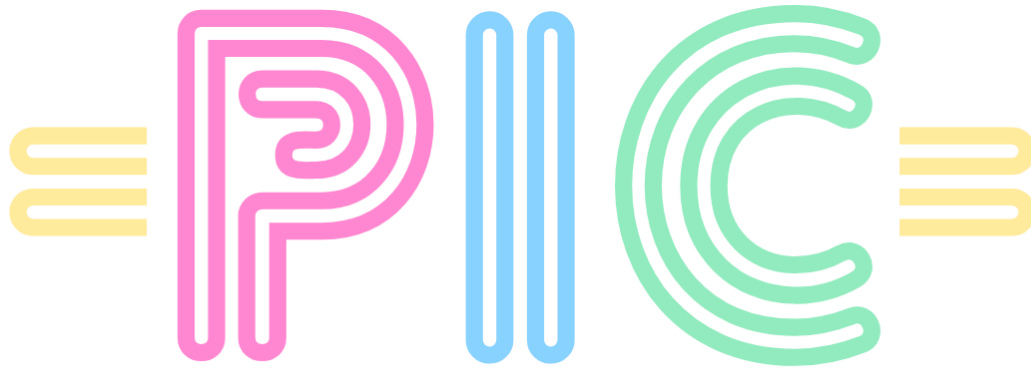




Project-based, Inquiry-based, Concept-based learning

Program Outline

School Year 2026/2027

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Program Overview

The ISN PIC program is a 4-year learning program starting from 6th grade, continuing the studies from ISN Elementary. It adopts an educational approach that combines Project-based Learning, Inquiry-based Learning, and Concept-based Learning. As such, it is a natural continuation of the ISN Elementary program, based on the IB PYP, provided to students around the world from age 3 (Early years) to 11 (Grade 5).

The PIC Program is the fully bilingual meeting ground of the global and the local, combining learning in English and in Japanese, the Japanese National Middle School curriculum with ISN's long experience of teaching inquiry, learning in the classroom as well as in nature.

It is fully dedicated to approaching each student as an individual, exploring their own wishes and helping them shape their future on their own. It was created from scratch with the vision of taking care of the student's complete well-being.

Program Values

1. Age-Appropriate Learning

Middle school is a precious time before bearing great responsibilities like high school or university, when students have the desire to fully express the curiosity, imagination and creativity that they developed during their time in elementary school. Their interests, values and uniqueness are the foundation for solidifying the idea of life-long learning that they will take with them to high school and beyond. We value learning methods and individual goal setting appropriate to this growth stage.

2. Learning as an Enjoyable and Challenging Activity

While connecting with the true purpose of learning, we explore each learner's internal motivation for learning, answering questions such as "For what purpose am I learning? Who am I learning for?" We emphasize first getting learners into a state where they connect with said purpose and feel motivated, then building experiences of a flexible and appropriate level of challenge. Learners who enjoy their school life and understand how they can affect and create that state of joy are well-equipped to lead a happy and fulfilling life.

3. Understanding the Fundamentals

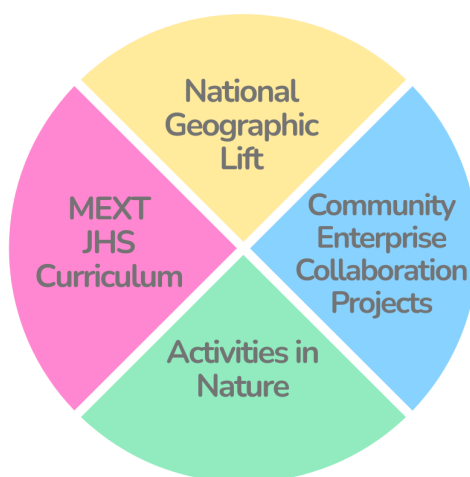
In the modern "VUCA Era" (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity), where the future is difficult to predict and the pace of change is fast, it is not enough to learn only facts or superficial skills. One of the main things that has consistently shaped ISN's viewpoint on education is the idea of acquiring more than simply superficial knowledge and skills, but understanding the fundamental meaning and value of things, and thinking and acting based on that understanding.

4. Fulfilling Oneself and Others

Nurturing ISN's education philosophy of looking at self-trust (confidence) as a sum of acting with honesty (an open mindset) and integrity helps the learner to be truly happy and affect the happiness of those around themselves. They understand that the way they act and express themselves affects others and vice-versa, and that their happiness is often proportional to how much they can give to others. They grow up to be leaders of their communities, ready to make the world a better place by striving to implement changes. By cooperating with others, learning opportunities expand.

Elements of the Program

The PIC program is a unique combination of four distinctive elements that work together to provide the optimal middle school education, providing students with both a local and a global perspective, as well as the knowledge, skills, and certifications that will shape their further education and life after graduation.



1. Activities in the Magnificent Nature of Shinshu

Not only is the environment surrounding ISN Gojo Campus rich with beautiful mountain scenery, scents, wind, water, sunlight, and the changing greenery, but so are its people, who live with gratitude toward nature, whether they are engaged in agriculture or forestry, born locally or those who moved here. Engaging in sports by rivers, lakes, and mountains; cultivating, cooking and eating food and enjoying camping and seasonal events are a part of their daily life. They cherish gratitude toward nature, and the interest in trying to understand nature.

We see outdoor activities as more than just fun - they build lifelong healthy habits, improve focus and reduce stress (therefore positively affecting all other aspects of learning), practice teamwork, problem solving skills, confidence and resilience. Every Friday, students will engage in activities in nature, whether locally, or travelling around the prefecture by bus.

2. Community Enterprise Collaboration Projects

Continuing on ISN's dedication to teaching life-long skills and promoting deep thinking, it is important to see those skills applied and practiced in real-life situations. Many members of the ISN community are active as business managers or business owners. With their generous support, and the support of other ISN supporter companies, right different Community Enterprise Collaboration Projects are implemented as a crucial part of the PIC program, each in collaboration with an enterprise from a different industry, and each in duration of six months.

The students will approach these collaborations by learning about the industry, in a way which will foster their curiosity and stimulate further inquiry. They will receive practical experience in said industry, which will help them form questions on current issues present in the industries or shortcomings of said enterprises and allow them to deeply explore, develop and present their own original ideas.

The partner enterprise projects in consideration¹ for the first generation of students are:

- **Agriculture & Food Industry:** Local Vegetable Direct Sales Store Operation
- **Retail Industry:** Matsumoto Festival Food Stall Operation
- **Manufacturing Industry:** Eco-Product Development & Manufacturing Experience
- **Tourism Industry:** Shinshu Tourism Guide Production

¹ Subject to change

- IT: Regional Issue-Solving App Planning
- Medical & Welfare Industry: Elderly Support Service Planning
- Energy & Environment Industry: Sustainable Regional Society Model Proposal
- Finance & Insurance Industry: Financial Education for Middle School Students

A time schedule of these projects can be seen under “Annual Plan”.

3. Complete Fulfillment of the MEXT Junior High School Curriculum

The Junior High School Curriculum composed and implemented in schools around Japan by the Japanese Government Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, is an invaluable asset in preparing students for possible continuation of their education in public and private high schools around Japan, via entrance exams. The key strands of the curriculum were used to inform the creation of the original ISN PIC curriculum and every other part of the curriculum connects to them as well.

A detailed full list of student and teacher expectations of the ISN PIC program curriculum based on the MEXT JHS curriculum and the National Geographic Lift Curriculum (described below) will be available upon request from the school office at a later date.

4. English Instruction and the National Geographic Learning Lift Curriculum

Morning and Friday lessons are conducted in English, utilizing the National Geographic Learning Lift programme as a reference material. National Geographic Learning follows on the well-known National Geographic Society’s mission of *using the power of exploration and learning to illuminate and protect the wonder of our world* by publishing materials for the learning of English and other subjects that help students develop essential skills, all the while *discovering and connecting with their global community*.

The National Geographic Lift program was specifically designed for multi-lingual teenagers. It focuses on *building academic language and literacy skills through content-based instruction using engaging materials like global literature, photography, and video*, all the while developing critical thinking, reading, speaking, and writing skills.²

² National Geographic Learning; eltngl.com

At the middle school level, it consists of six textbooks and related materials, each comprising between eight and twelve extensive lessons.

Annual Plan

The four elements of the PIC program, each with their unique curriculum and dedicated planning time, work together under the umbrella of Monthly Concepts, ideas that the learners are invited to inquire into and gain an understanding of from different angles, with the help of their teachers, and using a variety of resources available to them.

These monthly concepts encompass the students' current acquisition of the MEXT Junior High School curriculum, their learning of the National Geographic Lift program, and the current phase of their Community Enterprise Collaboration Project, and are connected with the activities in nature planned for that month. They build upon themselves as the Enterprise Collaboration Project and the school year progress, as well as horizontally throughout the four grades of the programme, enabling deep collaboration between the grade levels.

Month	G6	G7	G8	G9	
April	Community Values	Ecosystems	Environment	Advanced Biology	Energy/Environment
	LW1,2,3,4		L1-2,8		
	Mountain Biking	Mountain Biking	Mountain Biking	Mountain Biking	
	Introduction/Lectures	Introduction/Lectures	Introduction/Lectures	Introduction/Lectures	
May	Plants	Animals	Earth Science	The Human Body	
		LI7	LF7, L1-5	L2-5	
	Mountain Biking	Mountain Biking	Mountain Biking	Mountain Biking	
	Practical Experience	Practical Experience	Practical Experience	Practical Experience	
June	Food and Nutrition	Materials	Chemical Reactions and Changes	Advanced Chemistry	
	LW5,6		L1-3,4		
	Kayaking	Kayaking	Kayaking	Kayaking	
	Ideas and Presentation	Ideas and Presentation	Ideas and Presentation	Ideas and Presentation	
July	Meteorology	Geology	Astronomy	Environmental Science	
	LWB,10,11	LI8		L2-6	
	Overnight Camp	Overnight Camp	Overnight Camp	Overnight Camp	
	Research	Research	Research	Research	
August	Natural Disasters	Forces and Motion	Electricity	Advanced Physics	
	SUP	SUP	SUP	SUP	
	Product Delivery and Presentation	Product Delivery and Presentation	Product Delivery and Presentation	Product Delivery and Presentation	
September	World Geography	Continents	Culture of the World	Cultural Understanding	
	LW9	LF4	L2-4	L2-8,L3-1	
	Outdoor Cooking	Outdoor Cooking	Outdoor Cooking	Outdoor Cooking	
	Reflection	Reflection	Reflection	Reflection	
October	Geography of Japan	Prefectures of Japan	Nagano prefecture	Local Industries	Finance
	Shelter Building	Shelter Building	Shelter Building	Shelter Building	
	Introduction/Lectures	Introduction/Lectures	Introduction/Lectures	Introduction/Lectures	
November	Cooking	Woodworking	Programming	Personal Finances	
	LW7	LF3,5,8	L2-3,7	L3-4,5	
	Orienteering	Orienteering	Orienteering	Orienteering	
	Practical Experience	Practical Experience	Practical Experience	Practical Experience	
December	Painting and Sculpture	Theatre	Design	Music	
	LI5	LF2		L3-2	
	Winter Hiking	Winter Hiking	Winter Hiking	Winter Hiking	
	Ideas and Presentation	Ideas and Presentation	Ideas and Presentation	Ideas and Presentation	
January	Introduction to World History	Industrial Revolution	Modern World History	International Relationships	
	LI1,2		L1-7	L3-6,7	
	Snowshoe Walking	Snowshoe Walking	Snowshoe Walking	Snowshoe Walking	
	Research	Research	Research	Research	
February	History of Japan: Edo Period	History of Japan: Meiji Period	Post-war Japan	Contemporary Issues and Global Understanding	
	LI3,4			L3-3	
	Snow Sports	Snow Sports	Snow Sports	Snow Sports	
	Product Delivery and Presentation	Product Delivery and Presentation	Product Delivery and Presentation	Product Delivery and Presentation	
March	Democracy	Politics	Civics	Career Guidance	
	LW12, LI6	LF6, L1-1	L2-1,2	L3-8	
	Hiking	Hiking	Hiking	Hiking	
	Reflection	Reflection	Reflection	Reflection	

MEXT Curr./Monthly concept

Collaboration projects

National Geographic LJFT

Nature activities

Location

The ISN PIC program is undertaken at the ISN Gojo Campus. Surrounded by the rich natural environment, this location is perfect for the students' activities in nature and offers a quieter environment for everyday studies. This is also the location where ISN's Elementary program takes place, facilities such as the music room, art room, and home economics room will be available for students' use. For example, indoor physical education classes will be held jointly with the Elementary Division at the Shiga Gymnasium in Matsumoto City, and swimming classes will take place at the Shiga B&G Indoor Pool.

The school bus shuttle will operate between the campus building and the JR Akashina train station. The time spent on the shuttle bus is designated as an individual learning opportunity.

Weekly Schedule

Each of the four elements of the PIC program has a dedicated time slot in the class' weekly schedule. While certain variations of the weekly schedule are expected and welcomed, due to the PIC program's flexible nature, the schedule follows a similar structure to that of ISN Elementary, offering PIC program students ample opportunities to collaborate with their younger schoolmates.

From Monday to Thursday, the morning time slot lessons are conducted fully in English, utilizing National Geographic's Lift and the MEXT Junior High School curriculum as reference materials, implementing English, Mathematics, Science, Social studies and Art. Students also join separate English-language lessons designed to improve their core language abilities, as well as Music and Physical education, taught by subject teachers.

The afternoon time slots are reserved for lessons in Japanese. These lessons are primarily structured around the MEXT Junior High School Japanese language and Math curriculums, but providing insight into other subjects, connected to the current Monthly Concept. They are taught in Japanese.

Fridays are dedicated to activities in nature, as well as individual instruction time, providing each student with an opportunity to work on projects of their own choosing and hone the skills they are interested in, with full support from their teachers.

An example of the weekly schedule can be seen below.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:50-8:30	Shuttle Bus (in case of lessons taking place in Gojo Campus) Individual Learning (in case of lessons taking place in Shimauchi Campus)				
8:30-8:45	Break				
8:45-9:00	Morning Meeting				
9:00-10:30	Monthly Concept Learning / National Geographic LIFT / Collaboration Projects (conducted in English)				Nature activities (conducted in English)
10:35-10:55	Break				
11:00-12:25	Monthly Concept Learning / National Geographic LIFT / Collaboration Projects (conducted in English)				
12:30-13:20	Lunch Break				
13:25-13:35	Cleaning				
13:40-14:35	Japanese Language (conducted in Japanese)			Monthly Concept Learning (conducted in Japanese)	Individual Learning
14:40-15:35	Mathematics (conducted in Japanese)				
15:40-16:35	Shuttle Bus (in case of lessons taking place in Gojo Campus) Individual Learning (in case of lessons taking place in Shimauchi Campus)				
16:40-17:35	Individual Learning				

The PIC Portfolio

The PIC portfolio is a digital and continuously evolving collection of work every PIC program student has produced during their time at ISN. It serves as a living record of a student's learning journey, capturing both academic progress and personal growth, and being a tool for self assessment. It offers students a central space to organize and showcase their efforts and encourages students to reflect on their progress by identifying areas of strength, recognizing challenges they faced, and setting goals for future improvement. At key points in the year, students review and refine their portfolios, which are then shared with teachers for feedback, with parents to celebrate progress.

After the completion of the program, the PIC portfolio is also shared with prospective high schools to demonstrate the student's readiness for the next stage of learning. A printed version of the portfolio is available upon request.

Graduation and Career Paths

Upon graduation from the PIC program, ISN issues a graduation certificate. Students also receive graduation certificates from the public middle schools they are enrolled in, which serve as proof of Japanese middle school graduation. Activity records are provided in the form of the PIC portfolio.

If students wish to continue their education in a public or private high school that values entrance exam test scores, they can apply and sit exams through the public middle school they are enrolled in, just like any other students from that school. Public high school admission decisions are based on entrance exam scores, but in cases of tied scores, the PIC Portfolio serves as a "record of activities undertaken, interests, and achievements" instead of traditional internal assessment points. These activities are compared with traditional numerical internal assessment points, and comprehensive judgment is made regarding which student is more suitable for the high school.

During the entire program, but especially during its last year, the students are provided with comprehensive career guidance by their teachers and external collaborators, spanning both local private and public high schools, international schools across Japan, and educational institutions abroad. ISN does not discriminate between different educational paths, and full, individualized support will be provided to the students based on the educational path they decide on. A brief summary of the preparation schedule is visible below.

January	February	March	April	Domestic Private or International School
Exam preparation	Exam preparation	Application and Exams	Enrollment	
			School Starts	
Departure	School Starts			
Final Applications	Results	Enrollment Process	Visa Application	Domestic Public School
May	June	July	August	
School Selection	Application and Visa	Homestay Setup	Flight Booking	
	Travel Preparation		Departure Ready	
		School Visit		Overseas Private or International School
September	October	November	December	Overseas Public School (B Type)
Info Sessions	Open Campus	Application Preparation	Final Check	
School Starts				
School Starts	School Research	Application Preparation	Applications Open	
School Selection	Payment	Visa Application		Overseas Public School (A Type)

Application Process and Requirements

The application process for the PIC programme begins with a personalized enrollment briefing, school tour and an individual motivation interview and an information and Q&A session. Each application is carefully considered individually, and the applicant's family is directly contacted with the results of their application in one month after the submission.

In a step-by-step manner, it is as follows:

1. Application Period: The first round of applications (priority for current ISN students) will be held in June, followed by the second round for all applicants in September.
2. Interviews: Interviews will take place between September and November.
3. Enrollment Confirmation: After passing the interview, applicants will pay the enrollment fee, after which enrollment will be officially confirmed.
4. Uniform Fitting: Uniform fitting will be conducted in December.
5. Orientation: A new student and parent orientation will be held in February. Uniforms are planned to be distributed at that time.
6. Entrance Ceremony: The Entrance Ceremony will take place in April.

All PIC program students are required to possess a high level of motivation for the program, intermediate or higher level of spoken and written English, and be registered as attending ISN with their local public middle schools. Students are required to own a personal computer.

Tuition

Registration Fee	JPY 30,000 /year
Tuition Fee	JPY 98,000 /month
Facility Maintenance Fee	JPY 125,000 /year
School Uniform Fee	JPY 40,000
Full or Partial Scholarships	Available for students with exceptional English or other academic skills. Please inquire in the school office.

Contact Information

For further information on the PIC program, any of its elements, or the application process, feel free to contact us using the contact information below.

ISN PIC Program

0263-87-8418

office@isnedu.org

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Nagano Prefecture, Matsumoto City, Gojo 6387-1

Contact person: Mika Jongerius, Igor Coric

Online Contact:



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