

STRIDES

The official newsletter of  **Esol Education**

ISSUE 4 | Spring 2016



A STANFORD SUMMER

Esol Education's MOU with Stanford University gives students a reserved priority in international pre-collegiate institute program

IN FOCUS

READY, SET, LEARN

700 Esol Education teachers gather for PDC in Egypt

LEADING HONG KONG

Founding director takes over reigns at ASHK

TALKING EDUCATION

Catching up with Andy Torris at Universal American School, Dubai

MEET THE GEEKS

An exciting take on teachers' tech collaboration at AISA

ENTER THE DRAGON

Young Entrepreneurs competition challenges DIS students

WINNING PARTNERSHIPS

Successful parental engagement program brings community together at Inspire Nursery

TEACHER RETREATS

Collaborative planning days at UAS help teachers think ahead

ROBOTICS RULE

Students at AISE-Main gain a new appreciation for math and technology

PAY IT FORWARD

School support team welcomes English classes at AISE-West

SMELL OF SUCCESS

Essential oils help students focus at CES

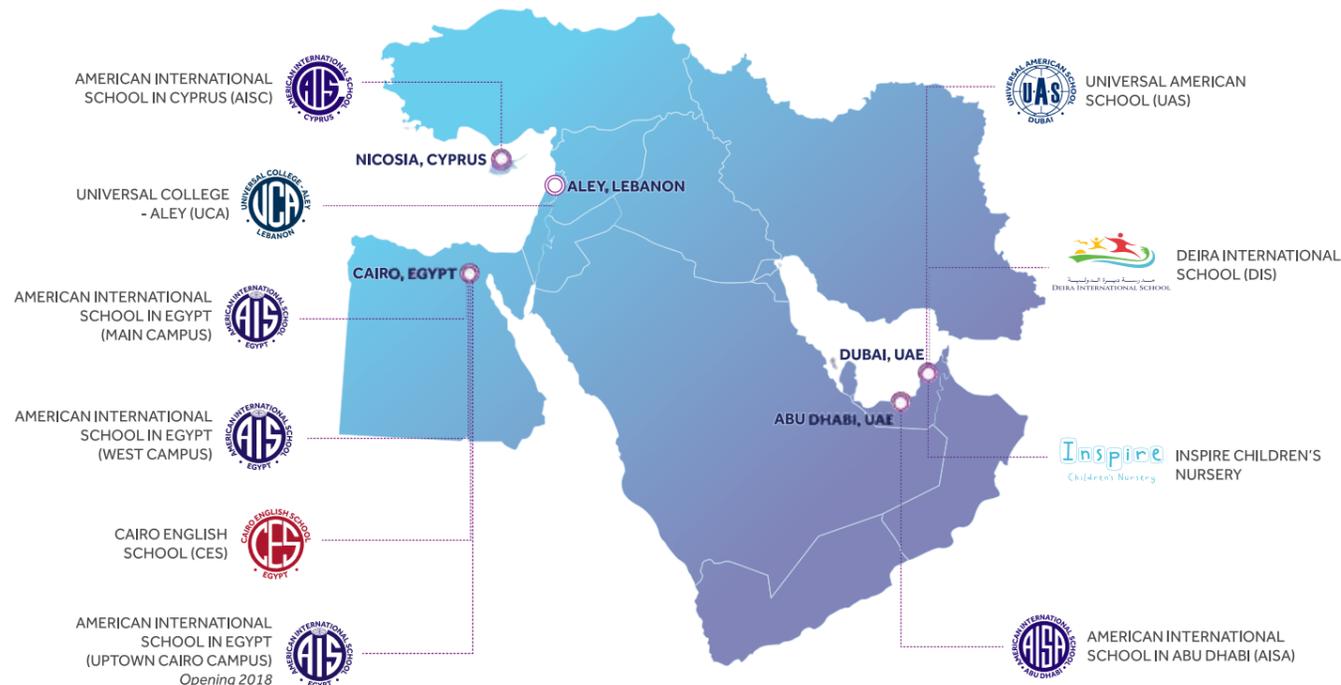
PLAYING GAMES

Students at AISC create their own board games as part of a literature study

JUST DANCE

Dance program at UCA sees 70% growth with 400 students this year

MIDDLE EAST & MEDITERRANEAN



EAST ASIA



RIPPLES OF PROGRESS

"Does the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas?" speculated MIT meteorologist, Edward Lorenz, metaphorically postulating that the tiniest of atmospheric variances could have a major impact on weather systems around the world. Similarly, while organization-wide initiatives lead waves of change, individual contributions can also have a transformative impact. As this issue of STRIDES shows us, industrious little butterflies have indeed been at work throughout our schools since the beginning of this year, collectively advancing our organization with innovative teaching and learning initiatives. From formal, organized professional development to teacher collaborations, and parental partnerships to technology programs, we continued to learn and evolve together this year, moving forward towards our goal of continually improving our craft, becoming better educators, bringing alive Esol Education's ethos of lifelong learning.

American International School in Abu Dhabi (AISA) premiered "speed geeking," a fun and unusual way to introduce educational technology to teachers, while the Universal American School (UAS) discovered planning retreats as a useful collaborative tool for teachers to better structure various units of inquiry. Proving it's never too early to introduce inquiry-based learning, Inspire Children's Nursery's early years teachers used global study guides that led children as young as one-year-old to investigate a central topic, exploring subjects like math, literacy skills, arts, technology, science and social studies! Teachers at American International School in Egypt – West (AISEW) helped their Arabic speaking colleagues learn and improve their English skills with free weekend workshops, while Universal College – Aley (UCA) introduced its homegrown Highland Hawks University program to offer professional development modules for teachers.

“From formal, organized professional development to teacher collaborations, and parental partnerships to technology programs, we continued to learn and evolve together this year, moving forward towards our goal of continually improving our craft, becoming better educators, bringing alive Esol Education's ethos of lifelong learning”

Student initiatives were equally intriguing. Young scientists at American International School in Cyprus (AISC) received a commendation for their entry in the prestigious Stockholm Junior Water Project Competition, and budding Middle School engineers excelled at Robotics at American International School in Egypt – Main Campus (AISE-Main). At Cairo English School (CES) a simple neuroscience study on students' focusing abilities discovered that olfactory inputs such as the fragrance of essential oils might improve student performance! This was inspired by one of the 80+ workshops that were presented during the Esol Education Professional Development Conference (PDC), where over 700 teachers gathered for two days of exciting keynote presentations and interactive sessions.

In this issue, we are also pleased to welcome on board John Jalsavec, the founding Director of American School Hong Kong, set to open its doors in September 2016. We are also proud to share the exciting news about Esol Education's collaboration with Stanford University, which provides all our students an exclusive opportunity to attend a pre-collegiate summer program at one of the world's top universities.

With final exams and the end of the year fast approaching, we warmly wish all our students around the world the very best, and hope you are all looking forward to a wonderful summer at the end of this final stretch!

Sincerely,
The Esol Education Team

STRIDES

The official newsletter of Esol Education – ISSUE 4 | Spring 2016

STRIDES is published twice a year by Esol Education for a wide internal and external readership, including our students, parents and teachers. This publication covers news and developments across the organization and its schools in the Middle East and Mediterranean. Since 1976, Esol Education has specialized in providing exceptional international K-12 education. With a strong focus on educational excellence, Esol schools enjoy the benefits of experienced leadership and management, superlative facilities, and caring and dedicated teachers.

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INSPIRED TEACHING AND LEARNING

Professional development, inspirational keynote presentations, workshops and lasting friendships made for a truly successful organization-wide conference



Esol Education opened this academic year by bringing together 700 teachers at the Main Campus of American International School in Egypt to attend the organization's official bi-annual Professional Development Conference (PDC).

The PDC events are part of a continuous professional development program for all Esol Education teachers. This year's event featured a lineup of five acclaimed educational speakers and trainers from the United States and the United Kingdom, presenting on a diverse array of topics. The speakers included: Bambi Betts, Director of the Principals Training Center for International School Leadership; Virginia Rojas, Faculty Member of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD); Daniel Feigelson, Literacy Consultant & Author; Abdul Chohan, Director of ESSA Academy and Apple Learning Technology Consultant and Gary Russel, School Head of Regents International School in Thailand.

“Esol Education is making such a significant contribution to our international schools world, and to the world of learning in general”

“Esol Education is making such a significant contribution to our international schools world, and to the world of learning in general. I so appreciated the opportunity to be part of the Esol family during your professional development conference, if only for a few days!” remarked Ms. Betts, in an email to the organizers after the conference.

Apart from the keynote sessions, over 80 workshops and job-alike sessions offered innovative teaching methods and classroom management strategies to the enthusiastic attendees. Integrating technology into teaching and learning is a key focus for Esol Education schools, and this year's conference unveiled exciting new platforms and inspired discussions on how to employ cutting edge tools to enhance students' learning experiences.

Heba Diraz, a teacher from American International School in Egypt – West shared: “It is truly a great feeling to do what we love under the guidance and scope of such a dynamic organization. Many thanks to the Esol Education Board and to the presenters for providing us such a rich learning opportunity and for driving us to excel in our profession. I'm looking forward to the next conference!”



“We pride ourselves on believing that progress never stops at our schools, and through professional development this will continue,” remarked Mr. Walid Abushakra, Chairman, Esol Education, commending the presenters and attendees for their dedication to lifelong learning.

Photos, videos and keynote presentations from the event are available to download and view online at the official PDC site: pdc.esoleducation.com.

FOUNDING DIRECTOR FOR AMERICAN SCHOOL HONG KONG

Charged with the stewardship of our new flagship school in East Asia, John Jalsevac brings nearly 30 years of educational experience to Esol Education and ASHK



At the beginning of 2016, John Jalsevac was appointed as the founding Director of American School Hong Kong (ASHK). John previously worked in Hong Kong from 2004 – 2014 as Principal of the Upper School at the Canadian International School Hong Kong (CDNIS) where, as Chair of the IB Steering Committee, he led the school in the development and implementation of its IB Program. CDNIS now ranks in the top 10 percentile of schools worldwide that require all students to complete the IB Diploma Program. Most recently, John was Head of School at Mission Hills International School in Shenzhen, China.

John supports the value of a holistic approach to education and was co-founder of the International School Sports Federation of Hong Kong, which is now comprised of 33 international schools in the region. He also served as Chair of the South East Asia Schools' Activity Conference from 2009 – 2014.

Prior to his arrival in Hong Kong, John was employed for 25 years as an educator in Toronto where he served as Principal of three high schools and as Curriculum Coordinator and Superintendent of Education for a large school district.

“John is a widely respected educational leader whose passion for education is reflected in the positive rapport he maintains with staff and students and the strong sense of community he establishes in the schools he directs”

STANFORD SIGNS MOU WITH ESOL EDUCATION

New collaboration with world's top university, offers outstanding students the opportunity to go to Stanford for selective summer academic program

“The program includes advanced content and skills development delivered by Stanford affiliates selected for expertise in their fields, with courses ranging from sciences and engineering to writing and humanities and themes and concepts such as creativity, leadership, design-thinki-ng, problem-solving, and communication”

On April 12, 2016, Esol Education entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Stanford University, allowing exceptional students at Esol Education schools around the world to attend Stanford Pre-Collegiate International Institutes, a prestigious, two-week residential summer program at Stanford University, ranked among the world's top 5 universities.

The program includes advanced content and skills development delivered by Stanford affiliates selected for expertise in their fields, with courses ranging from sciences and engineering to writing and humanities and themes and concepts such as creativity, leadership, design-thinki-ng, problem-solving, and communication. Students who participate in the program will share their interests and abilities with other international students

and will be given opportunities to enrich and accelerate their academic pursuits.

Weekend field trips will include visits to UC Berkeley, Golden Gate Park, Monterey, and other San Francisco Bay Area and Silicon Valley neighborhoods and landmarks. Students will also learn about the US college admissions process and about resources and services available to international students at US universities.

As part of the agreement, selected students will be part of the Esol Education worldwide cohort, traveling to Stanford with chaperones who will assist in their arrival and provide support in residential life. Limited spaces are also available for external students, based on merit. The students will have the opportunity to meet and bond with others who share their intellectual interests and vision to advance their education in the US.

As Stanford's educational partners, Esol Education schools will conduct the selection process and review all applications, which must include an essay, academic work samples, teacher recommendations, academic records, external test scores, and a personal interview. “We are proud to have been selected by Stanford as a collaborator for its Pre-Collegiate International Institute. This is a unique opportunity for our students to fully experience the ideals and values of American college education at one of the world's leading universities,” said Mr. Walid Abushakra, Chairman. “With rigorous, accredited American and IB academic programs, offering a balanced curriculum, Esol Education graduates enjoy excellent academic success at the world's best universities”

Esol Education's American International School in Cyprus (AISC) is the first school to offer this opportunity to its students in 2016. “With our high academic standards and holistic educational program, AISC students are reputed to be the best among their peers. We have also reached out to public and private schools across the island for their best and brightest, as well as other Esol Education schools around the world, to nominate their exceptional students for this unique opportunity to experience American college life at one of the world's finest universities,” shared Dr. Michelle Kleiss, Director at AISC.

Demonstrating its commitment to the collaboration, Esol Education will provide a total of one full scholarship (US\$4500) divided equally between two successful applicants - one half to an AISC student, and the other to a successful non-AISC student applicant.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Program: Two week residential summer program at the Stanford campus in California

Content: University level courses, labs and workshops across a range of subjects from Stanford School of Humanities and Sciences, Engineering, Medicine and Business

Ages: 14-17 years of age

For more information, please visit: www.esoleducation.com/stanfordsummer2016/



John is a widely respected educational leader whose passion for education is reflected in the positive rapport he maintains with staff and students and the strong sense of community he establishes in the schools he directs.

John obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from York University, Bachelor of Education from the University of Toronto, and Master of Science in Education from Niagara University in New York State.

“We are very fortunate to have such a highly experienced Director at the helm of Esol Education's first school in East Asia,” said Bassam Abushakra, Regional Director at Esol Education. “The rich diversity in the student body in Hong Kong requires knowledgeable and insightful leadership, and we are looking forward to John's guidance in laying a strong foundation for what will be one of East Asia's premier American Schools.”

RENAISSANCE MAN

STRIDES checks in with Andrew Torris, Director at Esol Education's Universal American School, Dubai, for an informal discussion about developments in education, and more!

Now in the second year of his tenure as Director of Esol Education's Universal American School, Dubai, Andrew Torris' experience spans much of the world, with years spent in school leadership positions in the United States, Saudi Arabia, China and the United Arab Emirates. STRIDES catches up with Andy to hear his worldview on everything from our schools and latest educational trends to social media and the revolutionary nature of the common kitchen knife.

1. How do you view UAS's development as a school that is now in its 11th year?

UAS' programs are at their maturation stage. The IB Diploma and PYP programs have been through a full authorization cycle, and the accreditation of the school by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and the Council of International Schools has been through two cycles as well. These all point to a maturation and solidification of the programs. More important, though, are the student learning results, which clearly point to high rigor and high performance.

2. With your experience in Asia/China, how do you view Esol Education's expansion to East Asia with the opening of American School Hong Kong?

I believe the school in Hong Kong will develop a distinct educational atmosphere. American style education and American college admissions are highly valued by the Chinese people and I believe that parents see English medium and American education as the gateway to a world of opportunities. This will provide Esol Education the opportunity to diversify the student body, enhance the recruiting opportunities, and

“We must our heads in the sand if we don't see that social media and the Internet are a significant influence on the fabric of our school cultures...with social media and our blogs we are developing an archive and historical record, which shows our school to the world”

broaden the depth of leadership within the organization. I think the demands of the Chinese context will drive Esol Education to have a fuller picture of the appropriate achievement targets that should be set for students throughout the organization.

3. We hear frequently about new trends that are supposed to revolutionize K-12 education. To what extent should school leaders incorporate new theories or practices into school planning, as opposed to sticking with what is tried and true?

Educators need to be constantly sharpening their pencils when it comes to educational trends. The "design thinking" trends that are currently in the press and being bantered around in schools bring significant value to the conversations and the changes we should be considering. That being said, there is still a significant focus on the basics of literacy, numeracy and the sciences. It is with the new trends that student engagement, student self-worth and student purpose can be built.

4. You are known as an accomplished blogger! How do you think social media and blogging fit into the educational landscape?

We must our heads in the sand if we don't see that social media and the Internet are a significant influence on the fabric of our school cultures. Years ago, I made up my mind that I need to meet my community where they are, and address their need for information about their children's school. Social media is the venue where most people connect with their world. When I was a child the local newspapers and the monthly paper newsletters were the pathway to the parent community. Schools spent vast resources on these methods, which unfortunately provided no significant archive and were wasteful to the environment. Now with social media and our blogs we are developing an archive and a historical record, which shows our school to the world.



RAPID FIRE

Name 3 books every child should read.

"Oh the Places You'll Go" by Dr. Seuss
"Wonder" by R.J. Palacio
"To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee

What's the most exciting part of your day?

Tough call... It's all exciting. I love to be in the front of the school in the morning greeting people!

Share an inspirational quote that always motivates you.

"A mind stretched by a new idea never goes back to its original dimensions"
- Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Whose brain would you like to pick?

HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

What is your favorite educational app?

iMovie

If you weren't an educator, what would you be?

A travel writer or food truck chef or both (ha!)

Name a piece of technology you couldn't live without.

The kitchen knife

Which is the cooler city, Shanghai or Dubai?

Tough question! Both cities are amazing. I don't think I want to decide. I love both places for different reasons

Which sports team do you follow?

The future World Series Champions for 2016 - The Chicago Cubs

SCHOOL NEWS



AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
IN ABU DHABI (AISA)



DEIRA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL (DIS)



INSPIRE CHILDREN'S NURSERY



UNIVERSAL AMERICAN SCHOOL (UAS)



AMERICAN SCHOOL HONG KONG (ASHK)



AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
IN EGYPT - MAIN (AISEM)



AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
IN EGYPT - WEST (AISEW)



CAIRO ENGLISH SCHOOL (CES)



AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
IN CYPRUS (AISC)



UNIVERSAL COLLEGE - ALEY (UCA)

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ATLANTA

12 AISA Students travelled to Atlanta, USA to participate in an international drama conference, where they explored social justice through theatre

By: Nooreen Raheemullah, Secondary School Drama Teacher



“Using what they experienced... ensembles devised theatrical pieces through music, dance, choral work, acting, and storytelling”

Students and two chaperones from AISA traveled to participate in the first ever North American International Schools Theatre Association festival in Atlanta, Georgia! They got to meet and work with students from Jamaica, Mexico, and the United States and even live with Atlanta families for three days.

Having been hosted by the Atlanta International School, students felt right at home, as the professional directors, choreographers, teachers, and music directors inspired them to create theatre based on a famous quote by Martin Luther King Jr.: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Students also had the unique opportunity to hear Martin Luther King III speak about his father and the struggles he faced during the civil rights movement.

By visiting The Center of Civil and Human Rights, students were able to understand and reflect on injustices around the world. Using what they experienced in the museum, ensembles devised theatrical pieces through music, dance, choral work, acting, and storytelling culminating in a presentation to an audience of over 100 people!

Fun sightseeing excursions were also part of the journey! Students visited the World of Coke where they witnessed the soft drink bottling process and even got to taste over 100 different flavors of Coca Cola! Next stop was the world's largest aquarium, where students got to pet starfish and sea urchins. Finally, they got a behind the scenes look at how news is produced at the world famous CNN studios. They even got to ride the on the world's largest escalator, which is over eight stories high!

Overall, AISA students were proud of what they created and explored through the power of drama and will never forget this once in a lifetime experience! In the future, AISA is hoping to make this an annual trip for students. 📍

DISPLAYS OF IMAGINATION AND INNOVATION

Grade 4's display of learning had students writing and performing poems, displaying art using different media, and using QR codes to share their artistic processes with their peers and parents

By: Mary Pittman-Jones, AISA Elementary Principal



Imagination meets innovation meets technology. AISA's Grade 4 students entertained the school community for two and a half hours exhibiting both the processes and the products of one of their units of inquiry. They delved into what it means to express themselves in written and spoken word, in painting and sculpture, using the latest technology to share their learning with us. This display of learning was chock full of performances, products, and reflections and attended by parents, administrators, and other grade levels.

First up were impressive performances by students of poems written throughout the unit: limericks, haiku, cinquans, acrostics, concrete and nonsense poems, and free verse. Many sophisticated devices of poetry from alliteration, onomatopoeia, and rhythm to similes, metaphors, personification, and hyperbole were

AISA'S ELEMENTARY FACULTY GOES SPEED GEEKING

AISA's Elementary teachers use a meeting structure called Speed Geeking to help with their implementation of iPads

By: AISA's Elementary Technology Committee



“‘Speed Geeking’ is...a way to quickly introduce teachers to a wide variety of apps, programs or technological ideas in a short amount of time”

One of our main goals at AISA is to continually build a collaborative community. With the new implementation of iPads in the Elementary School, we decided to focus on developing connections among teachers across grade levels and providing valuable time for teachers to network and share ideas. One of the meeting structures that we used to facilitate this was "Speed Geeking."

"Speed Geeking" is based on the idea of "Speed Dating" – a way to quickly introduce teachers to a wide variety of apps, programs or technological ideas in a short amount of time. Beginning with members of our Technology Committee

as volunteers, session leaders were asked to pick one app they have used in the classroom and share with colleagues practical examples and anecdotal evidence to prove its effect on teaching and learning. As other faculty members begin to explore the plethora of resources available and become more comfortable teaching with technology, more volunteers started flooding in.

On the last Wednesday of each month, teachers are emailed a flier informing them of the menu of short demonstrations that will be presented by their colleagues. Teachers choose five sessions to attend during the hour. After each ten-minute session, an alarm sounds and teachers move from one presentation to the next until the hour is finished. This allows us to maximize the time available while allowing teachers to customize their own experience and be introduced to a variety of tools that they can use in their classes.

The buzz in the room is amazing! Teachers are excited and energized by the discussions and it is obvious that everyone has found at least one thing that they can use to enhance and enrich the learning of their students. 📍



“I wanted everyone to know that fourth graders can be creative even if they are not fully grown up”

not only applied but performed with verve and confidence by our upbeat nine-year-olds. Many performed several poems handling the mics like pro poetry slammers!

From this the audience moved into spectator mode by regarding the same students' works of art composed of both two and three dimensional

works, using watercolor, pastels, and oils. The goal? "Express your lives or emotions or ideas using artistic media." Spectators had been warned ahead of time to bring their iPads as each work of art incorporated a QR code! A snap of the code brought us recordings of the students describing their artistic processes and reflecting on their failures and triumphs.

Reflecting upon the experiences of the units, Judy wrote, "I wanted everyone to know that fourth-graders can be creative even if they are not fully grown up!" Ryan added, "So we can show that kids can do anything they put their mind to." Salma loved the unit because "We got to express our feelings to other people. We got to show that we can write poetry and perform poetry." Baraa agreed: "Our family could see us perform and see our confidence in ourselves. It introduced our school to our parents and made us happy about our work."

We were all feeling extremely upbeat and cool by the end of this innovative display of learning. 📍





DRAGON'S DEN AT DIS

DIS was honored to have Paul Kenny and Edward Quinlan as judges of our Dragon's Den competition held earlier this year

*By: Garrett Spellman, Design Technology Teacher
Angela Chan, Ian Billingham & Brian Cleary, Business Studies Teachers*

“Dubai is a place of opportunities for smart and ambitious young people who are prepared to strive and achieve in life”

Mr. Paul Kenny, winner of two prestigious Entrepreneur of the Year Awards, and founder of Cobone.com, a multi-award-winning Internet company, was speaking to our senior school students about his journey as a successful young entrepreneur in the UAE. From this journey, Paul has been voted as one of the "Top 10 Most Influential People under the Age of 30" in the Middle East and one of the 25 most important people in technology in the region.

DIS students had a great opportunity to meet Paul, hear his story and find out what it takes to become a successful entrepreneur and business person. They also had a chance to ask him different questions, the answers to which will most probably inspire many of them to plan ahead and achieve their goals in the future.

After an engaging morning talk, DIS IB students, who are working towards the Young Enterprise competition, presented their business proposals and innovative ideas to the panel of judges at DIS. It was an honor to have Mr Edward Quinlan join the panel together with Mr. Kenny. Mr. Quinlan was a Senior Partner in a "big four" accounting firm until his retirement and now serves as a Non-Executive Board Member of the Al Futtaim Group of companies.

In his opinion, "Dubai, in the years ahead, will continue to lead in providing job opportunities for those people from all over the world who have an adventurous spirit and a willingness to work hard." Dubai is definitely a place of opportunities for smart and ambitious young people who are prepared to strive and achieve in life and DIS is making sure that each cohort of graduating students is ready for this challenge. 🌱



CRICKET LEGEND BRETT LEE VISITS DIS

One of the world's fastest bowlers inspired students and faculty at the school while spreading awareness about hearing loss and its remedies

By: Jay Tostevin, Head of Sports at DIS

“Brett bowled for both teams in a match involving DIS students and children who are recipients of the cochlear implant technology”

Brett Lee visited DIS on Sunday to launch the Sounds of Cricket™ Campaign in Dubai. The Australian who was once the fastest bowler in the world, has partnered with Cochlear Limited to be their first Global Hearing Ambassador. The campaign will raise awareness of the medical, social and economic benefits that improved hearing can bring through the language of

cricket. Brett bowled for both teams in a match involving DIS students and children who are recipients of the cochlear implant technology. The game played was an exciting one in which a "super over" decided the match. All players received signed cricket bats from Brett, a memory to last a lifetime.

"I am delighted to be in Dubai to help spread the message that if you have hearing loss there is technology that can help. There is a growing community of people in the Middle East with hearing loss stepping forward to express the challenges they face in everyday life." Brett Lee said.



Cochlear Limited recently launched an Arabic language website for people in the Middle East and users can now benefit from a wealth of information about hearing loss, and treatment options, by accessing iwanttohear.com/me. The website covers information on signs of hearing loss, newborn hearing screening and the importance of hearing with both ears. As part of the campaign, people can visit a dedicated website (soundsofcricket.com) where they can access online hearing loss checklists and information to find out if they, or their loved one, might be experiencing hearing loss. If people wish to seek professional advice, they can use the website to find their nearest hearing health professional. 🌱



UAE FLAG DAY

DIS students celebrate with thousands of others in the inaugural Schools Parade

*By: Martyn Clifford, Primary School Principal
Nigel Ludlam, Deputy Primary School Principal*

Earlier this year, 100 Year 5 DIS students and staff joined with 8,000 students from 110 Dubai schools at Creek Park in the inaugural "Schools Parade for HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum - A Show of Love and Appreciation." The event was organized by the Dubai Top 100 Student Leadership Program and supported by Dubai Municipality, Dubai Parks, Dubai Civil Defence, Dubai Police, Dubai Ambulance, Dubai Television, Dubai Media Office, UAE Ministry of Education and the KHDA.

Ten DIS students formed an honour line-up with other students to welcome HH Sheikh Mohammed on his arrival at the park. All students participating were issued with UAE flags and Flag Day caps. At midday, HH Sheikh Mohammed raised the UAE flag, the national anthem was played and sung, and then the ruler mingled with students in the crowd before departing. Simultaneously, 4500 other Dubai school children gathered at parks around the city, while schools and government offices across Dubai raised the UAE flag.

“Ten DIS students formed an honour line-up with other students to welcome HH Sheikh Mohammed on his arrival at the park”

As part of the tribute to HH Sheikh Mohammed, students and staff at the school were invited to submit messages of appreciation for him, which were to be bound into, what was hoped to be, the world's largest

Message of Appreciation. DIS students and staff from Year 1 to IB2 penned messages, which were passed on to organisers for inclusion in the Appreciation Book.

Back at DIS, UAE Flag Day was also celebrated with information shared in classes about the significance of the national flag, and the flag being unfurled. The recognition of this day by our international school community is an important component of understanding and appreciating the culture in which we live. 🌱





INSPIRING NEW STUDY GUIDES

Our study guides enhance learning experiences with investigations, encouraging children's thinking and predicting skills

By: Lisa Lewis, Inspire Nursery Manager

“New teaching guides help teachers plan meaningful learning experiences that engage and challenge children at all times of the day”

As part of our Creative Curriculum, using the Teaching Strategies® program, we have embarked on new teaching guides to help teachers plan meaningful learning experiences that engage and challenge children at all times of the day.

During our first term we conducted two feature studies, which were enjoyable investigations: a Ball Study and a Clothes Study. Both encouraged

children to apply math and literacy skills, as well as arts and technology as they explored concepts in science and social studies.

Children love balls and play with them in different ways: throwing, catching and kicking, with such delight. The study guide enabled the teachers learn how to use this interest to help children explore about the features and nature of different types of balls.

We began with a parent letter, informing them of the study investigation and what they, as a family, can do at home with their child to support this learning, we also asked families to contribute any items that could support and consolidate learning from home into the nursery environment.

Over the course of a week children explored different varieties of balls, how high they bounce, whether they roll, and the various uses for different sports and games, etc.. The children also explored the letter 'B' and went on a hunt to find items that began with the alphabet. At the end of the study parents were invited to come along to the outdoor nursery garden and explore the many different ball games that people play. 🌐



SUCCESSFUL PARENT PARTNERSHIPS

Parents take time out to enjoy their child's learning with parental partnerships at Inspire

By: Lisa Lewis, Inspire Nursery Manager

Parental partnership is crucial to an effective learning environment for all children and research shows that parental engagement has a significant effect throughout a child's school years. At Inspire we strive:

- To support parents as their child's first and most important educators
- To involve parents in the life of the nursery and their children's education
- To be open to input from parents about how the nursery operates
- To support parents in their own continuing education and personal development

“Inspire is very lucky to have parents who feel comfortable to share feedback and promote positive change”

We believe that children benefit from nursery care and education when parents and the nursery work closely together in partnership. We encourage parents to engage in nursery life and prepare them for active involvement in

their child's education before they even enter into formal schooling. Parent participation can be a hard task to achieve for any setting, however the daily life of Inspire has an array of opportunities for parents to actively participate, whether during story time, cooking, planning events or helping to make coffee for our monthly gatherings.

Our first term of the academic year has seen many parents offer their support and become involved with activities, field trips and organizing food for school parties, even helping us to create 'step numbers' in different languages for our nursery aesthetics. Mums and dads have both joined in, which has been wonderful!

Inspire is very lucky to have parents who feel comfortable to share feedback and promote positive change. They are truly our partners and with their support we are able to create a welcoming ethos, communicate effectively and collectively work together for the benefit of all children. 🌐



ALL CHILDREN WELCOME!

A new collaboration helps Inspire Nursery better support special needs students

By: Lisa Lewis, Inspire Nursery Manager

The basic premise upon which Inspire Children's Nursery was founded is that of inclusion – for all children, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, and special needs. We are committed to maintaining a bias-free environment where all children are afforded equal opportunities to learn and grow, are welcomed and respected, and treated with dignity. We strive to instill the values of diversity within our students and staff, and place great value on respect for all.

“Using our therapy room, children can access a range of equipment to support their targets and structured goals”

We have been extremely fortunate to have partnered with a local specialist center to provide in-house speech, language, physiotherapy and occupational therapy for those children who require additional support. This has created a holistic

team collaboration that ensures the goals of every child are being met in a conducive learning environment.

Using our therapy room, children can access a range of equipment to support their targets and structured goals. Teachers and teaching assistants alternate in taking part so they can reinforce the activities within the class and strategies can be shared between professionals. Team meetings are held quarterly with all professionals and families to review and assess new goals.

Aside from the weekly therapy sessions, children are integrated into mainstream classrooms, with the same experiences, opportunities and activities as all others, and we have successfully created an environment where all children can learn. 🌐





CREATING TIME FOR COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Elementary grade level teams at Universal American School hold 'planning retreats' when designing learning experiences for students

By: Larisa Sharifi, PYP Coordinator

“I absolutely love being able to plan learning experiences around inquiry...What the kids get out of it is magical, and I get to be responsive to their needs”

Earlier this year, teachers at Universal American school tried a new structure for collaboration – planning retreats. At the end of a six-week unit of inquiry, grade level teams from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 5 spent a half-day together to reflect on their previous units and to collaboratively plan their upcoming work.

Collaborative planning is at the heart of the IB framework and philosophy. As a PYP school, UAS' teachers plan instruction around six trans-disciplinary Units of Inquiry. This framework puts teachers squarely in the driver's seat when it comes to designing curriculum. "I absolutely love being able to plan learning experiences around inquiry," shared Grade 1 teacher, Lindsey Werner. "What the kids get out of it is magical, and I get to be responsive to their needs."

However, meaningful collaboration and reflection take time. Elementary and Middle School Principal, Pat Hould, often reminds teachers that teaching and planning is "like building the plane while flying it."

Planning retreats were organized so that teachers would have four and a half hours of uninterrupted time to organize for learning. "Planning inquiry-based units is different from planning based solely on content and skills," explained Grade 5 teacher, Anoushae Beram. "Teachers have to be crystal clear on what they want students to be able to know, do, and understand – you have to know where a unit is going, what questions will drive the inquiry, how the unit will end – all before you begin teaching!"

So far, teachers have responded enthusiastically to having more time to "think ahead." UAS will be holding planning retreats at the end of each Unit of Inquiry cycle to give teachers more time to collaboratively plan and learn together. 📍



STUDENT VOICE GUIDES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Guided by the findings of Dr. Russel Quaglia, UAS works towards implementing Quaglia Student Voice and Aspirations framework

By: Andrew Torris, Director

Universal American School recently took the first steps in a journey to seek new and more effective ways to engage in listening to the important voices of our students. Guided by the work of Dr. Russell Quaglia, the UAS teachers and administrators began to recognize research-based findings that have begun to transform our thinking. Some of these findings include:

- Students need positive role models. Students who have these role models are:
- 4 times more like to enjoy participating in classes
 - 4 times more likely to believe learning is fun
 - 4 times more likely engage in new learning.

Students need teachers who care about them as individuals and care about their problems. Students who have teachers who care about them are:

- 5 times more likely to think that what they learn in school is preparing them for their future.
- 3 times more likely to put forth their best effort
- 3 times more likely to believe they can make a difference in the world.

“Self-worth among students is evident when they know they are valued, trusted and have people they can trust”



RUMORS OF SUCCESS AT UAS

High School students persevere together to organize successful fall show at UAS

By: Victoria Williams, Theatre Director

“Students meticulously took care of every little detail, from building the first ever elevated platform on stage at UAS, complete with a staircase, to the colors of the walls, furniture and props”

This year, we wanted to include all of the high school students in the school's fall show, not just students who took theatre. Over the years it has been apparent that many students like to be involved in the shows but they can't because they don't take the class. On this occasion, however, every high school student had the opportunity to be involved.

As soon as the play selection was announced to be "Rumors," the farcical play, students rushed to join. There followed a rigorous selection process after which students were given various responsibilities including lighting, sound, set design, costumes and of course, promoting the show.

Aiming to support their cast and director, students purposefully took charge and ownership of the project, despite being slightly worried about this new challenge and the responsibilities it posed. However, with some encouragement they forged on.

On stage, students meticulously took care of every little detail, from building the first ever elevated platform on stage at UAS, complete with a staircase, to the colors of the walls, furniture and props. All the elements came together perfectly to create a convincing affluent New York townhouse. It was a long process but one the students felt most proud of as they had done it all themselves.

In terms of promoting the show, conscious of the impact of recognizable branding, the students created a standout logo for use on posters, flyers and tickets. And the marketing didn't stop there! A promotional video was broadcast around the school, sent to the parent community and finally the students themselves approached teachers, administrators, parents and even neighbors to sell tickets for the performances.

Of course the actors had a big challenge too. Following basic blocking instructions, warm ups and techniques for acting in a farce, it was up to the actors themselves to take ownership of developing their own character. Students were encouraged to cast a critical eye on their work and make improvements wherever they saw fit. The students even shopped and created their own costumes!

"We absolutely enjoyed taking ownership of our show. Ms. Williams often reminded us that we are the face of the UAS Theatre. She taught us that we cannot be afraid to make choices. We have put hard work into this show and feel so professional," shared the student committee. I am beyond excited and proud of the cast and crew of Rumors. I set high expectations and they stepped up to the plate. 📍



Student need schools that make them feel accepted. Students who do feel accepted are:

- 8 times more likely to believe they can be successful
- 4 times more likely to participate in school and class
- 4 times more likely to ask questions in class

Students need teachers who make school an exciting place to learn. Students who do are:

- 7 times more likely to think teachers respect them
- 7 times more likely be creative in classes

The guiding principles of the Quaglia Student Voice and Aspirations framework focus on student self-worth, student engagement and student purpose. Self-worth among students is evident when they know they are valued, trusted and have people they can trust. Students show engagement in their positive attitudes, showing desire to learn and being emotionally, intellectually and behaviorally invested in their learning. Finally, purpose exists when students take full responsibility for themselves as people and learners.

The Universal American School faculty and administration will begin, in earnest, the implementation of this framework in the fall of 2016, but in the meantime our colleagues are collaborating with the Quaglia book "Student Voice" and we are all learning together about how to instill the conditions in our school that will build a more healthy, more open and more responsive environment listening to student voice. 📍



LITTLE INVESTIGATORS LEARN BIG IDEAS

"Project Approach" to teaching in Early Childhood guides students through inquiry-based learning at a young age

By: Dr. Sara L. Lekas, Early Childhood Principal

“Students really enjoy this approach as they love to investigate and learn about the world around them”

In Early Childhood at AISE, we like to use what we call the "Project Approach" to teaching. This method allows teachers to go beyond the traditional use of concrete notions such as manipulatives and resources we have in school and use projects and essential questions to highlight the learning process. Teachers use open-ended studies of everyday topics to develop in-depth thinking, while engaging the hearts and minds of their students. The teacher guides his or her students through processes to study topics with purpose and flexibility.

Project inquiries encourage in-depth understanding, covering a wider range of appropriate sub-topics. Some of these projects take several weeks or longer to complete, depending on the age and interests of the students, thus extending the natural curiosity of the student. The project approach also enables students to think about something and share their ideas with classmates thus promoting their language skills.

Students really enjoy this approach as they love to investigate and learn about the world around them. Projects are like good stories. They have three parts: a beginning, middle, and end. Here's a summary of the three phases of project work.

In the first phase, students choose what to investigate, with some guidance from the teacher. The students discuss what they already know about the topic. The teacher helps students record their ideas. With help from the teacher, the students list questions that they want to answer during their study. Students then talk about what answers they might find to their questions. The teacher lists their predictions.

In the second phase, the teacher and students collect information. The teacher helps the students plan trips (around the school) to places where they can do field work and helps them find people to interview who can answer their questions. The students use books and computers to find information. During class meetings, students report their findings. The teacher encourages them to ask questions and make comments about each other's findings. The students might make drawings, take pictures, write words and labels, create graphs of things they measured and counted, and construct models. As they learn more, they can review and revise what they have made.

The third phase is the conclusion of the project. The students discuss the evidence they have found that helps them answer their questions. The teacher helps them compare what they have learned with what they knew before the project began. Students decide how to show what they did and what they found out to parents and peers who were not there. Students create displays to share the story of the project with others. Displays might include their drawings, notes, stories, taped conversations, photographs, models, graphs, and videotapes. Students can also act out what they have learned. The students might invite parents and other guests to a presentation about their project. The teacher can help the young investigators decide how to tell the story of what they did and what they found out.



TALES FROM THE FOURTH GRADE

This teacher's "no questions" approach helps students land at their own answers

By: Cathe Pearson, Grade 4 Teacher



Fourth graders are mysterious metamorphs. Educating them requires accepting their transitions. One day they are brilliant, bionic beings ready for any challenge; other days suspicious squirts unable to tie their shoes.



ROBOTIC ENGINEERING ENGAGES LEARNERS

After-school Robotics course offers multi-faceted learning opportunities for Middle School students

By: Mark Tennant, Middle School Assistant Principal

“The individual skills of the students shone...they were motivated, excited, and the look of satisfaction on their faces when they accomplished tasks was something special”

It can be challenging to get students interested in those aspects of technology that are not solely linked to their computer or mobile phone. Technology is critical for innovation, a trait we want to instill in our students. In Middle School, we recently introduced Robotic Engineering as an after-school activity in the hope we could change the mindsets of students and get them interested in this area at an educational level, duplicating the success of our High School Robotics course, which is already in its 4th year.

When we began the process of selecting after school activities we wanted to cover a variety of interests. Robotics offers practical and problem solving opportunities, which, together, bring out the competitive nature of students in a positive way. Programming can be abstract, but having a physical object, with which the students could interacted, helped immensely with their cognitive understanding of program code and its capabilities.

Students responded very well to practical activities associated with Robotics. Many students learn kinesthetically and Robotics is a great way to bring out this learning style, which often takes the back burner in classes. Robotics also taught students to work successfully in groups; their collaboration and communication skills visibly improved week by week. The individual skills of the students shone through as they progressed through the assignments. They were motivated, excited, and the look of satisfaction on their faces when they accomplished tasks was something special. The course itself is very hands-on, the onus is on the students, while the teacher is present only for guidance and motivation.

As educators we assist students with the development of their skills for their future. Robotic Engineering has introduced Middle School students to the importance of collaboration, designing and program coding. Robotics also introduced aspects of Math, primarily geometry. Students now have a greater appreciation of Math and its real world applications. Technology is, and will be a part of their life for a long time. Through this activity many expressed interest in further study in this area as they progress through their education.

We have to meet kids where they are, not just plowing through a curriculum. Kids need to work on problems, not be given answers. They need to "get their hands dirty," have their brains do summersaults and be rewarded with that warm feeling of accomplishment.

While students work, I say, "Read the directions and try your best. No questions for 10 minutes." Hands go up immediately; minds thinking, "She certainly isn't talking to ME."
I restate, "No questions..."
"But, it's not a question," one will blurt, "I just wondered..."
"NO questions."

When time is up students may come one at a time. ONE. Often we have to recount what one means. I go through the problem with them:

"What don't you understand?"
"Everything."
"You can't not understand everything."

OR

"Read the question."
"Look at the chart and determine how many..."
"Point to the chart"
"Ohhhhhh...."

Many students are "learned – helpless." They have been expected to be right for so long they are afraid to be wrong. They think, "If I get it wrong...the world will end...my parents will hate me...my friends will laugh at me."

Instead of trying, they give up. Educators, under pressure, want to get through curriculum and give answers so kids won't fail. Failure equals learning. Our job is to teach kids how to learn, and fail with dignity, then pull themselves back up. If my kids only learn how to learn, I feel I have done my job. Oh, yeah, and that listening thing.

We may want to prove our teaching prowess by forcing kids to do complex problems, or write a treatise, but fourth graders aren't ready for it. It goes in one ear (maybe) and out the other. You see all the debris on the floor? That's the knowledge you thought you were imparting to your students, falling out of their heads as they walk down the hall. Back to educating fourth graders. Love them, be firm, give them responsibility, challenge them and require them to think. Help them work together. I want a future that is lead by intelligent, responsible, problem solvers. Encourage your morphs to fly.

“Kids need to work on problems, not be given answers. They need to "get their hands dirty," have their brains do summersaults and be rewarded with that warm feeling of accomplishment”



TEACHING ENGLISH TO OUR ARABIC COLLEAGUES

For the first time at AISE-West, we are teaching our Arabic workers conversational English on Saturdays

By: Dr. Les Potter, Director

“It is very gratifying to see adults give up their lunchtime on a work day to learn a new skill”

One Saturday, we started a free program to assist our Arabic workers with their English skills. It was a challenge to find common ground of days and times to meet for the classes. Many of our workers are already here at school on weekends, and it was very gratifying to see participants give up their lunchtime on a workday to learn a new skill. Our teachers also agreed to give up one day of their weekends to help our workers.

Hugely popular, the sessions averaged around 75 “students” per one-hour class each Saturday. This program was something that was requested

for by many of the Arabic workers and we were fortunate to have six highly skilled and dedicated teachers volunteer their time. The first week the students introduced themselves and were assessed on their command of English, then divided by their ability - low, medium and high levels. Teachers were flexible enough to work with the different skill levels and decided to continue the classes until they felt that student goals had been accomplished.

Six of our regular teachers signed up to work with the adults to help them communicate at school. The program was very successful, where language instruction was provided through games, role-playing and scenarios. The goal was to have adult students learn enough English so they feel comfortable communicating with other English-speaking adults at the school. When the program was completed we rewarded the students with a certificate of accomplishment.

We would like to thank our six teachers for their time and energy to volunteer to help our workers: Noha El Hamamsy, Sophie Sewailem, Dalia Mokol, Akilia Nakham, Stephanie Kattera, and Melissa Newman

Now we are thinking about offering Arabic classes to our English-speaking teachers! 🇸🇪



INTERNATIONAL PEACE DAY

AISE-West Elementary School teachers worked together to create a class mini mural representation of peace in conjunction with International Day of Peace

By: Autum Callender, Pre-K Teacher



Increasingly, it seems as if our world is full of hate and violence but it doesn't have to be! AISE-West celebrated our 3rd Annual Peace Day coinciding with the International Day of Peace. People around the world celebrate and demonstrate peaceful endeavors on this same day.



JOINING HANDS AROUND THE WORLD

Elementary students participate in a unique art study with other students around the world

By: Ms. Krista Cary, Art Teacher

“The study, as well as our students, examined similarities and differences between drawings of a hand from a diverse range of international students”

This year the elementary artists at AISEW were able to be a part of an interesting international drawing project through the Brooklyn College CUNY of New York.

To be a part of this project, I accepted an invitation from the Brooklyn College to participate in the study. In turn, I invited my students and their parents to participate. By participating in the study, students and parents were able to view their completed drawings on an online platform alongside the similar drawings of other student artists around the world!

All my students were invited to participate and they completed a drawing according to the strict specifications of the study. By regulating what would be drawn and how much time would be allowed for the drawing, the remaining variable factors were mainly personal factors such as the artists' mental processes and cultural background. The study, as well as our students, examined similarities and differences between drawings of a hand from a diverse range of international students.

All students completed the project, but in order for their work to be published online, their parents' consent was needed. Many parents participated by providing consent and completing a short survey for the Brooklyn College CUNY. It was great to participate in this project as it allowed our students to see themselves as part of a global community of artists and researchers. For the students whose parents participated, it was also an exciting opportunity to see their work published in an international database of drawings. In addition, viewing the variety of drawings on the online platform was interesting and inspiring for all of our students.

The drawings in this study can be viewed online at <https://www.creatubbles.com/galleries/SBxaf5v3/list>

Drawings by : Aaryawart Karki 5C, Alia El Sawy 2D. 🇸🇪



During the last three years at our school, this project has evolved from pinwheels to peace poles and this year, mini-murals from 38 classes (PreK-5th grade). During the days and weeks leading up to Peace Day, classroom teachers worked with their students to identify what peace looks like, sounds like, and how it affects each of them. They then took ideas from all the students and created beautiful works of art, which are now hanging in our lobby as a constant reminder of peace. The creation of these works of art and the lessons surrounding it sparked genuine discussions in the classroom. Teachers and students alike were able to express their vision for the future.

“When I first saw the final project, I was so “teacher proud!”

Our music teachers worked with the students to learn the song, “We Are Children of Peace,” for our celebration. During the celebration the whole elementary school

(over 750 students, teachers, assistants, and administration staff) gathered on the soccer field. Together they joined as one voice to sing while class representatives paraded around the field to show off their work. We ended with a reflective moment of silence and with that, hopefully, we continue to plant seeds of hope and change for the future.

Several weeks later, the mini murals were permanent fixtures in the school. When I first saw the final project, I was so “teacher proud!” Seeing the work displayed reminds me of what an amazing group of teachers we have and their willingness to collaborate with one another and their students. It is my hope that the lessons learned will have a lasting impression on all of those involved with the project. 🇸🇪





NEUROSCIENCE IN ENGLISH

Can essential oils really help students focus and engage? Let's find out!

By: Jannine Gammond, Head of English

“A point that particularly interested me was the notion that using certain essential oils can help students’ focus, so I decided to conduct an experiment...peppermint oil is the clear winner”

At the Esol Education Professional Development Conference, I attended a fantastic Neurology workshop, lead by Lisa Gibson of Universal American School, Dubai, which was all about the science behind how teenage brains work. I constantly find myself battling against the teenage brain, and I'm sure all teachers have experienced this!

One section of the workshop was focused on 'sensory memory' and how the teenage

brain receives and uses sight, sounds, touch, smell and taste. A point that particularly interested me was the notion that using certain essential oils can help students' focus, so I decided to conduct an experiment!

Armed with recommended oils and my oil burner, my classes had two weeks of different scents and combinations. After each lessons pupils were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'I felt more focused'. Here are the results!

- 31% agreed or strongly agreed - Combination of vanilla and peppermint oil
- 41% agreed or strongly agreed - Vanilla oil
- 67% agreed or strongly agreed - Peppermint oil
- 37% agreed or strongly agreed - Neal's Yard 'Remedies to Roll' Study (containing clove, orange, lavender and basil)

So peppermint oil is the clear winner for getting teenagers to focus; though worth noting, many felt the vanilla oil relaxed them and said it might help them calm down and focus during a test or assessment. Whether the 'Hawthorne effect' was a contributing factor, or the elevated level of focus was psychosomatic, I don't know, what I do know is whatever helps my students to concentrate and engage, no matter how whacky, I'm giving it a go! 🍀



TOUCHING LIVES

CES Students' IB CAS project make a real impact on disadvantaged youth in Cote d'Ivoire

By: Zenath Biscombe, Business/CAS Coordinator



Last year, Ms. Parry, a former Art teacher at CES, travelled to Cote d'Ivoire and established the Art + Soul Project, teaching Art to disadvantaged youth, particularly those who are victims of child abuse, child labour and trafficking. After visiting the community school and witnessing the desperate need for basic resources first hand, Ms. Parry started a crowd funding campaign, and the IB1 CAS students chose the Art +Soul Project as their first service CAS project.

Students undertook a variety of fund raising activities including a bake sale and a "Guess the Number of Sweets in a Jar" competition. The bake sale was project-managed by Maya Morshed who did an amazing job of organising IB students and arranging for delicious treats and pizza to be sold at break time. Whilst students had only one week to raise funds they all rose to the challenge and at the end of the activities they had raised over 1,700 Egyptian Pounds.



TECHNOLOGY IN EARLY YEARS

Fun learning with iPads at CES, engages students to be better writers, thinkers, independent learners and users of modern day technology

By: Karen Abdel-Megid, Year 1 Team Leader, Early Years

“iPads allow children to experience the unbelievable, giving them the tools to imagine events they have never experienced”

Imagine we are children, we are young, and we are just starting our journey through school. We start school in FS1. We are three, maybe four years old but we learn the routines of daily school life, we are expected to learn to be independent, to line up quietly, sit nicely, play co-operatively, start learning pencil skills, letter sounds, numbers, not to mention, build our fine and gross motor skills.

Then we move into FS2 and we have to build on these skills, we have to sit for longer and concentrate harder. We have to write more, linking sounds to words and we have to begin reading simple sentences. Our teacher asks us to imagine we are in another country or travelling through space.

"'Imagine you are travelling in a hot air balloon,' our teacher says. 'We've never been in a hot air balloon, how can we imagine it? 'Now you are flying a plane; what will you see?' she asks, 'pretend you are in a bubble.' But we won't fit inside a bubble! Our teachers ask us to do so much, but what if...what if we could go in that hot air balloon? What if we could fly that plane? What if we could fit into a bubble?"

Well at CES we can!

iPads allow children to experience the unbelievable, giving them the tools to imagine events they have never experienced. Yes, we put our class into bubbles and hot air balloons!

Now imagine again, we are five, nearly six, years old. Finally, we are ready for Year 1 and now the teacher is asking us to write a story of our own. We need to use capital letters, finger spaces, adjectives, time connectives AND we need to use our imagination! In Maths, we need to make a graph and the graphs look so difficult and complicated. We now have ICT lessons and need to show that we have good knowledge of how to make things happen. It's just so much to learn!

But what if.....

What if we learnt time connectives making a comic strip on the iPad, and we could see that magical bird that teacher wants us to describe using adjectives, and we could build that mind map in a more interesting way. What if we could sort data using pictures on an iPad. Maybe we would enjoy our learning so much that we wouldn't even know we were learning!

Well at CES we can! 🍀

“The money raised by our students has helped to fund Awa's education for the next two years and has paid for her to access the therapy she needs to recover from her ordeal”

The funds raised went to towards purchasing basic school equipment such as books, pens and pencils. Ms. Parry also purchased paint to brighten up the community school. Whilst working in Cote d'Ivoire Ms. Parry met Awa, a six-year-old girl who was rescued from a life of trafficking. The money raised by our students helped to fund Awa's education for the next two

years and paid for her to access the therapy she needs to recover from her ordeal.

Ms. Parry visited CES recently and explained to students how their efforts to raise funds helped many different people in Cote d'Ivoire. Students listened intently and realised the changes they can personally make in the world whilst participating in the CAS programme.

"The fact that the money we collected has a huge impact on the emotional state of people that are not only in another country, but are also are in a huge need of therapy made me feel that taking a small step such as raising money could make a big difference," remarked Maya.

The CAS students have many more projects planned, one of which is the decoration of the school staircases. As their CAS teacher I am extremely proud of my students and I know that through the CAS programme each one of them can make a real difference to the lives of others. 🍀





WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL LEGEND?

Students use board games to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of key concepts from Paulo Coelho's novel, The Alchemist

By: Laramie Shockey, IB English Teacher and Head of Department

“While these dreams and aspirations may not be entirely realistic, the task provided students with a unique opportunity to think about ways to reconcile their passions with their future work lives”

After a detailed study of Paulo Coelho's novel, *The Alchemist*, Grade 10 students at AISC were asked to identify their "personal legends." According to Coelho, a personal legend is that thing, that in your heart-of-hearts, you most yearn to achieve in your life. In the book, the main character follows his heart to find his destiny and to achieve his personal legend, realizing along the way that he has all the power needed to make it happen, and that he has, in fact, more control over his life than he initially realized. Coelho posits that when a person really wants something, the whole universe conspires to make it happen. Students explored this idea through the creation of a board game representing their own deepest wishes and desires.

Once the restrictions of financial concerns, family pressures, and academic performance were stripped away, students identified dreams and aspirations ranging from being rock stars and professional football players, to owning a successful bakery and just travelling the world to experience as many places and people as possible.

While these dreams and aspirations may not be entirely realistic, the task provided students with a unique opportunity to think about ways to reconcile their passions with their future work lives.

Each student created and shared presentations about their personal legends and to explain how their paths to fulfillment connect to the various elements of the novel. Students used their hand-made board games to demonstrate ways in which chance, decision-making, mentorship, and attitude help or hinder one's journey to happiness. The unit culminated in a class period dedicated to playing the games, to experience, in a fun way, the trials and tribulations that may be encountered during the journey to finding one's destiny. 📌



THE THIRSTY CROW

Students create mathematical models and use them to make predictions

By: Nathaniel Highstein, Math Teacher and Math Department Head

One of Aesop's Fables tells the story of a crow who comes across a half-full pitcher of water in the desert. He cannot reach the water until he discovers that dropping pebbles into the vessel causes displacement. Then the water level rises so he can quench his thirst. Using this narrative as our lesson hook, Algebra students were given a cup full of marbles and a graduated cylinder partially filled with water. They were asked to predict how many marbles they would need to overflow the water in the cylinder.

Students dropped their marbles into the cylinder one at a time and collected data points as the water level rose. They created scatterplots of this data and calculated an average rate of change. Next, they used this information to find an equation for a line of best fit, which helped them to make a confident prediction about how many marbles they would need to bring the water all the way to the top. We took out enough marbles to test their predictions and added them to the cylinder.



SCIENCE? "JUST DO IT!"

IB Chemistry HL students of AISC take part in the prestigious Stockholm Junior Water Project Competition

By: Dr. Andreas Economou, IB Chemistry Teacher

I truly believe that there is no better way to promote science other than by "doing" science at a high level. By getting involved with the Stockholm Junior Water Project Competition (SJWP) AISC students engaged in meaningful research with field experts, communicated their thoughts and ideas and defended their research against a panel of experts. In the end, they proudly celebrated their achievements and most recently, were recognized for their outstanding work.

The benefits of being involved in the scientific competition were not only about academic achievement. Competitions at this level provide an opportunity for students to form a bond that is only achieved when the stakes are high and when everybody depends on each other's contributions.

“Competitions at this level provide an opportunity for students to form a bond that is only achieved when the stakes are high and when everybody depends on each other's contributions”

Our students' inquiry for our first attempt in the competition was on the questionable effects of increased sunscreen use in sea water - in tourist-attractive places such as Cyprus. At the time, our IB students had just barely completed the first few topics of IB HL Chemistry. They researched the existing literature and designed an experiment where a prepared solution of artificial sea-water was treated with different amounts of sunscreen and tested for the effects on a number of abiotic factors such as conductivity, pH and turbidity in order to prepare calibration lines. Then they introduced their findings on sea-water samples that were collected from the south-western coasts of Cyprus. It was an excellent opportunity to practice their ICT, time management and project presentation skills. The students submitted their work to the national committee along with 16 other schools and AISC was among the 6 finalist schools. The students defended their work verbally and they achieved the 4th place. You would expect students to be disappointed by the result, but

instead they were very reflective of their work and determined to do better next time!

This year, with much more chemistry knowledge and experience, the students' second inquiry sought to determine the quality of re-used wastewater in draught-hit countries such as Cyprus. With the support of NIREAS International Water Research Centre, an organization who is already working towards similar goals and a leading expert in the field, we set out to specifically evaluate the quality of sewage water in respect to the content in erythromycin, a widespread antibiotic, commonly found in sewage and wastewater (and is associated with a number of current and emerging antibiotic-resistant bacteria) after the wastewater effluent has been treated with a novel water treatment procedure that involves microfiltration, solar oxidation and final treatment with active carbon.

This project is ambitious and it has brought AISC students in contact with a high-level research facility. They have been exposed to a number of experimental procedures and scientific approaches that would have otherwise remained confined within the context of a text-book or some would have remained completely unknown. At the same time, they got the opportunity to co-operate with students currently pursuing their Masters or PhD degrees in the field and shared their views and aspirations with them.

We would like to congratulate Stephanie Agathangelou, Aleksandra Vujnovic and Nicolas Bröer for their outstanding project that was presented to a panel of experts just recently in Limassol. The team received an honorary mention for their work. The judges commented that their research was of a high standard and of equivalent quality to a Master's Thesis.

I urge all science teachers out there to reach out to their community, find the experts and get their students on-board with an appropriate research project related to an international competition, and be prepared to be amazed by the results. 📌

This type of task helps students connect the math from their classroom to questions that they will come across in the real world. Even if they will not need to calculate the number of marbles to overflow the water in a cylinder, they will almost certainly need to use similar problem-solving skills, and equally importantly, they will have to decide which math skills they need to apply to novel situations. Students react very strongly when they see the "answer" to this type of task—in contrast to how most students react when looking-up the answer in the back of the math textbook. Even reluctant mathematicians couldn't help but look closely as we counted the last few marbles out! 📌

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LEBANESE INDEPENDENCE DAY

Over 800 UCA Preschool – Grade 12 students and faculty celebrate Lebanese Independence Day through song, dance and poetry

By: Esther Sarver, Assistant Director
Lama Shehayeb, Preschool & Elementary Activities Coordinator

“Lebanese Independence Day links the past to the present and inspires students with the hope of having a better and brighter future”

Earlier this year, over 800 Preschool – Grade 12 UCA students celebrated Lebanese Independence Day, which links the past to the present and inspires students with the hope of having a better and brighter future. Led by our History and Arabic departments, students and faculty across all grade levels celebrated this special day through song, dance and poetry in our new auditorium.

All assemblies started with the Lebanese national anthem and a speech from UCA Director, Mr. Redd, about Lebanese Independence Day. In

the Preschool assembly, KG1 – KG3 students sang songs about independence and what it means to us in Arabic, English and French. Elementary students also watched a short movie about independence, then sang in three languages during their assembly. Small plays were also performed in both English and Arabic. Middle and high school students sang in three languages, recited poems and performed the traditional folk dance, “Dabkeh.” UCA’s Arabic Choir performed several national songs related to the event during all assemblies. Many students commented that, as a result of the presentations, they were proud to be Lebanese. Nour Ghanam, a junior at UCA stated “I am proud to be Lebanese. I am motivated to work to make Lebanon into a great country – the country that we all dream about and imagine it could be.”

In addition to performances, Grade 10 students competed in the annual Independence Day Academic Contest. Six of the best students competed against each other by answering questions concerning History, Geography and Arabic Literature. The winners were Carla Salman and Jad Daou. Seniors performed a traditional dance and an original play depicting what the Arab region is currently experiencing. The play stressed loving one’s country, no matter what.

No celebration is complete without food! Traditional Lebanese cuisine was served in our cafeteria during independence week. The students had the chance to sample traditional Lebanese food such as: Taboulé, Hummus, Kibbeh, Hreesi, Fattouch, Fatteh and Knefe. 🍴



The play stressed loving one’s country, no matter what.



HIGHLAND HAWK UNIVERSITY DEBUTS AT UCA

Starting with technology, the “university” offers professional development modules to UCA teachers

By: Gerald Redd, Director

Professional development at UCA moved into high gear this school year with the creation of “Highland Hawk University” (HHU). Named after the school’s mascot the Highland Hawk, Highland Hawk University offers professional development modules that are designed to be prescriptive and tiered toward a teacher’s self-assessed, individual proficiency level in targeted professional domains.



DANCING OUR WAY INTO THE FUTURE

The UCA Dance Program and dance students are experiencing significant growth

By: Gerald Redd, Director

“I think that dance is amazing. Not only is it good exercise, I also feel like I can let go of all the distractions inside my head and communicate my feelings through dance”

UCA has seen incredible growth in the number of students participating in after school activities this school year. Participation has increased from 180 students for the 2014-2015 school year to over 400 students enrolled in after-school activities for the current academic year. Several new after school activities were added for Grades 3-6 including Art Attack, Mad Science, Sound of Music, Basketball and Football. While the additional after school programs have proven to be a hit, no other after school program has experienced the same degree of growth as the UCA Dance Program.

The UCA Dance Program began in 2002 as an after school program to prepare students to perform in the American University Beirut (AUB) Folk Dance Festival. In addition to performing in the Folk Dance Festival, the UCA Folk Dance troupe became a regular fixture at the annual UCA Spring Fest and other programs over the last thirteen years. Now under the direction of Mrs. Melissa Chaar, the Folk Dance program has grown from fifteen students to a current enrollment of over 70.

Mrs. Chaar has described clear goals for the current UCA dance program. “Since taking over the program, I have moved the Folk Dance program to elementary grades 5 and 6. I overhauled the Middle and High School program to focus on dance as a performing art. This year, I also changed the approach of how I teach dance to students. I decided to challenge my students to a higher standard of discipline, motivation, creativity, and expectations. This year is about breaking down what they have been told about the world of dance, while also showing them what they can achieve in life through participating in our dance program.”

Her efforts seem to be paying off as voiced by two of her current students. Grade 8 ADP student Rena Shemait had the following to say about her experience in dance this year. “I think that dance is amazing. Not only is it good exercise, I also feel like I can let go of all the distractions inside my head and communicate my feelings through dance.” Grade 11 student Jana Sleem echoes a similar sentiment, as well. “We have not only learned how to dance, we have also learned how to love and believe in ourselves. We have been taught control, awareness, movement, confidence and the meaning of beauty. We’ve entered the world of performing arts which has now become our second home” 🍴



One of the major areas of focus for HHU PD modules this year is technology; specifically technology applications and the integration of technology in the classroom. We opened our new secondary building last year that is completely wireless and equipped with interactive projectors in every classroom. Although our new building provides our teachers unprecedented access to current technology, we discovered that many of our staff were in need of significant professional development in order for them to utilize the technology effectively. Our staff completed a self-assessment that helped us identify their proficiency level and their individual needs for professional development. Once our teachers’ needs were identified, professional development modules were designed to bolster their existing skills and help them acquire new ones

“The HHU experience was able to break the fear in us for all things technology related and made it way easier for us to include technology in our daily work”

In addition to identifying the faculty’s needs, teachers with highly developed technology skill sets, who regularly utilize technology during instruction were recruited to provide content-specific professional development modules for their departments. These teachers, dubbed “iChampions,” have continued to offer professional development to their departments during scheduled department meetings throughout the year.

The final step in the process has been HHU sessions that are led by the UCA IT department and technology teachers. These sessions are offered to teachers during and after school and are designed to remove the “fear” some teachers have of acquiring new skills. “The HHU experience was able to break the fear in us for all things technology related and made it way easier for us to include technology in our daily work. For example,

I found that I can prepare lessons ahead of time and show them to my students without losing time writing on the board. The teachers that gave the HHU sessions also deserve credit for introducing technology in an uncomplicated way that allowed us to feel that it really isn’t that difficult after all,” shared Daed Abdelkhalik, Secondary Arabic Teacher.

Faculty that participated in leading HHU technology professional development also found the experience rewarding as well. “There is no greater reward than that received when you support someone and they succeed. It is most challenging to teach adults and moreover your colleagues, but our approach was to become their mentor in the various areas that they needed to improve in. In this way, we are able to simplify our messages and cater to each individual’s needs in their skills as well as in their specific content. Our biggest accomplishment has been breaking their fear of technology and making sure that our faculty’s skill set is raised to the next level,” said Rana Al Awar, UCA HR Director. 🍴

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STRIDES would like to thank all our contributors for taking the time and effort to put together submissions for the school news section.

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