

April 24th, 2024

Dear Granadino Community,

### **Overview of the Cognia Accreditation Visit**

We are thrilled to announce that last week, from April 14th to 17th, Colegio Granadino very successfully hosted the Cognia International Accreditation Review Team. The visit allowed the Cognia Review Team to engage deeply with various stakeholders. Through classroom observations, focus group interviews, and reviews of our documented evidence and reports, the team gleaned comprehensive insights into our educational practices and learning environment.

We excelled in demonstrating our capacity for continuous improvement and they considered that our mission truly drives the work of our school. The initial report highlighted several strengths, such as our robust culture of learning where both Spanish and English languages and cultures are developed and supported, and the integration of 21st-century skills into our classrooms and curriculum. The use of standards-based grading was noted as a pivotal practice in empowering our community to effectively monitor and support student learning. Our teachers received recognition for their collaborative planning, leadership, sharing of best practices, and mentoring of one another.

During classroom visits, the team observed high levels of student engagement and active learning. The effective use of flexible grouping and formative assessments were particularly noticeable. It was noted that positive relationships between students and adults foster a respectful and supportive learning environment and that students have an open door to express ideas, suggestions, and initiatives (student voice). It was highlighted that classrooms were well-organized, and student behavior was well-managed, contributing to a nurturing educational atmosphere. It was mentioned that frequent grade-level and departmental meetings help tailor instruction to a diverse range of student needs. The Cognia Review Team remarked that the many leadership opportunities for teachers, parents, and students enhance our sense of community and shared responsibility. Furthermore, it was noted that the school is committed to retaining high-quality staff and developing leadership capabilities at all levels. Finally, our Data Panel Dashboard that collects, analyzes, and disaggregates data was highly complimented and recognized by the Cognia Review Team as a significant improvement since the last visit.

The report also suggested areas for further development, such as the importance of following through with our new strategic planning phases, expanding the use of technology in learning, reinforcing our data-driven decision-making processes, and ensuring that professional development will be a strategy for areas of the new strategic plan as well as driven by data and evaluated for effectiveness. These insights will guide our efforts to sustain and enhance the quality of education we provide.

We will be receiving a formal report in the coming months that will go into much more depth. This report will have ratings for thirty different standards in the key characteristic domains of Culture of Learning, Leadership for Learning, Engagement of Learning, and Growth in Learning. There will also be a narrative describing themes that relate to these key characteris areas. In addition, we will receive an overall Index of Education Quality (IEQ) score that rates our institution and can be used as a benchmark in relation to other Cognia schools in the network. Once we receive this report, we plan to share a more detailed summary of the findings with the community.

As the General Director, I extend a heartfelt congratulations to our exceptional team here at Colegio Granadino! Collaboration, teamwork, dedication, leadership, community, and a commitment to excellence are key themes present here at Granadino that the Cognia Review Team highlighted. As we celebrate this milestone together as a community, let us also renew our commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in all that we do. Together, we will build on our strengths and address the areas for growth as highlighted in the Cognia report.



### **Key Leadership Changes for 2024/2025**

As we approach the final stretch of this successful school year, it is important to share with the community that there will be a number of key leadership changes next year. The transition plan is already in progress and we are working hard so that there may be a seamless and supportive transition.

As we communicated earlier, our Secondary Principal, Ms. Marcela Diaz, will begin a new leadership position at a top international school in Colombia in July 2024. Although we will greatly miss Ms. Diaz and are deeply thankful to her for her seven years of dedicated and fruitful service to our community, we are happy for her new career opportunity and wish her all the best in her new endeavor. We take this opportunity to sincerely thank Ms. Diaz for her exemplary leadership and for her many contributions that got us to where we are today as a school.

After a thorough process in which we initially interviewed a variety of candidates, we decided to have three candidates move to the final round where these candidates were interviewed by various stakeholder groups. All three candidates that were in the final round were strong and credible candidates who each brought diverse talents and value to the table. However, one candidate clearly stood out during the process and in fact won over 70 percent of the final vote from the stakeholders who participated in the process. This candidate was Mr. Kenneth Horrocks. For those of you who were at the General Assembly, you are aware that we have hired Mr. Horrocks for this important position and he is very excited to join our team and eagerly contribute to *Making the Difference!*



Mr. Horrocks has been an international educator and leader for over twenty years in international schools around the world in six different countries. The last twelve of these years have been spent in Latin America. In Latin America, Mr. Horrocks has

served in both teaching and leadership roles at elite international schools in El Salvador, Costa Rica, and most recently in Brazil. Mr. Horrocks holds a Masters Degree in Educational Leadership, Teaching Certifications in Biology and the Sciences, and a Bachelor Degree in Environmental Science.

Mr. Horrocks is currently the Head of Science as well as the Director of Experiential Learning Programs at the American School of Rio do Janeiro. In fact, Mr. Horrocks is known throughout the Latin America network of international schools as an expert in experiential learning and he has recently led workshops for AMISA (American International Schools in the Americas) at international conferences in both Guatemala and in Paraguay. He is a dynamic and innovative educator with strong interpersonal skills, solid values, a student-centered focus, and an innate talent to build and develop strong teams. We are confident that Mr. Horrocks will bring great contributions to our community and we are very happy and proud to have him join our leadership team.

Last month we also communicated that our Director of Curriculum, Ms. Gloria González, will be retiring after an amazing thirty-six years of dedicated service to our community. We will greatly miss Ms. González and we are deeply thankful for her many years of dedicated and productive service to Granadino and for positively touching the lives of so many members of our community over the last thirty-six years. Ms. Gloria spent over three and a half decades entrenched in *making the difference* and we know that her legacy will continue to live on here in the years to come.

As was announced at the General Assembly, with the important support of the Board of Directors, we have decided to create a new role entitled the Director of Teaching and Learning. This new role will be robust in that in addition to being responsible for curriculum vertically through the school, it will also encompass leading instructional practices, assessment systems and practices, staff professional development, program evaluation, professional learning communities, and overall school improvement planning. In addition, this new role will play a critical role in aligning the different sections of the school in all things teaching and learning as well as support our continued focus on rigor, high expectations, and differentiated learning in all subject areas.



We have made the decision to move Ms. Lauren Hegarty into this key role of Director of Teaching and Learning for the next school year. Ms. Hegarty brings with her over seventeen years of educational experience with thirteen of these years in international schools in Colombia as well as six very successful years as our Elementary Principal here at Granadino. Most recently, she served as the Chair of our Cognia Accreditation Process and did an absolutely outstanding job writing the key reports for the visit. She magnificently synthesized our overall improvement journey in the executive summary, standards self-assessment report, and different analysis reports as well as clearly described our findings and possible next steps for improvement in an impeccable manner.

Ms. Hegarty strives for excellence in everything she does. She was her high school class valedictorian in a class of 460 students, studied Elementary Education on a full scholarship at the University of Nebraska in the Honors Program and graduated Summa Cum Laude. She has a K-12 Specialization & Certification for Teaching English as a Second Language, and holds a Masters Degree in Learning Design and Leadership with an emphasis in New Learning and New Literacies (media, technology). She also has an International Principal Certificate from the Principal Training Center.

In addition to being an Elementary Principal at Granadino and a classroom teacher in both schools in the USA and in Colombia, Ms. Hegarty was a K-8 literacy coach for four years at another international school in Colombia and in this role worked side by side with the Director of Teaching and Learning there. Ms. Hegarty's leadership skills, high intelligence, organizational abilities, vast experience, solid values, and genuine work ethic will be extremely valuable to us in this new role. We are very excited to have Ms. Hegarty continue with us in this critical role where she can assist us in aligning all sections of the school, support the section principals with all aspects of teaching and learning, and lead our academic improvement journey.

With Ms. Lauren moving into a new role at Granadino, we obviously needed to look for her replacement. For this particular role, we decided to look internally at our talented team. After conducting interviews and consulting in a collective manner, we decided that our current second grade teacher, Mr. Peter Laskaris, has the leadership talent and skills, institutional values, solid character, and overall experience to be the next Elementary Principal at Colegio Granadino.



Mr. Laskaris has successfully taught in Elementary School for over 20 years. Mr. Laskaris has a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education, he is a licensed teacher in the State of Massachusetts, and he is currently enrolled in a Masters of Education in Educational Leadership and Administration through Worcester State University. In addition, Mr. Laskaris has proven leadership experience as the Director of a highly successful Summer Program for over 10 years. Under his leadership, the program grew immensely and he recently led a team of fifty staff members who worked with around 400 hundred students from the ages of Preschool to 6th grade. This is a testament to his exceptional ability to build and lead teams.

Mr. Laskaris is strongly committed to combining social-emotional development and academics to ensure the whole child's development as well as fully committed to collaborative problem-solving with all stakeholder groups. Mr. Laskaris loves being here at Colegio Granadino and he has truly enjoyed his time so far in Manizales. We are very excited to welcome Mr. Laskaris to our leadership team and we are looking forward to the journey ahead together.

### **ACCAS Secondary Principals' Conference 2024**



At the end of February we hosted the ACCAS (Association of Colombian- Caribbean American Schools) Secondary Principals Conference here on campus at Colegio Granadino. Our Secondary Principal, Ms. Marcela Diaz did an absolutely outstanding job organizing and leading this conference. The thirteen Principals who attended the conference were very impressed with our school and thanked us for being such hospitable hosts.

The Principals shared knowledge and best practices, discussed relevant issues together, and engaged in professional development during the conference days. This was an important moment of learning and fellowship for the Secondary Principals in the region and it was an

honor for us to lead this conference. Ms. Diaz and her team certainly deserve recognition and a big thanks for all their hard work and dedication to make this a success.

### **ACCAS Directors' Conference 2024**



Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to share with the community that I recently attended an ACCAS (Association of Colombian-Caribbean American Schools) Directors' Conference at Colegio Bolivar in Cali, Colombia with the Directors of eleven of our fifteen international sister schools in Colombia. The conference was a very valuable experience and it was a good reminder to me of the many things that we are doing very well here at Colegio Granadino.

We are certainly one of the leading international schools in the region with outstanding potential to grow and develop even more and *make the difference* on a larger scale than ever before.

Sincerely,

David Esch  
General Director at Colegio Granadino