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A PICTURE OF CONCENTRATION FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Education choices in the spotlight



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Back to school

✍️ Duncan Roberts

📷 Steve Eastwood

As Luxembourg's schools gear up for a new academic year, the choice for parents of school-age children and for adults seeking to learn new skills – whether vocational or not – has never been greater. That is, unless you are the parent of a child with Special Education Needs, as Rebecca Thomas discovers on page 16.

For English speaking families, the choice of primary and secondary education is limited to a few institutions. They can either place their trust in the state system or send their charges to one of the private schools. These include St. George's International School (www.st-georges.lu), which follows the English national curriculum, the International School of Luxembourg (www.isl.lu), which gears its students toward taking the International Baccalaureate, or The European School, which is primarily reserved for families where at least one parent is employed by a European Union institution. All three have their merits. The state system



is, of course, free. While it has been criticised for not encouraging creative skills and for being inflexible, the national curriculum does seem to produce students who go on to study at some of Europe's top universities.

Talking of which, Luxembourg now has its own university (www.uni.lu) and it has been expanding and growing in reputation under the stewardship of rector

Rolf Tarrach. Other institutions offering higher education to local residents include The Open University and the OU Business School (www.open.ac.uk/luxembourg) as well as Sacred Heart University (www.shu.lu) who both offer MBA programmes. The chamber of private employees also offers Masters programmes and a wide range of excellent vocational courses through its Lifelong Learning Center (www.lllc.lu).

Training, whether it is to enhance career prospects by learning job-specific skills or a language, is also provided by a number of professional companies in Luxembourg. And learning for fun is also popular - whether it be taking photography, cookery or dance classes the choice of courses available is vast. For evidence of that, check out the articles and advertisements over the next few pages.

International School welcomes record number of students

✍️ Marian Aldred
📷 Steve Eastwood

There was a buzz of excitement in the late summer air as the International School of Luxembourg opened its doors to a record 910 students ages 3-18 and 178 staff members at the end of August. ISL enrolment continues to climb, building on a trend that began several years ago which shows no signs of abating. These figures represent an increase of 10 percent over the start of school in 2007. Students entering ISL for the first time this year account for 20 percent of total enrolment. In addition to its new students, the school also welcomed 36 new staff members.

Growth in ISL's student numbers has been accompanied by growth in the school's cultural diversity, creating a marvellously rich multi-cultural learning environment. At the time of its founding in 1963 as the DuPont de Nemours Private School, the school's student population was 100 percent American and the faculty was entirely Luxembourgish.

Today Americans make up only 13 percent of a student body that counts 45 different nationalities. Students come not only from most of the countries of Europe, but also from North and South America, Australia, Asia, Africa, and the

Middle East. In addition, ISL staff members represent 23 nations from five continents. While English is the lingua franca of the school, the majority of ISL students also come from non-English speaking backgrounds; 75 percent of ISL families speak a language other than English at home, a 10 percent increase over 2007. For this reason, the school provides a comprehensive English as an Additional Language programme, enabling English language learners to integrate both academically and socially.

Increasing enrolment can be explained by several confluent factors. The school itself is unique in Luxembourg, with an outstanding reputation built upon the academic, artistic and athletic successes of its students, a stimulating learning environment and an international perspective that includes genuine engagement in global issues and social responsibilities. In addition, new expatriate families are relocating to Luxembourg in growing numbers while others seem to be remaining longer, sometimes indefinitely. As well as meeting the needs of an ever-expanding number of expatriate families, ISL welcomes students who come from the Luxembourg community and values their contribution to the distinctive character of the school.



Owing to the high demand for an ISL education, most classes are completely full and waiting lists have been established for nearly every grade level. In order to respond to this demand, the school has embarked upon an ambitious expansion project. The first phase,

an extension of the present main building, should be completed in about 18 months. The final phase will be the construction of a brand new Lower School building which is expected to open its doors in four to five years time.

www.islux.lu