



International  
School  
Los Angeles  
Lycée  
International

## Globetrotter Alumni Perspectives

### Cori Duncan '91

#### When did you start at LILA and what year did you graduate?

I started at LILA in *troisième* and stayed through my *bac* in 1991.

#### How would you describe your LILA experience?

Intimate and nurturing - When I was at LILA, the high school was tiny. There were only four of us in *Terminale*. I was the only student in some of my math and science classes during that final year. So, we really had "individualized instruction." I had the good fortune of having a number of outstanding teachers who made sure I understood the material.

Academically challenging - Neither of my parents speaks French and I had never been to France when I started at LILA. I began learning French as a foreign language in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and was in a full French immersion classroom in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades at another international school. Entering the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, my French language skills were unquestionably below grade level and my writing in French was rough and rather rudimentary. It quickly became clear that my academic success would be based on clarity of thought and computational precision rather than eloquence.

#### If you had to choose just three words to describe your time at LILA, which would you choose?

Tiny, unique, formative

#### What is your fondest memory from your time at LILA?

School dances attended by virtually everyone from 4<sup>th</sup> graders to 12<sup>th</sup> graders and all the teachers and staff. The vibe was more community block party than awkward middle school dance.

#### Did you take the International Baccalaureate (IB) or French *baccalauréat* (FB)? Describe how and why you chose the track you did.

When I attended LILA there was no IB option, so I took the French *bac - séries D* which was focused on the sciences. While I loved history, philosophy, and the social sciences, French was not my native language, so it was easier for me to demonstrate proficiency in math and biology.



### **Where did you go to college/university? What did you study?**

I went to Stanford University and received a BA in Economics. (Years later I returned to Stanford for an MBA.)

### **How did your LILA education prepare you for college/university?**

By the time I graduated from LILA I had developed a strong work ethic as the course load was quite full, and I was attempting to master content and language acquisition at the same time. This was probably the most important preparation for college. A second element of my LILA education was the curricular focus on frameworks and structured thinking. Open-ended and expansive inquiry was the norm in both the humanities and the sciences at LILA which made the transition to college easy.

### **What did you do immediately after college/university?**

Immediately after college I joined Bain & Company, a strategy consulting firm where I spent two years getting great training as a business analyst.

### **What are you up to now?**

Today, I'm a partner at an investment management firm in the San Francisco Bay Area. We manage the investment portfolios of a small number of clients. I have been with my current firm for 17 years and have had the great pleasure to see it grow in client count, assets, and teammates.

### **How did your LILA education prepare you for the 'real world'? In other words, how has it impacted your career, personal life, etc.?**

The most important thing I learned at LILA was perseverance. I learned how to bounce back from all the little academic failures I experienced in my initial years. (Imagine attempting a French dictation exercise without understanding half the words the teacher is reading.) Many students put a lot of pressure on themselves to get perfect grades and don't have many opportunities to roam outside their comfort zones and practice resilience. I had many opportunities to try hard, fall down, get back up, and try harder. I learned to judge myself on the basis of my effort more than any narrow outcome.

### **What advice would you like to share with current LILA students?**

Find things to "geek out" about. Let yourself get carried away reading wiki pages about early American presidents after seeing *Hamilton*. Or waste a Saturday afternoon trying to learn all the piano chords to a favorite song even though you've barely started learning the instrument. Revel in your own geek. Practice identifying and following your own passions, big and small.