitive, dispositional, and socio-emotional domains.

Central to the learning at LEAF Academy is the graduate profile. It describes the competencies and skills each learner will have as they leave the school and move into the wider community, and it is the definition of success of the school in preparing those learners. The core curriculum shapes students into learners with these competencies and skills as articulated by its 4Cs and 4Es. It is hard to miss these, as they are embedded in every interaction of each learner, both adult and student, within the community. That said, it is also hard to quantify the growth and development of these competencies and skills within each learner without using anecdotal stories; there is no quantitative data that has been collected on the Impact of the LEAF core.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The Visitors applaud the school's efforts to find ways to quantify the nature of a learner's character, and thus the Impact of the core. By creating and defining mastery credits that assess creative, moral, social, and entrepreneurial learning, the Academy will be better able to measure the Impact of the core curriculum. This, in turn, will allow the Academy to more purposefully reiterate the curriculum.

Learning Principle 3: Assessment for, of, and as Learning

Rating

Learning Communities are Working on it... (Building; establishing the 'how'): *The design of a rich, diverse, and comprehensive model for learning and growth is being implemented. Assessment focuses on assessments of, for, and as learning. Moving to a focus on ongoing growth rather than periodic assessments of performance drives the design. Improvements and changes designed to support a growth mentality through instructional design, assessment, grading, and reporting form a large part of the learning community's strategic and action planning. Various opportunities to engage learners in their own growth are being explored.*

Observations

Learning is individualized at LEAF Academy; the Visitors observed students being afforded the opportunity to make choices about next steps in their learning, as well as student/teacher conferences within which students were guided with questions to discover deeper content knowledge. Feedback is descriptive and often follows the single-point rubric protocol. The Visitors saw examples of both student- and teacher-designed rubrics, and observed assessment as learning in various classrooms, with students conversing in a foreign language using new grammar in one class, then discussing characters and plots of novels in their mother tongue in another.

In conversations with Lower School students, the Visitors were informed that "assessment was about ranking at my old school, but here it is about what I need to do next." This individual feedback creates a personal learning journey for each student, and is often a cultural shift for many students new to the Academy. A staffulty member described this shift as a "...dilemma, because you have to figure out how to boost the student to want to learn more, while not destroying their confidence by always looking for ways to improve their work. We try to focus on why it's important to want to learn beyond the purpose of grades."

With such individual feedback students have a good understanding of their current state of learning, but it is harder to describe the progress of their learning across time or units of study because of the nature of the core in Years 1 and 2. They are offered more summative feedback through Veracross, the Academy's student information system, at the end of each unit or term. This takes the form of a report card which describes the student as either working towards mastery, or at mastery of various skills and competencies. A member of the staffulty discussed with the Visitors how each term they have to explain to new parents and students in particular how traditional letter or number grades are not assigned, and that "working towards" is not failing.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The tension between the traditional method of assessment at the culmination of the AP curricula and the mastery-based assessment of the LEAF core is palpable and not ignored by the staffulty; they are seeking ways to measure growth and assess learning differently. These conversations are robust and ongoing, and the Visitors concur with the school's proposed solutions, which include the need for both more in-house expertise on assessment, and the move to a mastery transcript within the next five years.

Learning Principle 4: Learning Perspectives

Rating

Learning Communities are Innovating and asking "What if...?" (Transforming; shifting the paradigm): *Having come this far, what if we...? These practices are innovative, unique, and constitute a shift in defining the purpose, practice, and Impact of education. Learning communities with this level of understanding, clarity of purpose, ability to redefine their aspirations, and determination to reinvent themselves produce learners and leaders who are well prepared to shape the future and 'see things that are not yet on the page'.*

Observations

The student experience at the Academy is such that they cannot help but be impacted by it. Parents of alumni describe LEAF Academy as "a competitive school that focuses on leadership as well as academics" and "a school that forces them to think and be independent, and dares them to look at things critically." The Visitors observed interactions between students that were healthy and respectful, and were able to talk with students about their learning experiences.

One student described how she had been interested in chemistry but was afraid the course would be too difficult for her. After a conversation with her advisor, during which he told her to take it as he believed she was quite capable, the student tried the course and found success. Another student reported, "I like academic writing, and this piece was student choice. Our teacher has told us that for the next piece we have to try something uncomfortable, so I am going to try poetry."

During a visit to an AP math class, the Visitors observed a learner explaining his thinking to the class. He made a calculation error, and was prompted by the teacher to "take another look at that. Think about what happens next, and if that step will get you there," leading the student to reflect on his thinking.

Learners are encouraged to take risks, and are supported through that process. A parent described her family as people who do not like history, and so when offered a history class her daughter had said no; however, after a conversation with a teacher, her daughter tried the history class and "fell in love with it."

Conclusions and Next Steps

Anecdotal evidence and observations are witness to the meaningful learning occurring at LEAF Academy. Reflections from the staffulty suggest that this is more prevalent in the Lower School than the Upper School, and the Visitors would agree. The school's Major Learning Plans outline its drive to create a bridge between the Lower and Upper School learner experiences in terms of both autonomy and engagement, which is underpinned by redefining learning, its outcomes, and its Impacts. The Visitors remind the Academy not to lose sight of what they do well as they embark on this endeavor.

C - Learning Culture

Learning Principles	School's Self-Assessment	Visitors' Assessment
<p>#5: Learner Engagement & Autonomy Learners are engaged with and inspired by their learning. They have autonomy over their learning and make informed choices, supported by teachers acting as coaches and mentors.</p>	Thinking About It	Working On It
<p>#6: Research and Reflection on Learning Research, reflection, and future design-oriented thinking are valued and acted upon by the community of learners.</p>	Working On It	Working On It
<p>#7: Inclusiveness of Learning The learning community embraces a culture of inclusiveness.</p>	Working On It	Working On It
<p>#8: Governance & Leadership for Learning Governance, leadership, and management support, embody, and promote the organization's intended Learning Impacts, norms and values.</p>	Working On It	Living It

Learning Principle 5: Learner Engagement & Autonomy

Rating

Learning Communities are Working on it... (Building; establishing the 'how'): *The learning community has created effective plans and structures to support learner self-improvement and self-direction. These plans include developing a clear set of goals and principles for SDL, defining indicators of learner performance, and reviewing implications for curriculum, assessment, learning spaces, and schedules. Revising goal-setting processes and creating personal learning plans is also under consideration. Staff is being supported in developing an understanding of this initiative and in shifting practice to support greater learner autonomy. The plans to promote this goal are being communicated to all stakeholders.*

Observations

Year 3 and Year 4 learners at LEAF described learning as "not about just getting knowledge; learning is part of our development to be able to form opinions, and these opinions are based on what you have come to know." Another learner explained to the Visitors that "opportunities make LEAF; opportunities lead to interest in learning." Student leaders described their voices being heard and having Impacts on learning through being part of discussions about important developments and changes. They also expressed that they find the staff very accessible, and that they

are free to share ideas, opinions, and suggestions about both academics and student life with any staffulty members, including the Principal. The student leaders went on to describe LEAF Academy as a village where each person's input on the learning community is important. Students cited project-based work, particularly in the Entrepreneurial Leadership course, as a key example of learning that was fully based on choice, interest, and autonomy.

Co-curricular clubs and Term E were described during conversations and noted in the Internal Reflection as "highly personalized and speaking directly to the passions of the people involved; further, they allow both students and staffulty to exercise voice and choice in what they're learning." In discussions with the Visitors, staffulty also described other opportunities for passionate conversations when the entire school community engages in seminal readings, and during unique learning opportunities offered in classes such as Central European Studies.

The Visitors observed an AP English Literature lesson that involved student choice of reflection questions, alternate ways of sharing thinking, and a staffulty member who prompted for open-minded interpretation of classic literature. In a Year 2 writing class, a student described having choice over both the genre and topic that she was developing in a workshop-style course with a staffulty member supporting each student through personalized conferring and targeted development goals.

Mathematics and science lessons observed were more frequently teacher-led and involved limited or no opportunity for student choice or autonomy within the learning environment. Frontloading of theory and notation were observed more often than investigation and discovery. When asked about this approach, the STEM staffulty noted that this tends to be the case in the initial weeks of the courses, and as the year progresses so does the opportunity for more investigative and personalized learning in math and science.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Learners at LEAF clearly express appreciation for the choices and opportunities they are offered. Learners feel respected and proud of their influence and involvement in the learning experiences that come from living and learning together in a boarding community. Learners at LEAF also recognize the Learning Impacts of the Entrepreneurial Leadership course that occupies the largest allocation of time on their schedule. This course embodies voice, choice, engagement, passion, and self-directed learning. Year 3 and Year 4 LEAF learners also share an appreciation for being able to select specific AP courses based on their interests and plans for the future.

The Visitors concur with focus points named in the future-design plans that further efforts be made in ensuring that departments and individual staffulty be further supported with "unlearning" some previously held beliefs about teaching practices: in particular, developing staffulty understanding of approaches for teaching STEM subjects to include more choice and autonomy for students. Approaches to explore could include providing subject-specific learning opportunities through varying investigations, student collaboration in classes in flexible groupings, and differentiation of learning experiences in a way that offers students choices in how they will tackle the subject-area learning both in class and during independent study.

Learning Principle 6: Research & Reflection on Learning

Rating

Learning Communities are Working on it... (Building; establishing the 'how'): Processes for future-oriented strategic thinking and defining key learning goals and Impacts are being articulated and implemented. Structures for identifying, prototyping, and evaluating innovations for effectiveness are being created. Reflective practices, focused on looking at evidence of achieving desired Impacts through the processes and products of student learning, are being adopted. A culture, in which change is validated through thoughtful reflection and research rather than happenstance or opinion, is being embedded in the learning community.

Observations

The Character Education Department articulated a vision for designing and developing a systematic approach to quantifying student character growth. The department displays a shared ethos of analyzing, reviewing, and promoting Impacts on learning through character education and finding ways to prove, promote, and embed the foundations built across all areas of LEAF Academy learning. This process is one of ongoing trials, revision, and refinement of a topic that is complex and difficult to quantify.

LEAF Academy has stated its commitment to continuing on with the development and design of a mastery transcript. This inquiry and work towards implementation exemplify the learning community taking action based on reflection, research, and a future-focused vision.

The Visitors' discussions and observations align with the information presented in the reflection documentation that opportunities for design, trial, and multiple iterations exist in many facets of LEAF Academy experiences, including residential life, sports and club programming options, staffulty development, and student leadership roles.

Entrepreneurial leadership was named in the school's self-reflection as the "most obvious" example of design thinking in action. Although seemingly obvious, the commitment to this learning and the Impacts of these courses are noted and recognized by all learning community members. An analogy was used by the Entrepreneurial Leadership staffulty to describe LEAF Academy learning:

If learning is a car, then each part of the curriculum makes up an individual component. Perhaps science is a wheel, math is another wheel, languages another part. Character education is the steering wheel -- the tool that gives students the ability to go in the right direction with all they have learned, and Entrepreneurial Leadership is the engine. The engine powers all other parts of the learning and gives the car the boost to move forward. (LEAF staffulty, in conversation.)

Discussions with alumni and current students revealed that members of the learning community, including staffulty, leadership, and students, are approachable and open to feedback, suggestions, and ideas on how to improve the community at an individual level. Noted as missing was a feeling of feedback impacting the larger institutional policies. Clarity and communication around a more formalized and articulated process for suggesting, designing, and developing impactful institutional-level change is not yet visible for, or understood by, all.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Action research, reflection, and design-orientated thinking are essential parts of life at LEAF Academy. The drive to be different, think towards the future, and embrace ideation clearly drive the culture of learning at LEAF.

As noted in the school's Future Design Reflection, the need for consolidation and development of structures and systems to monitor and measure Impacts are prevalent. The reflection and details articulated about moving from a start-up school to a more sustainable, efficient learning community with institutional memory are aligned with the observations and reflection of the Visitors. This work should include establishing open and transparent communication around institutional decisions, criteria for evaluation of Impacts, and structures to ensure that engagement at an institutional level is accessible to all members of the learning community.

Learning Principle 7: Inclusiveness of Learning

Rating

Learning Communities are Working on it... (Building; establishing the 'how'): *The learning community has created a shared definition and vision of inclusiveness and diversity. The ramifications of this vision for all systems - from policies to instructional practice - are being explored. Approaches to meeting the needs of all learners within the learning community are being identified. Supporting structures and frameworks for inclusion and diversity are being developed. Ways to strengthen the learning community's culture in support of inclusion and diversity are being explored and acted upon.*

Observations

A policy on (or a formally articulated definition of) diversity, equity, and inclusion practices has not yet been produced as part of the LEAF Academy documentation. This is noted in the Internal Reflection and is acknowledged as a missing element of importance in conversations with various staff. Despite the lack of formal documentation, robust conversations and purposeful application of DEI practices were widely noted.

A parent shared that his daughter chose LEAF because it is an inclusive community which embraces students of various genders and sexual orientation. Parents additionally noted and praised LEAF Academy for its different approach to accepting students for who they are, providing a need-blind admissions process, and developing learners who are open to multiple perspectives and care deeply about their fellow community members. Parents also noted the incredible growth in character that they see in their children after just one or two years at LEAF.

Students and staff both widely noted that they chose LEAF because they were drawn towards the Mission of the school as well as because they were trying to get away from traditional conservative schooling and escape negative experiences with fitting in at other places.

Learning support, counseling, advisory, and English language support are areas that are expanding in both reach and impact. These elements of the learning community allow for students to receive differentiated support for a wide variety of learning, social, and emotional needs. Examples were noted of a student who was able to "test out" of a course as they already knew the content and could focus their time on another more impactful learning experience.

Students have access to Global Online Academy for additional support or extension on their learning. The Learning Support Department noted that more clarity is needed regarding how the students can be supported, and that clearer parameters will ensure that students' needs are better met. The admissions team is working on developing a questionnaire to give a better understanding of academic needs, as well as mental and physical health, so that students can be better served when they arrive.

The value of international students bringing new perspectives to the learning community was mentioned regularly in conversations with the Visitors. Efforts are being made with time and resources to further support international students and to improve integration in the learning community.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Noted in the school's Future Design Reflection is a need to reconcile the regional development focus of the school's Mission with the strong desire to develop a more internationally diverse community. All conversations with the Visitors on the topic of international students were consistent in nature from all stakeholders; the importance and value of international students is clear. Concrete actions now need to be taken to ensure the long-term plan of finding ways to attract, grow, and support the international community.

The Visitors also agree with next steps for LEAF that include further examination of curricular opportunities (literature, current events, global politics) through a lens of critical thinking and open-minded exploration of diverse perspectives. It is also recommended that any instances of racial or cultural aggressions, microaggressions, or biases be viewed as learning opportunities. Investments in specific training and support around these topics may be of value to the learning community in order to further strengthen access to vocabulary, protocols, and processes for addressing situations and growing through experience. Together, the community can venture into the uncomfortable spaces of unpacking bias, privilege, and systemic racism from local, regional, and international perspectives.

Learning Principle 8 - Governance & Leadership for Learning

What It Looks Like - GOVERNANCE

Learning Communities are Working on it... (Building; establishing the 'how'): The Governing Body is engaged in developing sustained ways to check for learning community performance aligned with stated norms and values. It is developing mechanisms to focus goal setting and strategic thinking on Learning Impacts and to ensure that innovation and creative thinking become the norm. The Governing Body is identifying ways to gather, analyze, and act on data and evidence of Impact.

What It Looks Like - LEADERSHIP

Learning Communities are Living it... (Implementing; defining 'metrics' of success): The decisions of leaders at all levels are driven by the shared purpose of achieving common Learning Impacts for all learners. Well-trained and learning-focused Senior and Middle Level Leaders collaborate in sustained ways to plan and execute change, with shared and communicated understandings on respective decision-making scope. Time, training, and tools support leaders to enable them to effectively lead learning. Plans for improving learning and achieving desired Impacts are systematically developed, implemented, communicated, and reviewed.

What It Looks Like - MANAGEMENT

Learning Communities are Working on it... (Building; establishing the 'how'): Management develops and tests new systems to better utilize people, time, and energy in support of Learning Impacts. Systems are being developed to deploy material resources in support of these priorities, and data management systems designed to evaluate success in achieving desired Learning Impacts are being created.

Observations

LEAF Academy governance, leadership, and management exhibit steady, unwavering commitment and dedication to the Mission and Core Values of the school and the LEAF organization. The Board is aligned in its support of the school's Mission and the members serve as mentors to leadership. As a working leadership and managerial group, all members appear confident and competent to challenge one another or to step back and give space for decision making and management when appropriate. The Governing Body shares a common vision of the school as a flagship for the LEAF organization.

Parents, students, and staffuly shared examples and stories of their appreciation for the Leadership Team's open communication and guidance. A student shared a memory of the first talk with Year 1 students who had just begun their LEAF journey: "The Principal said that the goal of the school is not to raise the next PM, but to seek and make change in some way, no matter what field that might be in ...that everyone can make their own way using what they learned at LEAF."

Financial challenges related to the pandemic were addressed openly with the staffuly. Each staffuly member who spoke to the Visitors about these difficult conversations noted the care, transparency, and individualized approach that was taken for each person when addressing financial and work reductions. Leadership managed a very difficult situation strategically and with care.

The members of governance, leadership, and management have identified alumni relationship management, connection, and interaction as a critical aspect of monitoring school success. The Mission of the school looks well beyond the graduation day of LEAF students, and it is acknowledged that development of networking tools and LEAF-specific applications will be key to monitoring the success of the LEAF Vision and Mission. A member of the Board explained to the Visitors, "we want to share the stories of graduates who have influenced business or public life, ethically and with success."

Conclusions and Next Steps

The Visitors commend the leaders at LEAF Academy for leading with vulnerability, openly taking on feedback, moving forward reflectively, and developing open and trustful relationships with the learning community.

As LEAF is a highly dynamic and design-oriented organization, it is important moving forward that systems and structures be put in place that allow for further transparency and access to data, discussions, and decision-making processes that impact learning. As the school aims to eventually scale up in size, it will be important that these practices are already embedded in the school's systems. Information that easily travels by word of mouth, or the personal access to school governance that is felt in a small-school environment, could become increasingly difficult to

manage as the size of the school increases. The Visitors would like to see leadership focus on the consolidation and establishment of systems for inclusive communication.

Future-proofing the school and its governance structures (as it is the flagship of the broader organization) are essential considerations.

Systems for measuring and monitoring long-term impacts on the region should be established and be ready for data collection as students grow and develop into contributing members of the wider society.

E - Learning Ecology

Learning Principles	School's Self-Assessment	Visitors' Assessment
<p>#9: Learning Space & Time The design of learning spaces and the structuring of learning time are driven and shaped by the learning community's intended Learning Impacts.</p>	Working On It	Working On It
<p>#10: Learning Community Respectful, healthy, ethical relationships and interactions create a true sense of community. Communication is honest and transparent. Community values are clearly stated, actively lived and define a distinct, sustained identity.</p>	Working On It	Living It

Learning Principle 9 - Learning Space & Time

Rating

Learning Communities are Working on it... (Building; establishing the 'how'): The learning community is in design mode, and a clear sense of the interdependent relationship between effective future-oriented learning and the design of learning space and time is emerging. Design principles are being articulated, and purposeful discussions are taking place with learners, teachers, and other stakeholders to build robust, sustainable solutions that support desired shifts in learning approaches. New designs are being explored and carefully planned, and managed prototypes are tested in preparation for more comprehensive later adoptions.

Observations

It is clear from the Visitors' observations that the Academy is conscious of how the use of time impacts learning, and they have designed and scheduled learning experiences in a manner that supports the learning goals. Devoting over six hours a week to both character development and Entrepreneurial Leadership during Years 1 and 2 reflects the

value that the school places on these classes, as well as the alignment between the Mission, the structure of learning time, and learning outcomes. Experiential weeks, off-sites, and Term E have been consciously sequenced and scheduled in order to promote learning outcomes. The daily schedule that begins later and ends later than traditional schools demonstrates the staffuly's understanding of adolescent sleep needs and their development.

Although the school is somewhat constrained by unique and small learning spaces, it has demonstrated flexibility and creativity in the use of these spaces. The students value the quirky learning spaces, and see these as flexible and able to be rearranged to suit the purpose of the learning. The Visitors witnessed the students taking ownership of the spaces and deciding how best to use each space given the learning goals. The Library appears small, but it is home to mother-tongue books as well as study and fiction in English, Slovak, and Czech. The students also have access to a digital collection.

The residence halls also reflect the community and culture of the school. Structures are in place to promote both academic and social development. Residential weekends and hall activities are planned and implemented collaboratively. The night study hours/quiet hours allow both autonomy and structure, enabling students to develop their own successful study habits. As identified by the school, students and staffuly would benefit from central gathering spaces for both large and small groups, as these are currently unavailable.

The plan for Leaf Academy Vistuk (LAV) is highly detailed and aligned with the desired Learning Impacts. There is evidence of how each space will be used by stakeholders and how the spaces will enhance learning. However, amongst the staffuly and students there is some expressed trepidation about the new campus. In conversation with the Visitors, a staffuly member said "do I really want to move to Vistuk (new campus)? No, but I will go because I believe in the school and what we are doing." Several community members are concerned about how leaving the center of the city will impact the learning and the relationships that have been developed with local institutions. These concerns have been acknowledged and addressed in the Internal Reflection.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The LEAF Academy community is commended for their intentional use of time to structure learning to align with the Vision and Mission of the school. In addition, all community members demonstrate innovation and flexibility with regard to space. As many of the space constraints will be addressed at the new campus, the following suggestions are for the interim time period.

The school might consider continuing to develop the Library, especially digital subscriptions, in order to enable the students to have access to a greater variety of resources in various languages. It also might consider obtaining more space in the neighborhood and/or in the residence hall for students and staffuly to gather, both as small groups and an entire community, in order to share and celebrate learning.

Learning Principle 10 - Learning Community

Rating

Learning Communities are Living it... (Implementing; defining 'metrics' of success): *The values of the learning community are known to and supported by all stakeholders, resulting in a values-based identity, a 'cycle of*

engagement,' and clearly communicated expectations. When there are substantive breaches of these values, appropriate action is taken. Major decisions and directions are communicated in accurate, transparent ways. The time, talent, connections, and economic capacity of community members are mobilized in support of the community's goals. Stakeholders feel welcomed and included, and are proud to be part of a vibrant, open, healthy learning community. Evidence of desired Impacts is regularly evaluated.

Observations

LEAF Academy's learning community and culture are at the center of who they are and how they perceive themselves. This was evident in each conversation with stakeholders. Parents, alumni, staffulty, and students all spoke to the caring community that is the core of the institution. The 4Es (ethics, excellence, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement) and 4Cs (creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration) are not just talked about, they are embodied in the way the students, staffulty, and other stakeholders interact and learn together. The structure of the boarding environment promotes a strong sense of community, collaboration, and ethics. As one student said, "LEAF is a small village, and we are all its inhabitants."

The role of the staffulty in creating a culture that reflects the school's values is clearly evident. One staffulty member described the benefits of being present in the dorms in order to support students both academically and socially, even if it wasn't a duty night. A student reported not feeling stressed because she knew she could always go to a staffulty member if she was confused or overwhelmed, and she would be supported. The conscious structure of pairing roommates in order to provide optimal emotional support also speaks to the systems in place to support the development of a shared sense of community, as do the weekly assemblies, hall meetings, clubs, and classes focusing on character development.

Communication is clear and transparent, and flows in all directions. Students expressed comfort in approaching staffulty and school leaders to make changes, and staffulty and leaders welcome these conversations. There are a number of systems in place to ensure that all members of the community are informed and all voices are heard. However, not all stakeholders are aware of the changes that are made as a result of this open communication.

Reflection is at the core of both the individual's and the institution's growth, and mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn and grow. There are both formal and informal channels for reflection. The success of this model depends on the high value of trust that all stakeholders demonstrate. When these values or expectations are breached, there are systems in place to take action that repair relationships and trust. The student-led CPC uses a restorative justice model in order to help students reflect on mistakes and make amends.

One area the school has identified as a point of tension amongst students is the use of languages other than English within the community. An office has been established to support foreign students with the transition to LEAF. Another area for growth that has been identified through reflection is diversity, equality, and inclusion. It was observed that these issues do come up and are addressed through classwork, clubs, and informal discussions, but there is no formalized system for addressing them.

In addition, many parents spoke to the transformative nature of this caring community: "I knew that they would be strong individuals, but I was amazed at the real responsibility they felt toward their community and the people they

shared their lives with." Another parent also indicated that the truly unique part of LEAF was the sense of community as well as a responsibility to help others. One Swedish alum was inspired by her time at LEAF Academy and has made Bratislava her permanent home in order to give back to the community. This concept of identity based on shared values is at the center of LEAF Academy.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The close relationship between students and staffulty is at the heart of what makes LEAF Academy unique. This is to be commended. As LEAF moves from start-up into the next phase of its existence, careful thought and planning should be given to how those unique relationships can be maintained as the school grows. In addition, as the population of students and staffulty increases in both numbers and diversity, systems that support both the Core Values of the community and the development of each individual should be designed. There is a persistent perception among some members of the community that while the response to feedback from individuals is strong, it is less robust for the institution as a whole. The Principal acknowledged this, and stated that while there were structures in place such as "town hall" meetings for students and parents and regular lunches with leadership to facilitate stakeholder feedback, there was room for improvement in how the institution communicates its responses to this feedback.

The Four C's

Conceptual Understanding

Evident

Rationale

The learning community has created a definition of learning that is coherent, broadly shared, understood, and promoted by all stakeholders. There is a mature understanding of the difference between Organizational Outputs and Learner Impacts, and between ends and means. The definition of learning is the result of purposeful reflection and discussion, involving all learning community constituencies. This understanding is aligned with and supported by research. The learning community's Conceptual Understanding of learning is evident in the language and actions of the community; it is shaping, driving, and underpinning all initiatives and projects designed to improve learning and individual student development.

The leadership, staff, and students at LEAF have a strong shared understanding of what learning looks like, and how learning at LEAF is the pathway to reach the Mission of creating positive change in Central Europe. The Academy is seen by all stakeholders as a place which is learner-centered, and in which all members of the community are engaged in the act of learning with and from each other. At the center of this understanding of learning is the shared value system of the 4Cs and 4Es which are embodied by all members of the community. In addition, leadership, staff, and students at the Academy are involved in constant reflection on the effectiveness of both outputs and Impacts and how they support the Mission and Vision of LEAF.

Commitment

Evident

Rationale

The learning community's aspirations, organizational development efforts, and communicated intentions provide consistent evidence of an alignment between operational and strategic priorities. A disciplined Commitment to focused priorities is shared and expressed by all constituencies of the learning community. The learning community has already designed plans – and is in the process of implementing them – that chart a course with the potential of transforming, in time, the organization's approach to learning. Commitment has been shown to capturing evidence of success through appropriate metrics and evidence of Impacts.

As the flagship of the broader LEAF organization, the Academy's Mission is to bring about change, and so its team is already dedicated to societal transformation, working on both the present and the future simultaneously. There is clear alignment between strategic priorities and daily operations, and the Board describes the ACE protocol as "an important reflective process that has allowed us to confront our vision, and our reality." Departments within the Academy meet often to reflect on current practice and plan future refinements as they chart the course of the organization's approach to learning, its Impact on their students, and how they can measure and quantify those. Stakeholder groups are committed to the vision of socio-economic change in the region that is brought about with integrity, and this is kept at the forefront of the daily decisions of the community members. Additionally, parents noted

the transformation in their own children, the Impact the school has had on them as individuals, and the Commitment they show to their communities locally, nationally, and internationally.

Capacity

Developing

Rationale

The learning community's alignment with the Four C's of Assessment lies between being "evident" and "not sufficiently evident." Some aspects in the learning community's Conceptual Understanding, Commitment, Capacity, and Competence may already have attained an advanced degree of development and maturity; others may be less well understood, practiced, or embedded in the learning community's culture. The "developing" stage acknowledges that the characteristics identified on either side of the assessment scale may not be evenly distributed in a learning community's fabric or be present to the precise degree described in the rubrics. In some cases, effective practices may be in place without having been recognized as such by the learning community as a whole. As a result, such practices are not likely to drive or lead to sustained, organization-wide change.

As a recent start-up, LEAF quickly moved from an ambitious vision to a high-functioning reality, doing so while weathering the setback of the COVID-19 pandemic. LEAF has the Capacity not only to launch and sustain its school, but to create positive change across its region. Operating with a vision for 35-year cycles of truly authentic educational and regional transformation, LEAF has built and supported Capacity intentionally to sustain growth across both the near and long term. All stakeholders are deeply committed to the school and its vision. From its inception, the Academy worked closely with an advisory team that is experienced in educational transformation. This team provides wisdom and support to the school's Leadership Team. The Leadership Team has crystal-clear vision, and likewise, the community is aware of its strengths and areas for growth. The parent body sees the Academy's value far beyond providing a great education for their children; they see LEAF as critical to the health and viability of the region, and so are very supportive of the school. The LEAF organization is aware of the need to diversify funding in order to increase the sustainability of the school's finances and raise the capital needed to build the new Vistuk campus. Funding is the only area of Capacity that is still developing and was not totally evident at the time of the Visit.

Competence

Evident

Rationale

The learning community has given careful thought to identifying institutional and individual Competencies needed for success. Thus, members of the Governing Body, leadership, and staff possess the requisite professional and personal mindsets and dispositions to lead the learning community on its journey towards transformation. Leadership effectively articulates and communicates the organization's aspirations and knows how to effectively manage and drive change in order to achieve them. There is awareness of what will likely drive change and, at the same time, a realistic understanding of the challenges to be overcome.

The leadership and staff at LEAF Academy articulate and emulate a clear understanding of the Mission and Vision. These serve the learning community as a well-understood framework and guiding force towards Impact and

are well aligned with the ACE Learning Principles. The LEAF Academy Mission and Vision inform and impact decision making, rhetoric, and program development. This shared understanding is apparent at all levels of decision making, and new team members are supported accordingly as they seek out opportunities to grow and develop in alignment with LEAF's community values. The leadership and staff at LEAF display both the intellectual and emotional Competence to move learning forward and drive change, and at the same time, they have a realistic understanding of the challenges that need to be overcome.

Major Learning Plans

The Major Learning Plans reflect the ambitious goal of the Academy to become a beacon for learning and to develop changemakers who will transform the region. The Academy divided the Major Learning Plans into three sections: **Community, Education Laboratory, and Sustainability and Growth**. Overall, the primary area to consider carefully as the institution moves forward is how the current model scales up while maintaining the sense of community, energy, and innovation that have characterized the initial years of the school.

In the **Community Learning Plan**, it is evident that the current staffulty and student body are prepared and enthusiastic to take the next steps. The Visitors believe that solidifying and consolidating signature programming should be at the core of this work. Defining which students the Academy can and cannot effectively serve, supporting international students as they join the community, and maintaining connections with the growing population of alumni will serve to strengthen LEAF's identity and sense of shared community.

The **Education Laboratory** proposal to focus on developing a mastery transcript is well aligned with LEAF's Core Values and Mission. One element is the creation of an "unlearning" curriculum. The design and implementation of this program with unique curricular elements in each grade will be both time- and energy-intensive for staffulty; however, this may serve as a keystone for future student autonomy and success. The second element of the **Education Laboratory** is to create a Center for Excellence with a focus on the 4Cs and 4Es. This center will allow both members of the community and those from outside to engage in entrepreneurship in order to contribute to a "higher quality of life and a more sustainable political and business future in Central Europe." Actualizing this goal will require substantial grants as well as a commitment from staffulty and students. Finally, the third element is the mastery transcript. The Visitors see this as a natural progression and a clear way for the students to exercise autonomy and authentically demonstrate their learning.

The **Sustainability and Growth Plan** is multifaceted and highly ambitious. In the short term, it looks to enhance the learning experience at the current location by obtaining additional student-use spaces and accessing sports facilities. In the longer term, it is looking to increase the impact of LEAF by scaling up the program by obtaining additional funding streams, developing a day student program, adding a dual-track diploma, and moving to a new purpose-built campus. The Visitors applaud the lofty goals and drive that LEAF has demonstrated. As the institution increases in scale, having clear and formalized systems and offerings will be essential. As time and energy of staffulty and students are not infinite, it is important to monitor the timeline of the Major Learning Plans for Sustainability and Growth and adjust as needed.

Next Steps & Actions

LEAF Academy has developed insightful, impactful, and often ambitious Major Learning Plans that are appropriate to the current stage of the school's development. As the Academy begins to enact its plans, the Visitors encourage it to:

- stay true to the Mission and Core Values of the school and the greater LEAF organization;
- solidify and consolidate signature programming;

- build data creation and analysis systems that measure the impact LEAF is having on students and alumni, and over the coming years, the impact they are having on society as a whole;
- build the Education Laboratory so as to create a Center for Excellence with a focus on the 4Cs and 4Es;
- further develop and implement the mastery transcript to authentically represent how learning is demonstrated, enhance the AP program, and strengthen university and college applications;
- implement the Sustainability and Growth Plan with care not to break what has already been built when scaling up;
- continue to develop alternate revenue streams and fiscal structures such as reserve funds in order to raise capital and ensure long-term sustainability.

Timing of Next Learning Principles Visit

The next Learning Principles Visit should be in the fall of 2025.

Concluding Comments and Date

The Visitors have no doubt that LEAF Academy is a very special school. During the Visit, the Visitors observed 48 different lessons, Leadership Team and Advisory Board meetings, made three visits to the residential halls, talked to the majority of staffulty several times, and met with students, alumni, and parents.

In many ways the Visitors feel that the community is best able to speak to the qualities of LEAF:

"It's like a family for him. I think he found happiness there." (parent)

"He grew up initially very fast; I am amazed." (parent discussing character development)

"They have been given an opportunity no other public school can give." (parent)

"The school is preparing students to study abroad. We worry that they will leave and not come back, but it works because they want to come back and give back here." (parent about improving Central Europe)

"The vision is higher quality of life in Eastern Europe. This is central to what Entrepreneurial Learning is doing. They have to produce something that has real impact." (the Entrepreneurial Learning team)

"We want to change the society where we function. Our kids will deal with it. We need to invest in our kids now. LEAF provokes them to think, to think out of the box -- dare the system; think critically; test borders -- they are doing things we were not doing when we were younger." (parent)

"Learning is life, not classes." (Upper School student)

LEAF Academy knows exactly what it is and why it does what it does. It is worth repeating comments made when describing the school's context: "There are few schools that are more closely aligned with their core Mission; indeed,

almost everything that happens at LEAF Academy has been deliberately implemented, by design, to live its Mission and support the greater work of the LEAF organization."

It is remarkable that the Academy has come so far in such a short period of time. The school has only been operating for less than five years, two of which have been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has not slowed LEAF down. At times when reviewing the Academy's reflections, the Visitors felt that at this point in the school's development it is further along the transformational journey called for by the ACE protocol than it gives itself credit for. This is a community that will always be "thinking about it" and "working on it," but it does not necessarily follow that they are not "living it," or indeed moving towards "what if...?".

As has been mentioned elsewhere in this report, the culture and Core Values are at the center of who the members of the learning community at LEAF Academy are and how they perceive themselves. Indeed, the Visitors feel that LEAF serves as an example of what can be achieved if one stays true to a truly transformative Mission.

One member of the Advisory Group stated that "You are a school. Stop trying to save the world, stay true to your Mission and be a school." While the Visitors agree with this sentiment, they also recognize that in no small part saving the world, or at least LEAF's corner of it, is indeed central to the Mission lived by the school.

The Visitors thank the students, staff, parents, alumni, and members of the Board and leadership that they had the pleasure of meeting during this virtual Visit. Special thanks to "Sapo" for hosting us and making the whole team feel welcome, Jana Klagova who worked tirelessly on the logistics and schedules for the Visit, and to the "avatars" who allowed the Visitors to roam the school as a face, in a phone, on a tripod. This is a true learning community working together to make a difference.

"They [LEAF Academy students] will change the society we live in. It is too late for us, but our kids will do it. (parent, in conversation).

October 8, 2021