

W I N T E R 2 0 1 8

ISP News

International Student Program
Grand Rapids Christian Schools

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Fall Retreat

Kayaks, zip lines, s'mores, time with friends, and beautiful fall colors were all part of the ISP Fall Retreat this year at Pine Trail Camp. It was an opportunity for community building between international and American students and a time to simply enjoy the great outdoors, away from electronics and the stress of assignments and deadlines. 'Grace' was the theme of the group talks and students had time to reflect on the depth and significance of this Biblical truth.

University Visits



This fall several international students joined university trips provided by the International Student Program to visit the campuses of Northwestern University, University of Michigan, University of Chicago, Purdue University, Wheaton College, Loyola University, and Carnegie Mellon University. Visiting a variety of universities is an excellent way for students to learn which school is a good fit for them. We recommend visiting small colleges as well as large universities, state schools and private schools, because each type of school has its advantages.

Kate Zhou: University of Michigan

I encourage you to visit and apply to a wide range of schools, from small liberal arts colleges to big universities. It's hard to know what you are looking for until you experience the campus. Also, have peace and keep praying. Anxiety might take over you in such a crucial time, but remember that God will lead you to the right place no matter how anxious or helpless you feel. I love U of M. This is a place where everyone can find somewhere to belong without ever feeling bored. I made my first Indian, Turkish, even Taiwanese South African friend, and I live together with Muslims, agnostics, and Pentecostal Christians. I'm awed by how colorful my life has become every single day.



Isaac Chen: Calvin College

GRCHS has a great facility and great teachers. It prepared me well academically and socially for college. Many of my friends who came straight from China to a U.S. college find academics and social life very challenging. I think the best college is a college that suits your values, personality, and interests. Don't let the rankings or the big named school block your sight on other great opportunities. What I enjoy the most at Calvin is the interaction with professors; the professors here take personal interest in their students.

Jackie Liu: University of Washington

GRCHS helped me with time management skills. Having the chance to improve my English for three years greatly diminished the language barrier at university. The AP courses taught me how to do self-guided study. I learned so much about American culture from living with a host family. I encourage you to challenge yourself academically because exploring different disciplines is much harder at some universities. It also hurts more at university level when you don't perform well.



Carl Yao: Virginia Tech

At GRCHS I got the chance to familiarize myself with American teaching methodology, which assisted me in a smoother transition to college. GRCHS also has a community of inclusive faculty and students, which provided me a sense of belonging to this community. College is about community. You will form communities everywhere and get to know different people. It's also the place where you will make decisions about your life. It's amazing that you can paint a picture of your future with your friends around to help decorate it.





Student Stories: Vanessa Blas

“A real work of God,” are the words Vanessa uses to describe how she came to be a student at GRCHS. The story begins at a hospital in Bolivia’s capital, La Paz. Vanessa’s mother, the head nurse of her floor, encouraged her to come to the hospital to practice her English with the American patient she was attending. A rare opportunity since foreigners seldom came to their local hospital. It took a week for Vanessa to summon the courage to meet this foreign traveler. She was Lindsay Kiersky, the former Home Economics teacher at GRCHS. She had recently left her teaching position to explore the world with her new husband, when their travels were cut short due to medical complications. Vanessa was pleasantly surprised by how approachable and interested in her life Lindsay was. They talked for three hours about life, family and Vanessa’s dream to study in the US. Three days later Lindsey left La Paz, but they followed each other on Facebook. Lindsey connected her with the GRCHS International Student Program and after weeks of questions and wondering whether this could really be happening, Vanessa was on her way to the United States.

Vanessa’s interest in English began as a child watching Nickelodeon and the Disney channel. “I loved the songs and I investigated the lyrics.” Her interest grew and she loved to learn but it remained a distant dream to study in an English speaking country. In the small apartment she shared with her mother and sister, who has achondroplasia or dwarfism, Vanessa was everyone’s helper. She helped

with the cooking, her sister’s homework, and her mother carry the gas tank up the steps to their second floor apartment.

“Everything was a new experience,” is Vanessa’s reflection on her first weeks in the US. “It was like a movie with the tall trees, wide streets, and friendly Americans.” School also had major contrasts to education back home. “I enjoy discussing topics in class, sharing different points of view and having the opportunity to apply what I learn to society.” Even the bright classrooms decorated with pictures and student work was a stark change to the rows of desks and bare, white walls of her previous school.

Most importantly Vanessa experienced a spiritual revival. “After I got my visa I gave my testimony in church and started crying. I kept saying, ‘This is a work of God.’ The pastor told her, ‘You are going to clean your spirit and receive God tonight – before you were dead but now you are alive.’ That Saturday I was baptized. Now my mom’s faith is strengthened too and she is going to church. If I had stayed in Bolivia I would have been discouraged and lost. Everything is in God’s hands and I find strength in that. I realize God has a plan for me and I have to be ready so when He says follow, I am ready to follow. Last year’s verse was really meaningful to me. ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here I am. Send me!’ Isaiah 6:8. I keep remembering that verse. God is calling me and I will follow Him.”

Community Happenings



The Little Mermaid

This show was sold out for every performance and for good reason! This ‘under the sea’ musical was spectacular and several international students contributed to its success.

On stage, Yingjie Guo and Mandy Li served scrumptious platters to Ariel as dancing chefs, and Leanne Li competed for Prince Eric’s love as an Asian princess.

In the crew, Tony Cheng made Tritan’s commanding trident from scratch; Alena Sun worked on costumes for the turtles, dragonflies, seagulls and crabs; Andrea Jiang created the sea anemones, snail ties, chef shirts, crab hands and dragonfly eyes, and Cece Liu helped paint the beautiful coral scene.

In the orchestra pit Leo Zhang played saxophone and Ashley Zhou the cello for the inspiring music including “Under The Sea”, and “Kiss the Girl”.

Girls’ Breakfast

Every Monday morning the girls are invited for a relaxing breakfast in a peaceful, candlelit atmosphere. It’s a chance to chat with friends, encourage each other, and start the week off on the right foot. We decorated the office together with strings of light to enjoy the holiday season.



China trip

It is always a privilege to meet the families of our students and to visit the great cities they call home. In October, Rachel visited Kunming, Changsha, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Dongguan where she met with current families and presented our program to potential students.



Teen Anxiety: Where do we go from here?

Anxiety and depression in teenagers has been a reoccurring topic in leading magazines over the past months. Anxiety is the feeling of worry, nervousness or unease, usually about something uncertain. Fueled by negative patterns of thought, anxiety can trap a person in the cycle of thinking the worst of oneself and assuming the worst will happen. There are three common worries that fuel feelings of anxiety; not being good enough, not fitting in, and concern about the future.

To learn more about anxiety we interviewed Scott McKnight, founding director of the Third Chair, a counseling agency we work closely with to support our international students.

What is the difference between normal anxiety and unhealthy anxiety?

Every high school student can expect to experience stress or anxiety as they deal with the pressures of homework, friendships, and extra-curriculars. The difference between “normal” anxiety and unhealthy anxiety is a student’s ability to cope with these thoughts and feelings. Anxiety becomes a problem when a student does not have skills to deal with anxiety and feels that the anxiety is uncontrollable. An anxiety disorder can be diagnosed when the symptoms are causing a loss in functioning, such as inability to complete schoolwork or maintain relationships with friends or family.

What are the main causes of anxiety in teens today?

There are many causes of anxiety in teens today, including, but not limited to: schoolwork, relationships, social media, family, college/career decisions, and extra-curricular activities. Enormous pressure is placed on high school students as they build new relationships, prepare for college or career ahead, and explore new interests and ways of thinking. All of this pressure is magnified by the world of social media, which gives teens unlimited access to comparison with others and often leads to a sense of inferiority or discontent.

Has anxiety in teens risen significantly over the past 20 years and if so why?

With the rise of the internet and globalization, teenagers have more options than ever before. Students are told that they can grow up to attend any college, have any job, and live in any city they decide to. As exciting as that is, all of these decisions and options can lead to significantly higher

anxiety levels. Choosing a flavor of ice cream when there are only a few options is easy; walking into a shop that offers 31 flavors as well as a wide variety of topping combinations and cone styles will be considerably more difficult. Emerging adults need to be given the time and space to explore these options with a great deal of support, not pressure.

What are your suggestions on healthy ways of dealing with or preventing anxiety?

The first and best thing to do when experiencing anxiety is to stop and take a few deep breaths. The oxygen your body craves will slow your brain down enough to focus on the present issue, and the mental break will give you a chance to think more clearly about the source of the anxiety and address it directly. We also recommend mindfulness, positive self talk, and having a support system of friends, parents, and/or teachers who are willing to listen and help you process through any negative thoughts or difficult emotions. A journal or notebook to write down thoughts can be a great tool to both prevent anxiety from getting out of control and deal with it as it happens. We always recommend basic self-care as a preventative measure for anxiety and any other mental health issues. Self care includes things like eating well, getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, and participating in activities that bring you joy.

What does the Bible say about anxiety?

The Bible provides simple and direct truths about anxiety. Anxiety is a battle of the mind and the Bible directs us to fill our mind with positive alternatives to worry and fear. Instead of focusing on what we are missing, a heart of gratitude calms an anxious spirit. Instead of dwelling on darkness, gossip, hurts, and negative thoughts, fill the mind with, “anything excellent or praiseworthy.”

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, and thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is **true**, whatever is **noble**, whatever is **right**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **admirable**, - if anything is **excellent** or **praiseworthy** – think about such things....And the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:6-9

By Rachel Mulder

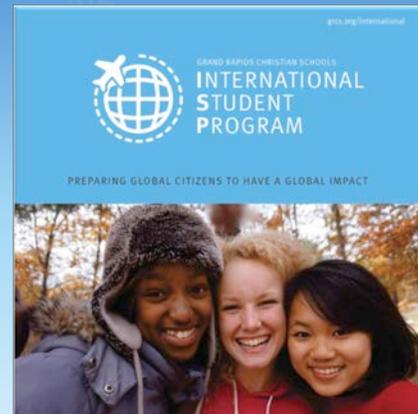
Apply to GRCHS!

We are looking for students who:

- are eager to fully participate in school, extra curricular and family activities.
- demonstrate academic English proficiency.
- demonstrate character qualities of integrity, self-discipline, and motivation, consistent effort, obedient spirit, positive attitude and respectful behavior.

Visit our website for more information on the application process.

www.grcs.org/international



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