



# CELEBRATING A SUCCESSFUL FIRST YEAR: I-RISE USA'S JOURNEY IN EMPOWERING INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS

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The latest news, views, and announcements

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LYSD Alaska Cohort '24 (top) & The Children's Guild Maryland Cohort '24 (bottom)



February 21, 2024. The Children's Guild & i-RISE USA (left to right) Dr. Ireneo Rios, Jr (i-RISE CFO), Dr. Claire Torrefranca (i-RISE COO), Mark Rapaport (TCG Managing Director), Jaime Wilson (TCG Managing HR Director), & Dr. Vilma Bethea (i-RISE USA CEO)

## School/School Districts & Visa Sponsor Partnerships

Since the launching of i-RISE USA as a sending partner/teacher agency back in September 2023, we have established incredible partnerships with schools, school districts, and J1 visa sponsors - these serve as the cornerstone of our success. Our first school partner was **The Children's Guild** in Maryland where 11 Special Education Teacher and 3 Paraprofessionals are now currently working with students with disabilities across three campuses. The **Lower Yukon School District** in Alaska came along and hired 13 General Education Teachers and a Special Education Teacher. Recently, we made a direct partnership with **Gila Crossing Community School** in Arizona. We also have teachers in **Dallas ISD**, (Texas) **The Spectrum Centers** (California), **South San Francisco USD** (California) and **Pittsburg USD** (California) through our direct, full-placement partnerships with **GeoVisions** and **Alliance Abroad Group** (visa sponsors). Besides GeoVisions and AAG, we have the privilege to partner with two more Department of State designated Visa Sponsor - **Intrax** and **HRC International**. For SY 24-25, we placed 36 Exchange Visitors in the Teach and Intern/Trainee programs. We believe that through sustained collaboration, our teachers receive the support they need to thrive in their new roles, while schools benefit from the rich cultural diversity and expertise that international educators bring.

## International Impact

In just less than a year from inception, we have facilitated the arrival of several talented educators from across the globe, i.e., Philippines, Kenya, and Ghana, each bringing unique cultural perspectives, pedagogical knowledge, and expertise to classrooms all over the US. Our partnership and collaboration with four distinguished US Department of State-approved visa sponsors has been key in ensuring a smooth and successful transition for these teachers.

### Diversity Matters

*At i-RISE USA we take immense pride in the rich diversity of our teaching community. Our educators come from various cultural backgrounds, each brings unique perspectives and experiences that enrich the learning of their students and school community.*



# Testimonials

Our greatest validation comes from the words of the teachers we have had the privilege to serve. Their testimonials speak volume as to the quality of our services and the dedication of the team. Here are some of them.



## Gratitude for Your Unwavering Support and Assistance

*"My experience with i-Rise USA as an Autism classroom educator in the United States has been incredibly rewarding. Right from the beginning, i-Rise USA showcased unmatched expertise in the cultural exchange program process. Their comprehensive professional development programs not only equipped me and my colleagues for the complexities of the US education system but also ensured a seamless transition. One aspect that particularly impressed me was i-Rise USA's ability to place us with reputable visa sponsorship agencies, leading to a successful visa acquisition process for the entire cohort with approved visas. I highly recommend i-Rise USA to anyone seeking assistance in securing educational job opportunities and navigating the US job market. Their commitment to client success and the exceptional quality of their services are truly commendable."* - Emmanuel Taylor (Ghana), Special Education Teacher, The Children's Guild Transformational Academy, Maryland

## *i-RISE USA Team is Incredible*

*"A heartfelt thank you to the incredible team at i-RISE USA. The power of 3—Doc Vilma, Doc Claire, and Doc Jun—for their tireless efforts, dedication, and commitment in guiding us toward a brighter future in the USA. Despite the unavoidable challenges we faced like gathering documents, securing appointments, clearing certifications, and more—your unwavering support and guidance made the journey smooth and successful. As the i-RISE USA first batch of teachers to secure employment in the USA, we are a living proof of your hard work, teamwork, and hands-on assistance. You made us all feel secure and guided every step of the way. Thank you for helping us reach our dreams and for touching not only our lives but also the lives of our families. More power to you, and may God bless our i-RISE USA Family."* - Felmar Maloto (Philippines), MS/HS Science Teacher, Lower Yukon School District, Alaska

## *Going Global*

*"i-RISE USA has played a critical role in supporting teachers and paraprofessionals seeking foreign employment. They provide professional development seminars through Zoom on subjects including classroom management, VISA processing, financial literacy and inclusive educational techniques. Participants receive certifications on professional developments and access to recorded sessions for reference. I-Rise also aids with travel plans, communicates with VISA sponsors on a regular basis and resolves issues quickly. They also organise teaching license certification, accommodations and cultural presentation training for schools around the United States. Their multichannel communication techniques, which includes email, WhatsApp, Facebook messaging and phone calls, keeps members up to date and supported. I-RISA USA attention to detail has helped prepare teachers for teaching opportunities worldwide."* - Peter Namasaka (Kenya), Special Education Teacher, The Children's Guild PG County, Maryland

## *Exceptional Service*

*"As one of the J1 teachers under i-rise USA, LLC, I can confidently say that the agency is dedicated to providing exceptional service that goes beyond the scope of traditional work. Dr. Vilma Bethea, Dr. Claire Torrefranca, and Dr. Jun Rios are all highly professional and knowledgeable individuals who always go above and beyond to ensure the best possible experience for their clients. Their commitment to treating their clients like family and genuinely caring about their well-being sets them apart from other agencies. With i-rise, you can trust that you will receive top-notch service with a personal touch."* - Mark Anthony Chavez (Philippines), HS Math Teacher, Lower Yukon School District, Alaska

# Messages from the CEO & i-RISE USA Team

## Vilma Bethea, Ed.D. - Chief Executive Officer

As the CEO of i-RISE, I am immensely proud of what we have achieved in such a short span of time. Our journey has been marked by rapid growth, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to our mission of enhancing cross-cultural education and experience for our international educators and the students whom we serve.

From the outset, our focus has been on **establishing a robust foundation**. This involved not only engaging with passionate and qualified teachers but also creating a supportive environment where they can thrive. Our efforts in providing opportunities for professional development and mentorship have been pivotal in ensuring our teachers are well-prepared and confident in their roles.

The path has not been without its challenges. **Overcoming challenges and navigating the complexities** of the education sector, meeting our visa sponsors' US Department of State's regulatory requirements, and managing the logistics of teacher placements, i.e., pre and post arrival and pre-employment activities, have tested our resilience. However, each challenge has been a learning curve - an opportunity for growth and learning, strengthening our resolve and adaptability as a team.

What I find THE most rewarding aspects of this work has been building and working alongside dedicated and skilled team members, Claire and Jun. Together, we **foster a culture of collaboration, innovation, and open communication** – these of which are key to our success. The team's unwavering commitment and shared passion for education have been the driving force behind our achievements.

As we look to the future, I am excited about the possibilities that lie ahead. We are poised to expand our reach, continue to build strong partnerships with schools and visa sponsors, and upscale educator professional development opportunities. Our vision is clear, and our foundation is strong - setting the stage for continued growth and impact.

In summary, leading i-RISE USA LLC has been a fulfilling and inspiring experience. What was once envisioned has come to fruition. I am beyond grateful for the dedication of our team, the resilience of our teachers, and the trust of the communities we serve. Together, we are making a meaningful difference in education, and I am confident that our best days are yet to come.



### **Ireneo Rios, Jr, Ed.D. - Chief Financial Officer**



i-RISE USA embarked on its remarkable journey in September 2023, fueled by a shared passion for educator excellence and professional growth. Co-founders Dr. Vilma Bethea, Dr. Claire Torre Franca and I united to bridge the gap between educator development and the diverse needs of US school districts. Dr. Bethea, a visionary educational leader, championed diversity, cultivated multicultural atmospheres, and upheld the teaching profession. Dr. Torre Franca, leveraging her own international teaching background, provides personalized support for educators transitioning to the US. As for me, I drew from my experience as an exchange teacher, recognized the value of cultural diversity and co-founded i-RISE USA to assist aspiring educators in securing teaching opportunities and facilitating their travel to the US. Our unwavering commitment to cultural competency, global awareness, and individualized guidance has transformed i-RISE USA into a resounding success, boasting a 100% visa approval rate for applicants coming from different countries across several states. The i-RISE USA team has traveled to different states, meeting teachers personally and providing post-arrival and pre-employment support.

### **Claire Torre Franca, Ed.D. - Chief Operating Officer**



Starting a teacher agency had always been a dream shared by each of us, but it remained just an idea until one fateful day when Vilma, Jun, and I decided to bring it to life. That same week, we found ourselves brainstorming at IKEA, and that's when i-RISE USA was born. When we first came to the US to teach, we each had not-so-great experiences with our agencies, but what stood out to all of us was the lack of support in helping us navigate our new work and environment. We wanted i-RISE USA to be different. Our goal was to know each teacher on a personal level and provide the needed support until they become fully acclimated to their new lives and jobs. Looking back on our first year of operation, we've had the privilege of bringing nearly 40 teachers and paraprofessionals from various countries. What makes me incredibly proud is the quality of service we deliver - both pre and post arrival. I'm truly proud of i-RISE USA and grateful to be working alongside Vilma and Jun. We have truly redefined what a teacher agency should and must be.



# Capturing Excellence: A Glimpse into our Teachers' Professional Journey in the US







Please visit our website for more information about i-RISE USA: [www.i-risellc.com](http://www.i-risellc.com)