

An International Member Connection, December 2023

Fellow International Christian Educator,

My teammates and I are just back from Indonesia where we concluded the International Christian Educator Conference (ICEC) Asia for 580 or so attendees from 53 Christian schools from 17 countries around the world. We came back home with our hearts full, friendships renewed, and plenty of smiles. Allow me to share just two personal highlights from the conference...

In the final keynote, Mr. James Riady told us, "Even the smallest Christian school is the world's best school!" Riady, an Indonesian Christian businessman, went on to explain how schooling that is integrated with a biblical worldview is the very best education a child can receive and one that blesses families, communities, even nations – yes, the best in the world! This coming from an individual who has invested his time and talents into a foundation that has started many Christian schools, small and large, across his nation. I trust that you too, dear Christian educator, understand that you are engaged in one of the world's best schools and one of the world's noblest callings.

My other highlight was a report we heard from the platform from a very courageous brother in Christ who leads one of those small, world's best, Christian schools in a closed-access country – name, school, and location withheld. This brother shared his willingness to suffer, if need be, to provide his students with a Christian education in his underground school because the love of Jesus compels him to do so.

To hear that his classrooms were scattered around his city by grade level in discreet locations so they could be moved if needed, inspired all of us to pray for our friend “O”, his family, and his school and to press on into our own callings with joy.

I left Indonesia blessed. And the good news is that we get to do it all over again in [March 2024 in Prague](#). Will you join us?

I wish you all a blessed Merry Christmas and a restful holiday.

Blessings upon you,

Tim for the international school team.

Tim Shuman, Senior Director, International Division, for the [International School Team](#)

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Your international schools team.

[Tim Shuman, Senior Director, International Division](#)

[Chealsea Allen, International Schools Activity & Events Coordinator](#)

[Michael McNabb, Director of Accreditation, International Division](#)

[Kimberly Park, Accreditation Specialist, International Division](#)

[Caitlin Taylor, Administrative Assistant, International Division](#)

Merry Christmas, ACSI Family!



Click the image above to view a message from ACSI President and CEO, Dr. Larry Taylor.

COMING UP

- **REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN** for [ICEC Europe, 20-23 March 2024](#) in Prague, CZ. Book your rooms **NOW** at [Vienna House by Wyndham](#). We are looking forward to a wonderful team of keynoters as well as peer-to-peer workshops. Submit your [workshop proposal](#) today. Check out the keynote lineup here: [ICEC Europe](#), each one an author.
- **Stay tuned for our next International School Leaders Conference (ISLC) Europe 2025.**
- [PFO2Go](#), our online course for new hires at international schools remains open for your participation year-round. If PFO2Go is new to you, please [check out our FAQs](#).



- ACSI's most recent posts and resources:
 - [Good Growth: A Tool for Sustaining Your School's Vision](#) – Shaun Brooker
 - [Incredible Beginnings: A Glimpse at Our Elementary Chapels](#) – Nate Johnson
 - [Leading by Living](#) – Jay Ferguson
 - [Character or Compliance-You Choose](#) – Dave Hill
- Moms and dads, I highly recommend the video series (also podcast) “Rooted Parenting” and this episode in particular on [Keeping Technology in its Place](#) hosted by our international school friend Natalie Mann. Natalie and her husband Matt Mann lead an international member school together they know what your life abroad is all about.
- Peter Greer's latest blog post caught my attention. [The Real Reason Behind Writing Lead with Prayer](#). Peter will be a keynoter at ICEC Europe in March 2024.
- Michael and Kim Essenburg love international Christian schools and want to see them flourish.
 - [Teachers, what do you want your students to learn?](#)
 - [How can you deepen shared understanding of your international Christian school's Christ-centered purpose statements?](#)
- Have you ever noticed how the closer one gets to the equator the spicier the food gets? It might seem counterintuitive, but there is some science behind it. [Do Colder or Warmer Places Eat More Spicy or Bland Foods](#).

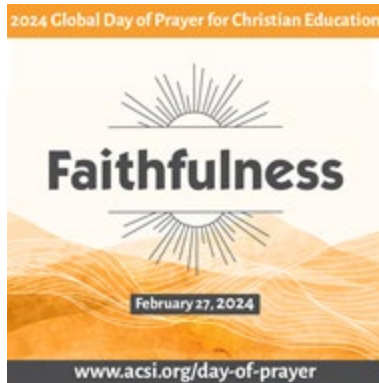
- And speaking of food (and Christmas), [these holiday recipes by American Kindergartners](#) made me laugh (don't try these recipes at home, haha.)

HEADSHIP OPENINGS ONLY:

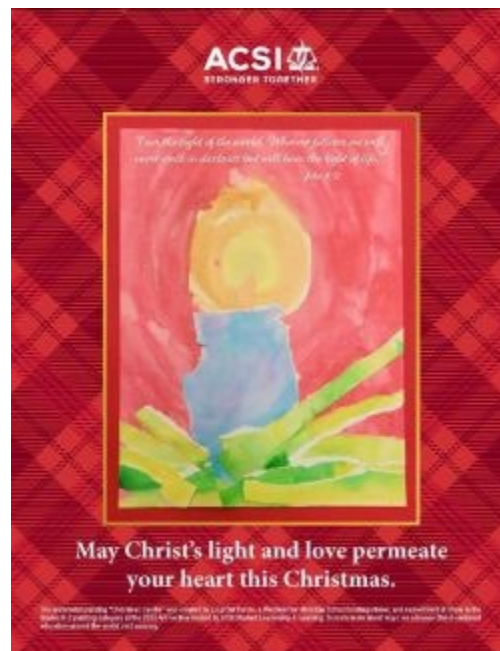
- Cairo Covenant School (starting June 2025), Egypt. [Learn more here.](#)
- Christian English School, Italy. [Learn more here.](#)
- Faith International Academy, Philippines. [Learn more here.](#)
- International Academy of St. Petersburg, RU. [Learn more here.](#)
- International Christian School of Vienna, Austria. [Learn more here.](#)
- International Christian School, Pyeongtaek, South Korea. [Learn more here.](#)
- International Christian School, Uijeongbu, South Korea. [Learn more here.](#)
- Kigali International Community School, Rwanda. [Learn more here.](#)
- Mountainview Christian School, Indonesia. [Learn more here.](#)
- Rain Forest International School, Cameroon. [Learn more here.](#)
- Sekolah Pelita Harapan, Lippo Village, Indonesia. [Learn more here.](#)

If you have a head of school opening coming up, please let me know. Be sure to check our [member school vacancy page](#) as well as the [ACSI Job Board](#). If you are interested in a position at an international school, check out the latest non-USA opportunities [here](#). Two international schools took advantage of the [December 2023 Job Flash](#). Learn how you too can get your need posted to thousands [here](#), look for Job Flash.





[Other in-person or virtual events >](#)



The flame burned brightly on its watercolor backdrop—a symbol of hope, truth, and peace. Luigi, a kindergartener at Westminster Christian School, held up his artwork and his best-of-show ribbon with pride.

Attendees of Westminster Christian's Spring Fine Arts Night curled through the halls of the school, admiring student paintings, drawings, and cut-outs. Many of the student art pieces exhibited were top placers in the ACSI Art Festival, which the school participated in online.

Westminster has participated in the ACSI Art Festival for several years, but this particular year resulted in a special display of students glorifying God through their artistic talent.

ACSI Director of Student Leadership & Learning, Emily Pigott, shared a bit of history surrounding this popular event.

“The ACSI Art Festivals have been going on for more than 30 years,” she said.

“They are designed to encourage fine art education, promote creativity and expression, and ultimately, to glorify Jesus. We typically have about 150 schools, both U.S. and international, participate.”

Westminster Christian School, an accredited K-12 ACSI member, looks forward to participating in the event each year.

The school’s elementary school art teacher, Jessi Luecht, shared that the school community has repeatedly chosen to host the art festival because it celebrates and affirms students as they discover their God-given gifts and abilities.

“As students create their works of art, they are able to see how they bring something unique and special to each piece because God has created them with intentionality as special and unique individuals,” she said. “As an educator, it is my joy to encourage students to grow and develop as artists and point them back to their Creator.”

Students at Westminster truly thrive in their fine arts class. In fact, Luigi’s art submission for the ACSI Arts Festival has been featured on the 2023 ACSI Christmas card. The recipients of the Christmas card, both digitally and in print, include more than 2,000 schools.

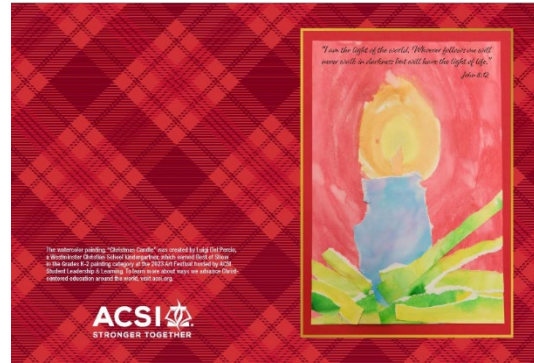
Head of School Carlye Hay shared how proud she is of Luigi.

"We are so proud of Luigi and his openness to sharing the gifts God has given him for His glory," she said. "At Westminster, we celebrate each of our students as individuals created in God's image. It is a joy to be a part of what God is doing in our students and families' lives and hearts."

Luigi is excited to see his art featured on the ACSI Christmas card and shared a bit about his best-of-show "Christmas Candle" painting. "The artwork means the light of God during Christmas. My favorite thing about art is that I get to be creative, and my favorite thing about Christmas is that I get to celebrate Jesus's birthday."

Luecht, a proud teacher, is excited for Luigi and his family.

"Art provides an opportunity for students to explore not only the process of creating, but also the different ways to communicate and express thoughts, ideas, and emotions in their work. I am so proud of Luigi and enjoy each day I get to disciple these precious students for Christ."



ACSI Introduces Vision 2030

ACSI is introducing a new vision for Christ-centered education. Vision 2030 is the next extension of the foundational strategic plan created in 2018 featuring the pillars of Advance, Access, and Advocacy and the six supporting anchors of prayer and God's Word, IT, HR, Communications, Thought Leadership and Finance/Advancement. ACSI is moves forward in bold and innovative ways not only responding to critical needs today but planning for the future of Christ-centered education tomorrow.

With many of the established goals from the 2018 Strategic Plan completed in 2022, the ministry leadership sought God's direction of how to go deeper between now and 2030. After 18 months of prayer and dialogue with Senior Staff, Leadership, All Staff, and through critical conversations including industry voices, growth initiatives were created.

In October, the ACSI Board endorsed these initiatives and encouraged the organization to move forward with more detailed planning. Vision 2030 proposes four unrelated growth initiatives including:

- 1) New Fields for Ministry—positioning ACSI to serve newly ripened fields of opportunity for children to access Christ-centered education.
- 2) Missional Partnerships—connecting ACSI with other organizations to leverage personnel and resources together for a greater missional impact.
- 3) Educational Resources & Programs—addressing the need for high-quality, biblically based educational resources and programs across the world.
- 4) Teacher and Leader Pipeline—addressing the current worldwide teacher shortage, as well as meeting future needs for more credentialed teachers and qualified leaders who are biblically trained for educational ministry.

In the coming months, ACSI will continue to seek and pray for God's continued wisdom and discernment as the organization crafts this God-sized vision into tangible tactics driven by God-honoring stewardship. Please join ACSI in praying for Vision 2030 knowing the work now will create momentum for the days to come. ACSI is excited for what the future holds knowing WHO holds the future.

Leadership U "A Blessing" for Mentor and Scholar Pairing

by: Josh Worden

When Brandon Kline was approached by his head of school at Evansville Christian School in Indiana about participating in Leadership U, he knew it could be a valuable resource.

Leadership U is a 14-month program that provides support and learning experiences for early education leaders, principals, and new heads of school. The program is designed for people like Kline, who is in his second year as a middle school principal.

Kline was hesitant about committing to the program amidst a busy schedule, but he agreed to join. He was paired with a mentor, Tom Hughes, who serves as a Field Director in ACSI's Eastern Division.

"When we were first interviewing, I said, 'Tom, I'm not really sure if I have time for this.' And actually, it's been an extremely valuable resource," Kline said,

"When we were first interviewing, I said, 'Tom, I'm not really sure if I have time for this.' And actually, it's been an extremely valuable resource," Kline said. "Not only meeting with Tom but in terms of being able to review content that is sent out as far as different articles and resources to help us gather more information to be able to make wiser decisions."

The Leadership U program began with a week-long residency in Kansas City, Missouri, (at the Flourishing Schools Institute), and will conclude with a similar experience at the Leadership U training and graduation in Plano, Texas, in March of 2024.

"I really enjoyed the opportunity to work with other Leadership U mentees and mentors and to be able to talk to them, develop relationships, connections, and really just see how other schools are performing," Kline recounted of the first institute.

Kline meets regularly over Zoom with Hughes, who casts a wide net in the ways he provides support.

“We cover everything from strategic planning to communication skills, what’s an effective team, what’s a dysfunctional team, and conflict resolution,” Hughes said. “The whole gamut of leadership, we cover.”

Kline says he has trusted members of his staff in Indiana that he discusses decisions with, but he finds it helpful to have a voice outside of his school to run ideas by.

“It’s been great to talk with him and share my decision-making, changes that I was looking into and investigating about student behavior, communication with parents, and so forth,” Kline said. “Tom’s done a great job as far as listening, asking ‘what are your thoughts within that?’ and then either affirming or also providing his insights. So I find that to all be very beneficial.”

Kline’s motivation in seeking out counsel came directly from Scripture. Jesus had His disciples and they sat there at His feet in order to learn,” he said. “If you don’t, especially as first-year teachers or administrators, look up and have someone to mentor you and lead you, you may get there eventually, but you’ll have a lot more difficulties along the way. To have a mentor who not only is leading you and guiding you but is also doing that from a Biblical perspective is just a blessing.”

Hughes said his motivation to give back is like other types of giving that are promoted more often, like tithing or serving at church. He believes that generosity should extend to helping others in a professional context.

“Brandon and people like him, they’re right there with the students and teachers and board members,” Hughes said. “They’re there in the heat of the battle. Anything we can do to help people, that’s what we’re called to do.”

The program is only about halfway done, but Kline has already made up his mind that his decision to join was a good one.

“I would encourage any leader in Christian education to take the time to invest in a leader and a mentor, both ways,” he said. “Leadership U provides that investment, and that investment will always be worth it. I’m very thankful that I’ve chosen to take that investment and that Tom agreed to be my mentor. And I want to come out the other side a lot better for it.”

For those interested in joining Leadership U as a mentor or as a scholar, applications for the 2024-2025 cohort are currently open. For more information, please visit www.acsi.org/professional-development/leadership-u/. If you would like to speak with a staff member, please contact the ACSI Professional Development Department at Leadership_University@acsi.org.

Reflections of a School Counselor

by: Nancy Gillespie, Grove City Christian School

Perhaps the thing I have learned to value the most in my role as a school counselor is the importance of collaboration and relationship building. Having a supportive administration and a cooperative staff is imperative to a healthy school counseling program. It is when we work together that we can best meet the needs of students in the classroom, on the athletic field, and in the halls as they navigate their way through life.

In Scripture, 1 Corinthians 12:18-20 offers an excellent illustration to point out the importance of the many different parts that need to work together to maximize the efforts of the body: “But in fact, God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts but one body.” In the same way, each part of the Christian school.

In the same way, each part of the Christian school needs to work together to maximize the educational experience for students. Across the world, people are faced with challenging circumstances and difficult days. This is where we have the amazing opportunity to stand out as a school. As a Christian school, we offer a message of hope, love, goodness, restoration, and peace.

***Excerpt taken from ACSI's Leading Insights: Mental Health and Well-Being. To read this complete article and other articles by practitioners, experts, and researchers as they share valuable insights and practical strategies for attending to mental health needs and promoting well-being in Christian education purchase Leading Insights: Mental Health and Well-Being on the [PDP store](#).*



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