



**THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL (P-5)**

025 SW Sherman St; [intlschool.org](http://intlschool.org)  
**ENROLLMENT: 450**  
**TUITION: \$5,000-12,350**

The only thing more humbling than having an American 5-year-old walk you through the elements of food distribution—in Japanese—is having a chorus of 10 of them explain it. But for the first graders at the International School (TIS), a language immersion elementary program in Southwest Portland, that's just an average morning. After all, they spend every day transitioning seamlessly between languages at school and at home, navigating their world with a sharp linguistic compass.

Students at TIS plunge into a full immersion program in Spanish, Mandarin, or Japanese at age 3, and continue learning in their chosen language until their fifth-grade graduation. Teachers, who hail from as far away as Chile and Mongolia, instruct only in their native language, guiding pupils through a classic curriculum of math, reading, and science, and steeping them in the history and culture of the teacher's home country.

There's more to TIS than foreign languages, though. The school boasts Portland's first elementary school International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Rather than working through a rote, predetermined set of facts and questions within a lesson, the IB method encourages students to master ideas by exploring their *own* questions—ones they've asked, of course, in three different languages. —*Rachel Ritchie*



**FRENCH AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL (P-8)**

8500 NW Johnson St; [faispdx.org](http://faispdx.org)  
**ENROLLMENT: 471**  
**TUITION: \$10,000-14,000**

Strolling the carefully manicured grounds of the French American International School (FAIS), it's hard to believe that the school was born 32 years ago as a small preschool class in a church basement. Perched on a lush, forested swath of Portland's West Hills, the 14-acre, LEED-certified campus is now Portland's oldest independent immersion school.

Why French? "It's not as much about the language itself as it is about the immersion experience," explains director of admissions Arezu Movahed. The core of that experience, she explains, is the flexibility in thinking and sensitivity to language and culture that comes with such early exposure to multiple languages.

And it doesn't stop at French. The Gilkey International Middle School at FAIS offers three language tracks for incoming students: one for students transitioning from the French program, one for those with previous immersion experience in Spanish, German, or Mandarin, and one for students with no foreign language experience. At the middle school level, only advanced language arts and social studies are taught in the target language, and the rest is in English. Students who come from the immersion elementary school also study *another* (yes, a third) language. For as that early leader of the Franks, Charlemagne, put it: "To have another language is to possess a second soul." So why not one more? —RR



**THE GARDNER SCHOOL (P-8)**

16413 NE 50th Ave, Vancouver  
 Students at this bucolic school begin learning Spanish in preschool and continue through eighth grade.

**THE GILKEY INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL (9-12)**

1130 SW Main St  
 A new partnership between FAIS and the Northwest Academy, the Gilkey program allows students to take advanced, immersion-based language courses in French and Mandarin through 12th grade.

**POP QUIZ**

**WHAT'S ACCREDITATION?**

**A**CCREDITATION IS ESSENTIALLY A QUALITY-CONTROL measure for private schools. It's awarded by one of six US regional associations—for Oregon that's the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC)—to certify that a school adheres to the same standards as those set for public schools. Accreditation is more important than just ensuring academic rigor, though. It also can affect a student's chances of being accepted into college. According to Dr. David G. Steadman, NWAC's executive director, students who graduate from an unaccredited high school can be denied admission to college—even if they meet all of the school's other admission criteria. If you don't see the NWAC stamp of approval on your school, don't panic; that doesn't mean it's not accredited through them. NWAC facilitates third-party accreditation through several local organizations. To see the list of organizations recognized by NWAC, visit [northwestaccreditation.org](http://northwestaccreditation.org). —*Gretchen Holzgang*