



Head of School- November Update

SIA Board of Directors,

This update is intended to keep you informed of the progress and emerging questions for Spokane International Academy as we seek to meet our mission and build and maintain a high-quality rigorous learning environment for our students. My objectives for November have been:

1. Preparing for Renewal

Every 5 years we have to renew our Charter with the Commission. Our Charter is up for renewal in the 26-27 school year. Since enrollment for the 2026-27 school year starts in Fall of 2025, the commission made it a priority to schedule all renewals for prior to the end of the 2025 calendar year. Eight schools in the sector are up for renewal this cycle.

Here is the renewal timeline, so far:

- On Nov. 4, 2024, I received an updated document with renewal guidance
- February 3, 2025, SIA receive a renewal performance report from the Commission
- March 5, 2025, the renewal application is due to the Commission, and SIA may submit a response to the performance report including any corrections or clarifications
- April 16-17, 2025 our renewal site visit will take place. Within 14 days of the site visit, the authorizer issues a draft renewal inspection report to SIA
- September 18, 2025 The Commission will discuss and vote on SIA's renewal
- Within 90 days of the renewal decision, SIA works with the commission to establish the terms for the next charter contract; the authorizing board and charter board both vote in public meetings to ratify the new contract

Full transparency, this timeline is much different than what I initially expected. This is a massive undertaking, so this dictates a lot of how and where I will be spending my time February-April.


Here are the renewal guidelines given to us by the Commission.

Click the links for more information on [Oversight and Accountability](#), [Site Visit Protocol](#), [Renewal Guidance and Application](#)

Don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or want to provide feedback on this process.

2. Quarterly School Review (QSR)

Every Quarter I meet with the Commission to update them on our progress, goals, and functioning. This month Cassie (Board President) joined me for the meeting. Together we met with Italiana Hughes (Oversight Manager), Scott Canfield, and Jess Barton (Director of School Quality and Accountability). Please follow the link to review the summary of that discussion.

 [Spokane International Academy QSR Fall 2024 Notes.pdf](#)

3. Family Conference Week (Nov. 12th-Nov. 15th)

Our goal for conferences is that 100% of students in K-5 have a family conference and that every student in 6-12 with a D, F, 1, or 2 has a conference. We have made some shifts in our middle and high school conferences to prioritize the students who are not meeting expectations, so they can meet directly with multiple teachers for feedback. This was different in the past, when parents would just meet with the Advisory teachers, and the advisory teacher would not always have knowledge of how the student was performing in the classroom. We hope this process will help with having more clear communication. If families in 6-12 want a conference for students performing well, we also accommodate those requests.

4. 10th Anniversary Gala- Saturday, June 7, 2024 5:30 pm-8:30 pm 777 E Magnesium Road!


We had the first meeting with families to plan our upcoming event.

 [Fundraising Gala Planning 2025](#)

We are starting our work by doing the following:

- 1) Solidifying a Clear Event Budget
- 2) Creating Sponsorship packages and targeted emails/glossy inserts to send out to community partners
- 3) Finding a platform that can hold donations, allow for silent auctions, and ticket sales/purchases.
- 4) Begin to meet with planning committees to flesh out all of the details for the event fully.

5. November Community Highlights

- A) Leaning into our missions with many cultural celebrations: Dia de los Muertos, Diwali, Halloween Fun, Veterans Day, and Native American Heritage Month (upcoming speaker and student presentations).
- B) First High School-only Homecoming Dance sponsored by the ASB  [IMG_9022.MOV](#)
- C) Clubs and Activities: Mock Trial (Middle and High), Math is Cool Club (Grades 6-8), After School Tutoring (Grades 1-10), Play Practice (Alice in Wonderland- January 17th and 18th), Circle of Security Parenting Class (8 weeks), lunch Career Cafes every Wednesday, Costa Rica Preparation for the 8th Grade Trip), After School tutoring for Algebra, and SYSA Strength and Conditioning (Grades K-5), pajama days, Mock elections, and

6. Transitional Kindergarten for SIA?

- A) [Transitional Kindergarten Policy](#) Here is the notice that was sent out last week. I also have a meeting scheduled with Marcus Harden (Executive Director of the Commission) to ask questions and discuss what it would entail to add a Transitional Kindergarten option. I'm interested in understanding the necessary steps and the preparation involved.

Adding a transitional kindergarten (TK) can offer several benefits that align with the mission and goals of the school. **Here are key advantages:**

1. Early Access to Quality Education

- Developmentally Appropriate Learning: TK provides age-appropriate academic and social-emotional learning for young children, bridging the gap between preschool and kindergarten.
- Readiness for Kindergarten: Prepares students for the academic and behavioral expectations of kindergarten, increasing their chances of success in early elementary grades.

2. Enhanced Student Outcomes

- Academic Achievement: Early exposure to structured learning environments has been linked to higher literacy and numeracy levels in later grades.
- Social-Emotional Growth: TK supports development of key social-emotional skills such as self-regulation, cooperation, and resilience, building a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

3. Expanded Enrollment Pipeline

- Retention from Early Grades: Families entering at the TK level are more likely to stay within the system, boosting enrollment stability and continuity.
- Attract New Families: TK programs can attract families seeking high-quality early education, increasing overall school enrollment and creating positive word-of-mouth about the school.

4. Equity and Accessibility

- Free Public Option: Providing a public TK option ensures access for families who may not be able to afford private preschool, supporting equity and inclusivity.
- Closing Achievement Gaps: Helps to address disparities in early childhood education by providing underserved communities with an early start.

5. Strengthened Community Connections

- Family Engagement: TK encourages families to engage with the school earlier, fostering long-term relationships and a sense of belonging.
- Community Trust: Offering TK demonstrates the school's commitment to the entire educational journey of its students, building trust and loyalty among families.

6. Long-Term Academic Benefits

- Reduced Need for Interventions: Early support in TK can reduce the need for remedial support in later grades.
- Stronger Cohort Performance: Students entering kindergarten with a TK foundation are more likely to contribute to a cohesive and high-performing cohort.

7. Professional Development Opportunities

- Teacher Growth: Expanding to TK allows staff to deepen their expertise in early childhood education, enriching the overall teaching culture.
- Innovative Practices: Incorporating research-based early childhood strategies can influence and enhance teaching practices across all grades.

8. Alignment with Mission and Vision

- Foundation for Lifelong Learning: A TK aligns with the school's mission to empower students with the academic skills, habits of mind, and global competence necessary for future success.
- Global Competence from the Start: Introducing themes of global awareness and habits of mind early ensures that students internalize these values throughout their education.

9. Financial and Operational Opportunities

- Increased Funding: TK programs can bring additional state funding for early learners, depending on local policies and funding structures.

It also comes with challenges and potential drawbacks:

1. Financial Considerations

- Increased Costs: Launching a TK program requires significant investment in staff, curriculum, classroom setup, and age-appropriate materials.
- Funding Gaps: TK programs may not receive the same per-pupil funding as other grade levels, depending on state policies, which could strain the school budget.
- Ongoing Expenses: Maintaining small class sizes, offering developmentally appropriate resources, and providing additional support services can increase operational costs.

2. Facility Constraints

- **Space Limitations:** Adding a TK program will require dedicated classrooms, which can strain our existing facility.
- **Age-Appropriate Facilities:** Young children require specialized facilities, such as smaller bathrooms, play areas, and furniture, which may require costly renovations.

3. Staffing Challenges

- **Qualified Staff:** Finding and retaining teachers with early childhood education expertise and credentials can be difficult.
- **Professional Development:** Current staff may need additional training to meet the developmental needs of younger students.

4. Curriculum and Program Development

- **Alignment Challenges:** Ensuring the TK curriculum aligns with the school's broader K-12 academic framework and mission may be complex.
- **Developmental Appropriateness:** A TK program must prioritize social-emotional and developmental milestones, which may differ from the academic focus of higher grades.

5. Increased Operational Complexity

- **Regulatory Compliance:** TK programs are often subject to additional regulations, including licensing and age-specific safety requirements.
- **Logistics:** Managing different schedules, meal times, and transportation needs for younger children can complicate operations.

6. Impact on School Culture

- **Shift in Focus:** Introducing a TK program may shift some attention and resources away from older students, potentially impacting the K-12 culture.
- **Behavioral Differences:** Younger students require different types of support and behavior management, which could necessitate a cultural adjustment for the entire school.

7. Enrollment and Retention Risks

- **Unpredictable Demand:** The demand for a TK program may fluctuate, especially in areas where other early childhood options (e.g., preschools or Head Start) are available.
- **Retention Challenges:** Families who enroll in TK may not necessarily continue through the K-12 program, particularly if other schools offer more appealing options for higher grades.

8. Community Perception

- Perceived Mission Drift: Adding a TK program might raise concerns about the school diluting its focus on the older grades or high school preparation.
- Market Competition: Other early childhood education providers in the area may view the addition as competition, potentially affecting community relationships.

9. Equity Concerns

- Access Limitations: If demand exceeds capacity, admission to the TK program might disproportionately favor certain demographics, raising equity concerns.
- Readiness Gaps: Students who do not attend the TK program might arrive in kindergarten at a disadvantage compared to those who did.