



## Aiming High at AISM

**N**ew AISM Principal Dave Kipatrack, who joins the school as it celebrates its tenth year, is telling me about how he recently casually bumped into AISM's very first student.

"Something I'm discovering is that there are many magic moments that tell the history of the school."

Although Dave only arrived in Malaysia six weeks ago (he admits that he does not even have cutlery yet – those will likely arrive when his family join him next month), the history of AISM is something he knows a lot about. He has already told me how it began in a bungalow with only a handful of students, quite an amazing thing to believe when you visit its current large and beautiful campus where hundreds of students get the very best in Australian-based education.

Dave also speaks enthusiastically about former AISM students who went on to become super achievers, one of whom recently came back to talk to students and to receive a medal from the school.

"That's what I'm passionate about," he says. "The impact that good international schools can have on a student's life."

Dave grew up in Tumburumba, a small country town in New South Wales, Australia. During his childhood, his only contact with people from other cultures was with the Greek family that operated

the local fish and chip shop and one of his childhood friends who was an indigenous Australian.

He started working in school education in 1983 and left New South Wales in 1990. In the 30 years since then, Dave has become a citizen of the world, accumulating and sharing his educational experience in Vietnam, Indonesia and several states of Australia.

Dave is thrilled to be joining AISM at this particular time, a time of great growth for both the school and for its host country.

"KL is potentially the most exciting place to be in the region as Malaysia marches towards economic development and Vision 2020," he says. "I want to be here for that."

Equally impressive is the speed at which AISM is growing. By next year, it will be able to accommodate 1,200 students, twice the number that it serves now.

"There is a real demand for the Australian curriculum," says Dave. "When students graduate they get the same certification that gets students in Australia access to any Australian University, or any in the world."

There will also be a new performing arts building, improved resources for science and technology and more sports facilities. Dave looks forward to raising the standards of extra-curricular activities, to make them

match the excellence AISM has achieved in academics. "We're looking for opportunities where students can nurture their talents," explains Dave, as he goes on to describe the black box theatre, dance rooms and instrumental practice rooms that will make up the world-class performing arts centre.

While speeding towards the future, AISM makes sure that the present still gets all the attention it deserves. Dave assures me that the schedule for the school's expansion has been planned to ensure that classes are not disrupted in any way.

All other changes are treated similarly. Dave joined AISM well before their principal of the past 8 years, Anne-Maree Armstrong, retires. The school determined that three months for the handover would ensure a much smoother transition.

When it comes to making the changes that will carry AISM into the future, Dave says that, "a fundamental belief of mine is that schools get better with research." Where he wants AISM to be is not at the cutting edge, but only slightly behind, seeing evidence that these new directions work before adopting them.

"A child only has one chance to do well in year four," he explains, stressing that AISM never gambles with a child's education. He sees this as a responsibility not only to the students but to their parents as well. "I am truly parent and child-centred. My leadership and philosophy is that parents must also get what they want out of their investment in their child's education."

A leadership and philosophy that fit well with AISM's own approach to education and which should keep it the popular choice that it is today.