

# ECIS Intentionally Small Schools Special Interest Group

## Annual Executive Summary 2023/2024

### Steering Committee Members

- Jeremy Majeski (Chair), Frankfurt International School
  - Wayne Johnson, International School of Belgium
  - Alison Stark, International School Breda
  - Owen Murphy, Bavaria International School
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### Overview

The 2023/2024 academic year marked a period of meaningful dialogue, deep reflection, and exciting growth for the ECIS Intentionally Small Schools Special Interest Group. Our community continues to grow in both reach and relevance, providing a space for leaders of small international schools to connect over shared challenges and unique opportunities. Through virtual gatherings and in-person engagement, we have centered our efforts on building collective wisdom around how intentionally small schools can thrive.

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### Highlights & Events

#### 1. Virtual Roundtable: *Big Outcomes – How to Manage Admissions and Marketing in an Intentionally Small School*

 22 November 2023

 Online

This virtual roundtable brought together school leaders from the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia to examine the dual-role nature of admissions and marketing—often managed by the school principal or a small team in intentionally small schools.

Panelists shared their experiences and strategies for enrollment management, brand storytelling, and fostering mission-aligned growth. The event highlighted how small schools must be both nimble and intentional in communicating their value to prospective families, often without the resources or scale of larger institutions.

The discussion was highly practical, and participants walked away with insights into creating sustainable marketing pipelines, improving retention, and aligning messaging with mission.

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## 2. Virtual Keynote & Conversation: *What's Our Learning Purpose? No, Really!*

 12 March 2024

 Online

In this powerful and thought-provoking session, internationally respected educator Kevin Bartlett—founder of the Common Ground Collaborative and early leader of the IB PYP—invited participants to step back from the daily noise of school leadership to explore a fundamental question: *“What are we really trying to do here?”*

The session was grounded in a proposed answer: *“To nurture learners who can make sense of the world—and help the world make more sense.”* Kevin introduced the concept of a Portrait of a Learner, and participants explored how intentionally small schools can align curriculum, school culture, parent engagement, hiring, and professional learning to support this vision.

Interactive breakout discussions allowed leaders to share how their schools are navigating this purpose-driven transformation, and the unique role that small schools can play in leading systemic change.

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## 3. In-Person Roundtable: ECIS Leadership Conference, Windsor

 Windsor, UK

 April 2024

At the ECIS Leadership Conference, the ISS SIG facilitated a roundtable discussion. Participants engaged with one another around the challenges and freedoms that come with scale, and the importance of maintaining clarity, adaptability, and vision.

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## Looking Ahead

A major milestone in Spring 2024 was our decision to launch the first Leadership Retreat for Leaders of Intentionally Small Schools, scheduled for January 2025. Planning is now underway. This retreat will be a dedicated space for deeper collaboration, renewal, and vision-building for those at the helm of small schools. Our goal is to create not just an event, but a touchstone experience for leaders working in unique and complex school settings.

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## Closing Thoughts

The ECIS Intentionally Small Schools SIG remains deeply committed to fostering community, courageous leadership, and forward-thinking practice. As we look to 2024/2025, we are energized by the momentum of this past year and the ongoing potential of small schools to

make a big impact. Thank you to all our members and supporters for helping build this space of shared purpose and professional growth.