**Reflections on 5 Years of Headship at BISB**

As I come to the end of 5 years of Headship at the British International School of Boston, I have been asked to reflect on this time for the Bulldog Inquirer. For me, the immediate feeling I had that made me want to work at BISB is still the one that I hold most dear- that is the real sense of community within the school. This has been highlighted by the Transition and Graduation ceremonies that have just taken place at BISB. It was a real community process that brought the whole school together and the wonderful outcome for the students and their families is testament to the sense of teamwork we take a great pride in at BISB.

I vividly remember arriving in Boston for my interview a little over 5 and a half years ago, not really knowing much about Boston, but knowing that it is the center of the educational world. Having been in education all of my life and being a ‘life-long learner’, I knew professionally it was a place I wanted to continue my career, I just needed to know if I shared the same outlook and philosophy as the school. It was very clear to me walking through the front door that BISB was a nurturing school that valued individuality and was truly inspirational and international. However, it was the palpable feeling of warmth I felt from everyone I met that really made me believe that this was a place in which I would love to work and at the same time add value to the amazing progress the school was making. I was therefore delighted when I was offered the position of Headship at the school.

During my tenure at BISB we have implemented a huge amount of changes, had many successes and have also had time to reflect and refine our practices to ensure we offer the highest standards of education for all. Some of the changes have been very big- such as the expansion into the STEAM Center- but it is also the small changes that we make on a daily basis that I think has been the secret of our success. I always remember a quote from Clive Woodward, ex- England Rugby coach who said that if the team did 100 things 1% better they would be world champions, and that for me encapsulates everything we have tried to achieve at BISB. We have welcomed feedback and asked parents to be actively involved in the educational journey and in this way ensured that every student makes progress and continues to achieve.

It is also the unrelenting focus upon the acquisition of skills for the students that has been vital in the high standards we constantly pursue. This has set us aside from many schools in a very strong and competitive Boston market. As staff we remind each other that we are preparing students for jobs that do not yet exist, and to solve problems that the world does not know are problems yet, and for this reason we created the BISB Learner Profile to ensure that in every lesson we focus upon the skills young people need to be successful in the twenty first century. We teach the students to be: balanced, caring, communicators, inquirers, knowledgeable, open-minded, principled, thinkers, reflective, risk-takers. We know these are the transferable skills they will need in the future and the confidence in what we are doing as a school is in the very best interests of the students is the driving force for every teacher.

As a historian and a leader, I am fully aware that fundamentally education has changed little in the last 150 years yet I am reminded of the words of Jean Piaget, ‘The principle goal of education is to create men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done.’ We have therefore tried to push the boundaries that have existed in education and focus more on the creative holistic aspect of education. In the words of Ed Catmull, ‘Creativity has to start somewhere. Don’t be afraid to fail, mistakes are part of creativity. Failure is an essential aspect of the learning process.’ We are fully aware that it is hard for many students, but the resilience shown by BISB students of all ages has been astonishing. However, it is not only the practical creativity we have embodied but the moral purpose as well. As Maria Popova states, ‘The ability to connect the seemingly unconnected, and meld existing knowledge into new insights about some element of how the world works. That’s practical creativity. Then there’s moral creativity: to apply that skill towards some kind of wisdom on how the world ought to work.’ It is the extra-curricular offer that I am also proud of. Students at BISB truly have a global experience and realize the privilege we have daily and understand that our role is more than an individual one, but to strive to make the world a better place as well.

This past year has certainly been an extremely stressful time, but early on we decided that we would do all we could to ensure we were open, as this was the right thing for the students. We have learned a lot and overcome many barriers and for this we should be exceptionally proud.

I have on occasions experienced the most difficult times in my professional life at BISB, but also some of the most rewarding. I will be leaving BISB a more resilient leader, with a clear philosophy on what I believe education should be and a greater understanding of how to achieve this. For that I am truly grateful for my experience. However, more than this is the experience I felt every morning greeting the students as they arrived in school and the true excitement and love they had for education made every moment worthwhile. If I formed a small part in giving young people better opportunities and equipping them for life then I leave very proud of what we achieved.

In the words of Roger Lewin, ‘Too often we give children answers to remember rather than problems to solve’.

I wish all of you and the school every success and happiness in the future.