

Learning In Style School February 2025 Board Update

Supporting Our Students

It is very important that Accola and LIS support students and their families in their lives outside of our classrooms, especially in uncertain times like ours. We've recently taken steps *within LIS* to address the changing immigration landscape that is impacting their lives. LIS teacher (and experienced immigration law professional) Eva Moline led "**Know Your Rights**" trainings for all LIS students in late January. Ongoing efforts to establish general **building security** – including the recent installation of a buzzer and camera system for entry – will allow us to better monitor and control access to the building. It is our intent that interior **signage designating "Private"** spaces provide further (legal) security. Reinstated **lockdown drills** – including "Code Yellow" practice – have prepared staff and students to react to situations of concern. Several staff are attending the many **trainings and information sessions** offered by our community partners – including the CSJ's Justice Commission, the International Institute of MN, the Immigrant Law Center of MN, ACT-TC (Asylum Coalition for Transition), etc. - and subsequently sharing up-to-date information and advice with fellow staff and students. And we are responding to students with **emergency financial support**, including for those whose work has been impacted and those who have had promised support rescinded without warning (e.g., refugees working with resettlement agencies whose funding is frozen). *We are privileged to do the work in front of us every day.*

Digital Literacy Program

A primary goal for LIS this school year is to develop a practical digital literacy program for students. Led by Melody Stapleton, our digital literacy/computer lab coordinator and Jim Carnes, Ignatian Volunteer, we have launched the first steps of a digital literacy program tailored to our particular student population. Following extensive research and information gathering, connecting with other programs and considering other curricula, surveying LIS staff and students, and testing new approaches, we've begun onboarding new LIS students with a tech skills assessment and computer lab orientation. Staff from Literacy Minnesota's North Star Digital Literacy program will visit LIS in March to see what we're doing and gather information to support other small organizations like ours. (The computer lab and lab staff also help to fulfill some case worker-type responsibilities, i.e., housing and job searches.)

University of St. Thomas IPC Program Partnership

LIS and the University of St. Thomas' IPC program (Interprofessional Center for Counseling and Legal Services) are piloting a new program to support LIS students. The IPC is a

collaboration between UST's MSW program, the law school, and the psychology department. Supervised Social Work students will be on-site at LIS twice a month, seeing up to 8 students each time. Students with more extensive needs – including legal and therapeutic support – can also receive services via virtual appointments and/or in-person appointments at the STU campus nearby.

Global Potluck 2025

On February 12, we held our Global Potlucks, LIS's annual celebration of our school, our students, and their countries and cultures of origin. We ate amazing food from around the world, laughed a lot, and even introduced students to a (new) American dance tradition: the Cupid Shuffle! Many thanks to our volunteers and all who generously donated raffle items. It was a very happy day at LIS.