

ZURICH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

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# VOICES



## **VIRTUALLY FRIENDS**

How technology has transformed the way we stay in touch with friends and family.

## **A TASTE OF HOME**

For expats, food is family, culture – and a handing down of tradition.

## **WORK, LEARN, GROW**

How today's workplaces are encouraging us to awaken our inner student.

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The opinions expressed in Voices are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of Zurich International School or YBM

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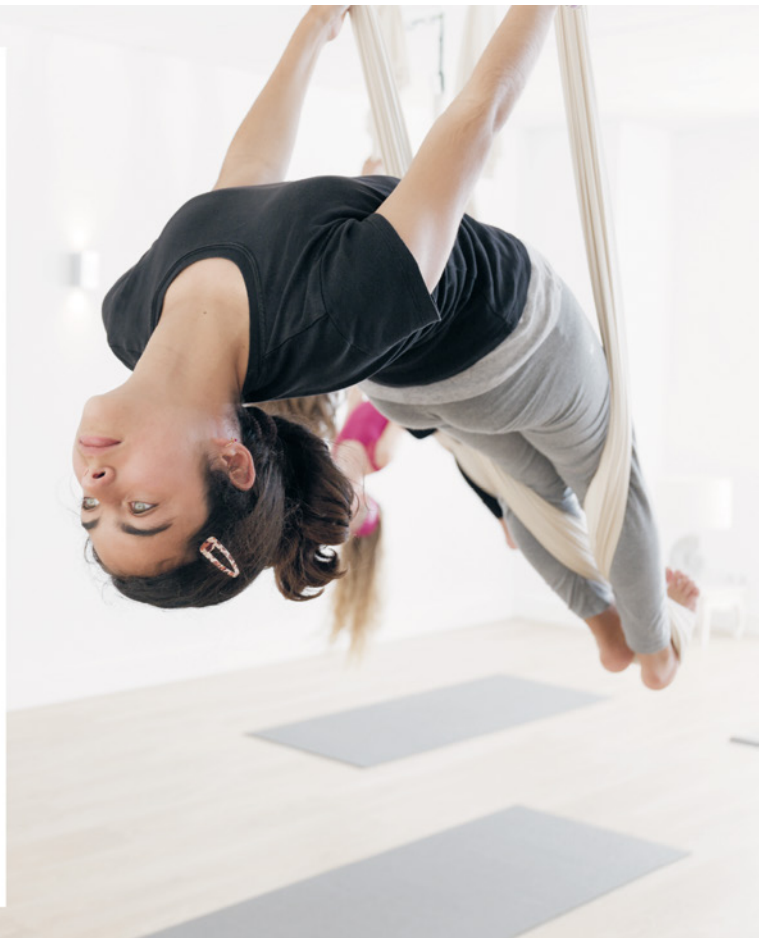
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# WELCOME

Welcome to the spring edition of ZIS *Voices*. In this issue, we put a spotlight on the ingredients that come together to create our strong and celebrated sense of community.

Of course, focusing on our community – both here in Zurich and around the world – is not new for our school. As we engage with you, in person, at events (such as ZIS VOICES *Live*, which you can read about on page 5), and online, the one thing that comes up time and again is just how special our community is. Built on shared values, experiences and our global outlook, we are very proud of the sense of togetherness that is such an important feature for all our alumni, students, parents, trustees, faculty and staff.

Parents have been central to the ZIS community since its inception in 1963, and today's Parents' Association shares many of the goals of its predecessors. On page 16, we talk to the Association executive committee members, past and present, to find out what it is really like to lead this essential building block of school life.

Our community has been shaped by geography – but it is not bounded by it. In 2020, technology means staying in touch has never been easier, but that doesn't mean maintaining global friendships is without its own challenges. On page 22, we examine the joys – and sorrows – of digital relationships.

Feeling hungry? Long to return to WorldFest? We asked you to tell us about the dishes that remind you of home and, on page 28, we share your recipes and explore why food is such a powerful way of creating and maintaining a connection with home culture, celebrations and traditions.

Elsewhere, on page 36, we discover why many companies are responding to a rapidly changing world by building offices that encourage and enable staff to experiment, iterate and develop – in other words, to learn. And we're delighted to share the next stage in our plans to become a two-campus school. Building work on the new state-of-the-art Middle School, connected to the Upper School in Adliswil, will start this spring and, on page 38, we look at how the new building is designed to further nurture the learners of the future. To view a video of the new plans of the school, visit [zis.ch/new-middle-school](https://zis.ch/new-middle-school).

Thank you to everyone who has been in touch with stories and updates – or just to let us know how much you enjoyed the last issue. We love to hear from you, so please do keep the emails coming, or connect on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

**Michaela Seeger**  
Director of Community Relations





TWO-CAMPUS MODEL

## NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL GETS THE GO-AHEAD

The two-campus model takes a step forward this spring, with the start of the building work on the new state-of-the-art Middle School in Adliswil, due to open its doors for the 2022/23 school year.

The Middle School will include a connecting wing to the Upper School – together the buildings will accommodate around 850 students. Facilities in the new building will include flexible learning spaces, a media centre, a triple gym, a makerspace area, dedicated STEM classrooms, music rooms and a theatre.

According to Ron Steijn, Chairman of the Board of Trustees: “This new building represents enormous potential for all our students. The newly combined campus will support a curricular and co-curricular programme with the breadth and depth

required to continue to meet individual student learning needs. It should also increase collaborative opportunities for faculty to develop and implement aligned curriculum, and streamline student transitions throughout Grades 6 to 12. Ultimately we expect the new campus to further foster an enhanced sense of community and school spirit.”

The development reaffirms the school’s commitment to the two-campus model, following the successful completion of the Early Childhood programme’s move to the Lower School in Wädenswil last August.

**To find out more about the plans for the new building, visit [zis.ch/new-middle-school](https://zis.ch/new-middle-school)**

ZISMEETS

### PRIVATE TOUR

Members of the ZIS community had a private tour of the Karma Gallery in New York at a ZISMeets evening in January. The tour was guided by art expert Deniz Atac, Class of 2003 (1997-2003), followed by a short talk, “How art is integrated into our life”, by 2017 John Mattern Award honouree and former art history teacher Regina Lanford.

THERAPY DOGS

### PAWS FOR THOUGHT

Therapy dogs have been spending time with Middle School students as part of a new initiative in the library. Research shows that children can benefit from relationships with dogs, which are particularly good for stress and anxiety reduction, and that reading to dogs can help to improve self-confidence and public speaking skills.

SCHOOL LIFE

### GREASED LIGHTNING

More than 90 students were involved in the recent Upper School production of Grease, from students in design classes helping to make sets to cast, crew and musicians on performance days. The show, the most sustainable to date, was a massive hit, with more than 600 audience members across the three nights.

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NEASC ACCREDITATION

# 93%

**of current students  
 would recommend  
 ZIS, according  
 to a recent survey**

ZIS: PLANNING THE FUTURE

## POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Two new surveys among the ZIS community have confirmed strong confidence in the school, identified its specific strengths and helped shape strategic decisions for the future.

An online survey among students, faculty and parents revealed that an overwhelming majority would definitely recommend the school, with positive responses in the 90%-plus range.

And as part of the accreditation process for the NEASC Commission on International Education, members of the ZIS community were asked their views across a wide range of learning principles. The school's inclusive and caring community, its focus on the whole child, the quality of its teachers and the opportunities and choice provided were all stressed as its strengths.

Alumni were asked what elements of ZIS should never change as part of the community-wide strategic planning initiative, and the quality of its teachers, the global community and the co-curricular experiences and trips were mentioned consistently.

One recent alumni said: "I had a more well-rounded education than my peers", while another respondent added, "You are creating CEOs, not worker bees."

"Responsible, passionate and open-minded," wrote another alum. "Not every high school student has the chance to develop those skills... I am forever grateful for ZIS to have always pushed my limits and built strengths."

**Learn more about the strategic planning process from Director Lisa Lyle on page 9.**



ILLUSTRATION: MICHAEL KIRKHAM

ZIS PARTNERS

## ZIS VOICES LIVE

Around 120 members of our community from across the globe met in Zurich in September to share their thoughts on disruptive innovation and its impact on economy, society and education.

Covering four main topics – designing education for the 21st century; the Middle School pinch; the role of teachers; and designing the 21st-century classroom – alumni, students, teachers and parents discussed the ideas that will help shape the future direction of the school.

Key to the first discussion was a focus on "productive" or "safe" failure – creating learning experiences that encourage risk, creative thinking and reflection. Professor Manu Kapur, Chair of Learning Sciences and Higher Education at ETH Zürich, discussed his research finding that – counterintuitively – failing, rather than being told, is often the quickest way to learn a new skill or grasp a new concept. McKinsey consultant Alexandre Kleis, Class of 2012 (2008-12), agreed that a learning environment that allows teachers to embrace risk is key, and talked about the positive experience of his entrepreneurship class at ZIS where, he said, he felt safe in the knowledge that his teachers and business advisers had his back.

Elsewhere, graphic designer and singer-songwriter Dora Donaldson, Class of 2007 (2004-07), suggested that when it comes to designing an education, there are always trade-offs – and new doesn't always mean better. "I don't think practical education and tech should come at the price of traditional academics," she said.

Finally, ZIS Director Lisa Lyle pointed out that learning doesn't always take place in school, and designing for that is crucial. "The ZIS approach is to facilitate the practical, collaborative group work that is so critical, because it inspires a level of commitment and extension and problem-solving. These cross-disciplinary groups allow students with lots of different skill sets, interests and passions to come together and exceed what they could have done individually. And that's happening right here."

**Learn more about the event at:  
[zis.ch/community/zisvoices-live](https://zis.ch/community/zisvoices-live) (#ZISVoicesLive).**



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#### ANNUAL FUND

## FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

As the yearly appeal to all members of the ZIS community, the Annual Fund supports strategic projects that enhance educational excellence for our students.

This year's focus is on Educating for Sustainability. A range of impactful projects – including Living Classroom development, participation in the Eco-Schools initiative, Sustainability and STEAM guest speakers, Zero Waste workshops and many others – are offering opportunities for students, their families and the whole community to participate and to support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

**Visit [zis.ch/support/annualfund](https://zis.ch/support/annualfund) to find out more.**

#### VACATION PROGRAM

## ACTIVE FUN FOR THE SPRING AND SUMMER



Looking for something fun and active for your children to do in the upcoming school holidays? ZIS is offering a variety of activities for students from Pre-School to Grade 8 during the spring and summer vacations.

In the first week, 6-9 April, there will be art, gymnastics, STEAM, soccer and multi-activity for students. Then, during the weeks of 15-19 June, 22-26 June and 3-7 August, these and other activities – including kayaking – are on offer again. In addition, ZIS is hosting external providers for German, drama, golf and soccer camps.

**Visit [zis.ch/student-life/vacation](https://zis.ch/student-life/vacation) to find out more.**

#### ALUMNI

## ZIS COMMUNITY

We are always delighted to hear from you and share your updates! Email us at [alumni@zis.ch](mailto:alumni@zis.ch) and read more classnotes in Alumni Links, our e-newsletter.

Three alumni have been in touch to tell us about books they have recently published. San Diego-based **Ken Davenport**, Class of 1981 (1976-77), has his second novel out, *The Bug Hunter*, a near-future biotech thriller about terrorists using CRISPR to turn insects into weapons (find out more at [www.kendavenport.net](http://www.kendavenport.net)). **Dr Loughlin Sweeney**, Class of 2008 (2006-08), a historian and professor of international studies in South Korea, has published his first book, *Irish Military Elites, Nation and Empire 1870-1925*, the result of his doctoral work at Queens' College, Cambridge. Loughlin's history teacher at ZIS, **Paul Doolan**, is mentioned in the acknowledgements as an early influence. Finally, **Richard Morais**, Class of 1977 (1973-77), has released his third novel, *The Man With No Borders*. Visit [richardcmorais.com](http://richardcmorais.com) to find out more about Richard's life and work.

**Joonas Jokinen**, Class of 2013 (2009-11), is excited to share news about the sport-tech startup called Athlete CRUSH he has just launched. Based in Philadelphia, USA, Joonas is proud of the sport-specific social media app that revolutionises how athletes, fans, brands and charities connect.

**Cameron Gray**, Class of 2017 (2011-17), has more exciting news – his first single, *Weather Talk*, was released earlier this year, and his new album comes out this March (with artwork by **Katy Johnson**, Class of 2017 (2007-17)).

Finally, **Raghav Maheshwari**, Class of 2016 (2012-16), shares the inspiring news about Duet ([giveduet.org](http://giveduet.org)), his non-profit startup, whose mission is to connect donors with vulnerable populations across the globe and make it easy to support others in a transparent and personal way.

ZIS alumni are planning reunions for: all the 1980s graduating classes (14-17 May); the Class of 2000 (8-9 August); and the Class of 2010 (13-14 June). For more information, visit [zis.ch/alumni/alumni-events](https://zis.ch/alumni/alumni-events) or email [alumni@zis.ch](mailto:alumni@zis.ch) for help to plan your own reunion.

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## THE ZIS PERSPECTIVE

### It's good to talk: how your feedback is helping to shape our school's direction and ensure future success.

Over the past few months, I've been delighted to see so many members of our community engaging in conversations and responding to surveys as part of the strategic planning initiative. It's great that alumni, students, parents, trustees, faculty and staff have taken the time to share their thoughts with us as we strive to confirm our strengths and determine opportunities for continued growth as a global learning community.

While I myself have led numerous parent discussions, I am far from the only one who has done so. It has been wonderful to work in partnership with campus principals and Parents' Association leaders, who have themselves organized further outreach and at least 26 different parent meetings. Alongside these conversations, a survey of our community, as part of the NEASC accreditation process, has given us additional insights. From these information sources, clear themes have emerged.

When parents were asked to describe the characteristics and skills they yearn for their children to demonstrate at the end of their time at ZIS, they highlighted critical "soft skills" such as adaptability, open-mindedness, global thinking, responsibility, confidence and resilience. These are the very skills and attributes highlighted by business leaders when they share what they seek in new hires. Parents have expressed confidence that ZIS is helping their children develop these important traits and alumni have confirmed that in their survey responses.

I have also heard parents talk about the importance of having excellent teachers who understand each student personally and challenge them to grow – and parents, students and alumni confirm that this is the case among ZIS faculty. Constituents also appreciate the wide range of course options and co-curricular activities, which, together with excellent field trips, help students develop in such important ways.

Across all constituent groups there were suggestions for changes. Opportunities for improvement cited across groups include: the hope that students develop stronger German

fluency and integrate better into the local Swiss community; the desire for more STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) courses and co-curricular experiences, including lots of coding and robotics at each campus; and a desire for more 'academic rigor' and clearer feedback about student performance – though alumni stated they felt exceptionally well-prepared academically for university, and the vast majority of students felt the level of challenge was just right.

Parents, a few alumni and some students mentioned concerns about student risk behaviors (vaping, substances and social media, for example) and encouraged ZIS to continue to focus on prevention and intervention. A summary of the data is published for current parents at [zis.ch/community-portal/zis-partners-news](https://zis.ch/community-portal/zis-partners-news), or you can contact us at [zis\\_partners@zis.ch](mailto:zis_partners@zis.ch) for more details.

While there have been some areas of concern from each constituent group, the overriding message is that ZIS is a forward-thinking, caring institution preparing students for the challenges they will face in the future. We have already made a few tweaks to programming and have begun planning additional initiatives that could eventually become part of a robust strategic plan in response to feedback.

The new strategic plan will be shared with the community at the Board's Annual General Meeting in May. A strong plan will ensure that ZIS continues to be the school of choice for the international community in the Greater Zurich Area, while addressing the issues highlighted in order to ensure we continue to prepare students to thrive in an increasingly complex, interrelated and fragile world.

**“Parents expressed confidence that ZIS is helping their children develop the important traits that business leaders look for in new hires”**

Lisa Lyle  
Director



## AFTER SCHOOL

### Art teacher Ryan Pace says there is so much more to a good sketch than simply putting paint to paper.

WORDS MEGAN WELFORD PHOTOGRAPHY KATE PETERS

Members of the online art community Urban Sketchers want to “see the world, one drawing at a time” – and that’s exactly what art teacher Ryan Pace aims to do. “When I found the Sketchers, I knew I had found my tribe,” says Ryan. It also inspired him to share his passion for sketching beyond the classroom and throughout the streets of Zurich.

He started running ‘sketch crawls’: journeys of discovery at locations across Zurich for members of the ZIS staff and faculty to try their hand at capturing images. “We might start at Polyterrasse at the top of the Polybahn station, because

it gives a great view of the city skyline,” explains Ryan. “From there, I might set a timer and we’ll walk for five minutes in one direction and draw what we find, or I’ll pull a destination out of a hat. I like going to places I haven’t been before, it’s part of the fun. It’s about discovering things together.”

For Ryan, a sketch is not simply a pen-on-paper drawing: it’s about making a memory. “When you’re drawing for 30 minutes or so, you have to really look at something, and that inputs it into your brain better than anything else,” he explains. “It’s a gift we’re giving to our future selves.”

He gives the example of a recent family trip to Amsterdam, where he walked past a fountain he recognised from a drawing he had made of it when he was just 12. “Even if an image is from 30 years ago, I’ll be able to remember if I was sitting uncomfortably, what the weather was like, who was there – just from looking at the drawing.”

He was inspired to sketch by his great-uncle, Bob Miller, a well-known graphic artist. “He was my idol,” Ryan says.



**Sketch crawl**

Ryan at some of his favourite locations, including Lindenhof Park overlooking the Limmat River towards the old town, and views of Predigerkirche and the church of St Peter.

**“You have to stop, slow down, be present in that moment, be mindful of the space and time”**

“He travelled extensively and always had this hard-bound, black Canson sketchbook with him to record what he saw. When I was in fourth grade he bought me one for Christmas. Before the internet and cell phones there was a lot of downtime and I spent that time drawing.”

Today, he has boxes of drawn memories – which are sometimes a dangerous rabbit hole, he says. “My notebooks are my most precious thing, apart from my family of course,” says Ryan, whose children, Seth, Grade 11, and Corinne, Grade 9, as well as his more reluctant wife Reina, have learned

to share his passion. “I get the books out fairly regularly to look up the name of a hotel we’ve stayed at or something – and then I realise I’ve spent a couple of hours down memory lane.”

The process of drawing is like meditation, he adds. “You have to stop, slow down, be present in that moment, be mindful of the space and time. It’s like yoga or exercise. At one point I realised I wasn’t drawing during stressful periods, like the IB submissions or an art show, but that that was exactly the time I *should* be drawing. So now I have a pocket-sized book, and I make time to draw almost every day – it’s like a reflection on the day.”

Naturally, the book goes with him on the sketch crawls, too. “My philosophy is that we’re making a memory, not a picture. We’ll spend time looking, because drawing is about seeing. And let’s be honest, there is no shortage of views in Switzerland!”



## ON THE LAKE



### Lions, tigers, bears... and a sophisticated ecosystem designed to bring the Indian Ocean to Zurich.

WORDS SARAH WOODWARD

#### A warm welcome

*The Masoala Rainforest biosphere at Zurich Zoo mimics its big brother in Madagascar.*

Zurich: home to Siberian tigers, Indian lions and wild-roaming rhinos, giraffes and elephants. And whatever the local conditions, you can be guaranteed a balmy 25°C throughout the entire year. Sound familiar? Well, maybe, but only if you've been to the Zurich Zoo.

"The Masoala Rainforest is a good place to be when it's snowing outside!" says zoo curator Dr Robert Zingg. Opened in 2003, the biosphere

is maintained by sustainable heat pumps and recreates the ecosystem of a rainforest in Madagascar. "The cooperation with Masoala National Park in Madagascar was one of our very first conservation projects; 90 per cent of the plants and animals here are native to the island," he says. "Through it, we support a third of the annual running costs of the Masoala National Park."

The zoo has been a feature of Zurich life since it opened 90 years ago, enticing the ZIS community with its mix of the very best nature has to offer, and even hosting an event as part of ZIS' 50th anniversary celebrations. "Our role is to remind society of the importance of maintaining biodiversity and keeping the environment intact," explains Dr Zingg.

The zoo is committed to developing ecosystems rather than individual displays, recreating natural environments as far as possible. Around 70 keepers act as gardeners as well as being responsible for

## The zoo has successfully bred the endangered Amur tiger from Siberia, as well as Gir lions from the deciduous forests of North-East India. The elephants have their own park, where researchers are working to resolve human-elephant conflict

their live charges – and each of the eight focus enclosures is associated with a specific conservation project. Visitors can walk through dense vegetation looking for red-ruffed lemurs, for example, as well as the other species that are part of international breeding programmes: the Rodrigues fruit bat, the Madagascar crested ibis, Meller’s duck, the crested coua, as well as the Madagascar tree boa that lives in a terrarium in the adjacent information centre.

Among the big cats, the zoo has successfully bred the endangered Amur tiger from Siberia, as well as Gir lions from the deciduous forests of Gujarat in North-East India. The elephants have their own park, named Kaeng Krachan in recognition of the Thai National Park supported by the zoo, where researchers are working to resolve the human-elephant conflict as well as establishing anti-poaching measures and the construction of wildlife corridors.

The open Lewa savannah area – more than four hectares created on land donated to the zoo by the city of Zurich back in 1997 – will represent the biggest enclosure in terms of area, where rhino, giraffe, antelope and ostrich will roam. “There will be predators such as hyenas as well, but naturally in their own separate enclosures,” Dr Zingg laughs. “But we want the children to get close to as many of the animals as they can. I hope that if they have this kind of experience in their early years, they will want to help preserve the animals and their natural surroundings for the future.”

The zoo welcomes around 65,000 schoolchildren a year and helps teachers with learning programmes such as those in the great apes enclosure on the impact of palm oil and deforestation.

“We see our animals as our ambassadors,” says Dr Zingg. “We aim to let our visitors see how these creatures might live in the wild, motivating them to preserve their natural environment. I hope we teach children and their parents to take care of nature for the future, as well as having a great day out.”

## 24 HOURS IN GLASGOW



### ZIS parent Lily Quinn takes us on a whistlestop tour of the highlights of her beloved home city. #ZIStravels



#### WANDER THROUGH KELVINGROVE PARK

A beautiful, historic park with the River Kelvin running through it. Previously the site of three great exhibitions, you can stop off at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum to see Salvador Dalí’s stunning painting Christ of St John of the Cross.



#### TAKE A TOUR OF GLASGOW CITY CHAMBERS

This amazing building is the home of Glasgow City Council, and you’ll learn about the recent change from industrial Glasgow to this modern, cleaner place. You can also see works by the influential Glasgow Boys art movement, representing the history of the city.



#### LUNCH AT MACKINTOSH AT THE WILLOW

This building, designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, was out of commission for years but then gutted and restored to its original form about five years ago. The tearoom is right in the centre of Glasgow and there’s a shop selling Mackintosh goodies next door.



#### CHECK OUT THE GALLERY OF MODERN ART

This small gallery at Royal Exchange Square has some interesting pieces, including Andy Warhol. At the front, there’s the Duke of Wellington monument, which is mostly famous for always having a traffic cone on his head – a tribute to Glaswegian humour!



#### ENJOY A MODERN CHINESE RESTAURANT

The Amber Regent is our favourite Chinese restaurant in Glasgow. It used to be very traditional, but then the next generation took over and modernised it. It’s classy, the food is gorgeous, and it reflects the diversity and friendliness of Glasgow.

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# Parent power

**The American International School of Zurich was founded with the vision and effort of parents. Today, the Parents' Association remains a vital part of school life.**

WORDS HELENA POZNIAK PHOTOGRAPHY KATE PETERS



**On the Villa staircase**

*Pat Wyant, PA President  
(to January 2020), and  
Rebecca Coyle, Secretary.*

It's 56 years since a 14-year-old **Creighton Smith** – then a surfing teenager from California – accompanied his father up the steps of an elegant Swiss villa at the top of a Kilchberg hill. Creighton, Class of 1967 (1963-67), saw a space that was ideal for kicking a soccer ball about. His father, whom he describes as “a miracle worker, a pioneer”, had grander designs: the founding of a new international school.

Parents have always had a huge role to play in the life of ZIS, from the very first conversation about the need for a new school back in January 1963, to today's multi-functional Parents' Association (PA). The modern group works hard to welcome new families, build the ZIS community and support the school's leaders – and in the early

days such partnership was instrumental in the very foundation of the school.

“One key factor was that every one of the nine parent couples originally involved were 100 per cent committed,” says Creighton. Over spring and summer, they would meet twice a week for updates, knocking on doors for support. “The goodwill was extraordinary. I don't know where my dad found the time, and he almost died during the process when he suffered appendicitis with complications. It took a lot of determination to get the project off the ground.”

More than two decades later, parents again played a critical role during **Peter Mott's** time. Peter started working at AISZ in 1987, became head in 1989, led the school to the merger with ►



IPSZ in 2001 and became head of ZIS until 2012. “I needed them all the time,” he recalls. “They were extremely supportive, and the air of collaboration was incredibly important.”

The PA then was largely focused on organising community events – still one of its main, and vital, functions. “But I felt there should be more. I pulled them into accreditation committees and other school bodies where they could help leaders shape the school – that’s how you can create a healthy dynamism in the school community,” says Peter.

And as the role of the PA developed, it became Peter’s go-to group, offering its views to help inform the decisions made by the school’s leaders. “They were a crucial sounding board for me – their input into proposed new initiatives was always

helpful, and I valued that partnership when it came to strategic planning.”

**Gretchen Du Peza** was one of the PA presidents during Peter’s 25 years at the school. A former business administrator, she found herself leading the PA for two years from 2002 – the result, she says, of “being in the wrong place at the wrong time!” After the merger to create the new ZIS in 2001, it fell to Gretchen to bring together one cohesive parent body across the four separate campuses. “Parents of little children are used to being very hands-on,” she says. “Later, it’s a lot less personal, but the school needs just as much support. Trying to balance the two was a challenge. We had to try to lose that culture of two different schools – the ‘We’ve always done it this way’ approach – and stress that we were ZIS, one school.”

**In the Villa’s main room**

*Noelle Aigrain-Kaegi, Lower School Campus Coordinator, and Celecia Partap, VP Welcome and Community.*

### Downstairs at the Villa

*Eileen Vincett and Lucy O'Sullivan, Lower School Campus Coordinators for Early Childhood, and Maaïke Lange, VP Communications.*

She was clear about what fell within the PA's role – and what didn't. "We were there to help develop the community, and to create a welcoming environment for new parents so they could feel part of that community." At the same time, her role was to build a supportive rapport with teachers and staff. But it wasn't the PA's job, she says, to influence how the school was run on a day-to-day basis. "We weren't there to change how the sports team was organised, nor to dictate what the school was doing – the strategic view fell to the Board of Trustees."

Gretchen was careful to protect her family time, and arrange PA meetings after she'd packed off the kids for school. "It was pretty much a full-time job. But my husband was very supportive."

Her two young sons were fine with their mother's involvement in school, while her daughter, **Lauren Du Peza Walenczak**, Class of 2004 (2001-04), pretended not to know her if they passed in the corridor. "Normal for a teenager," she laughs. "It was a challenge for family life." Gretchen went on to become a school trustee. For her, the association remains a fundamental building block of community. "Parents pick up the slack: they can spread messages, they can rally people to help out at a swim meet or help with classroom reading. Without them the school wouldn't be what it is."

**Pat Wyant** took up the helm as Co-President in 2018/19 and then as President in 2019/20, determined to continue to build community. "My work was to make it clear to parents what ▶





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the PA does, and that did seem a bit stressful at first. This current school year, we've come to play an important role in the strategic planning work being done by new Director Lisa Lyle and her team, and I've welcomed the chance to feed into that."

Pat has also been impressed by the team's focus on staging events, such as the annual welcome barbecue and November's WorldFest. "This is all about community; finding different ways to get parents who may have different backgrounds to meet and feel part of something. It's a cool feeling to look around and see people from all over the world come together and learn about each other's perspectives. Building that real sense of community is a vital part of our work." His son (Jacob, Class of 2027 (2018-20)) was also young enough to be excited to see his dad on campus.

"Though at the time he couldn't understand why I didn't change some rules, such as what time they go in for lunch!" Pat says.

Parents today might recognise the founders' ethos still present in the fabric of the school. "It was all about tolerance and the coming-together of different cultures," says Creighton. "In the early days, we were an all-American school. We had all come from privilege: our parents were big cheeses in multinational companies. But we were all in it together – 'hoity-toity' behaviour wasn't tolerated.

"I didn't realise it until years later, but the real education we got was interaction with other people. Our parents, our school – they gave us the world." ©

**If you would like to volunteer for the Parents' Association, email: [pa\\_president@zis.ch](mailto:pa_president@zis.ch)**

#### **In the library**

*Chris Wright, Treasurer, and Rocio Loeliger, VP Events.*

*Our thanks to the Parents' Association, including those not pictured: Heather Halsey, Vice-President, Welcome and Community; Annette Kammerlander and Christine La Pierre, Middle School Campus Coordinators; and Farley Lucke and Maria Vigil, Upper School Campus Coordinators.*



# Staying in touch has never been easier. But new media means new challenges – for everyone.

WORDS SARAH WOODWARD PHOTOGRAPHY KATE PETERS

## Opposite

*Kathi Goldscheider  
and her children:  
Yael (Kindergarten);  
Haya (Grade 3);  
and Eli (Grade 5).*

It's been 27 years – and thousands of miles – but **Ines Respini Jones**, Class of 1992 (1987-92) still feels as closely connected to her “tribe” as ever. “At first it was letters, then we moved on to email,” she says. “I never email my friends now, though – that’s a work tool. With social media I feel we are closer than ever, even if we are on different sides of the world.”

It is only two decades since the first social media sites emerged – but, together with other digital communication, they have transformed friendships. Today, staying in touch with friends and family all over the world, sharing news, arranging get-togethers, or just knowing what our friends and relations are doing right now couldn't be simpler.

Ines relies on a WhatsApp group to keep up with her family. “My parents live in Zurich but travel a lot to Italy and France; my sister, **Eva**, Class of 1994 (1989-94), lives in Boston, and my brother, **Erik**, Class of 2001 (1995-96), is in Lugano, but until recently was in Singapore. We were a three-continent family for a long time. My father is a ‘silver surfer’, the man with the selfie stick who sends pictures from golf courses. My mother, who is Scandinavian, is quite private. What’s interesting is that the family dynamics continue online just as if we were face-to-face.” ▶



## Opposite

Lucy Reza, Grade 11,  
shares a letter to  
her parents.

**“We were a three-continent family for a long time. What is interesting is that the family dynamics continue online just as if we were face-to-face”**

**Eline Ferket**, Class of 2016 (2007-12), knows all about virtual relationships – her boyfriend lives an ocean away. “He is in Michigan and I am studying in Utrecht. It’s not ideal, but we’re making it work, and have done for three years now. We keep our relationship alive by Skypeing every day and we meet in the summer and at Christmas. It’s not that unusual. Every friendship I have has an online part to it.”

Eline has been making new virtual friends since agreeing to coordinate the monthly alumni takeover of the ZIS Instagram. “I went to a ZISMeets in Amsterdam in May 2019, which was really lovely – meeting others with the same school experience. For me, Instagram is easy and fun, so I was happy to take over the role when I was asked,” she says.

“Since then I have met some really cool people online. I am in touch with **Antonia McGrath**, Class of 2014 (2007-14), in Honduras, who founded Educate, an NGO working alongside communities to support locally driven projects focused on education. Antonia passes through Amsterdam regularly, so we’re hoping to meet. And I also connected with **Melvin Wezenberg**, Class of 2014 (2006-14), who works for Google in Dublin. The real-life element of these relationships is important as well, and it is great to know that there is a friendly face in countries I haven’t visited yet.”

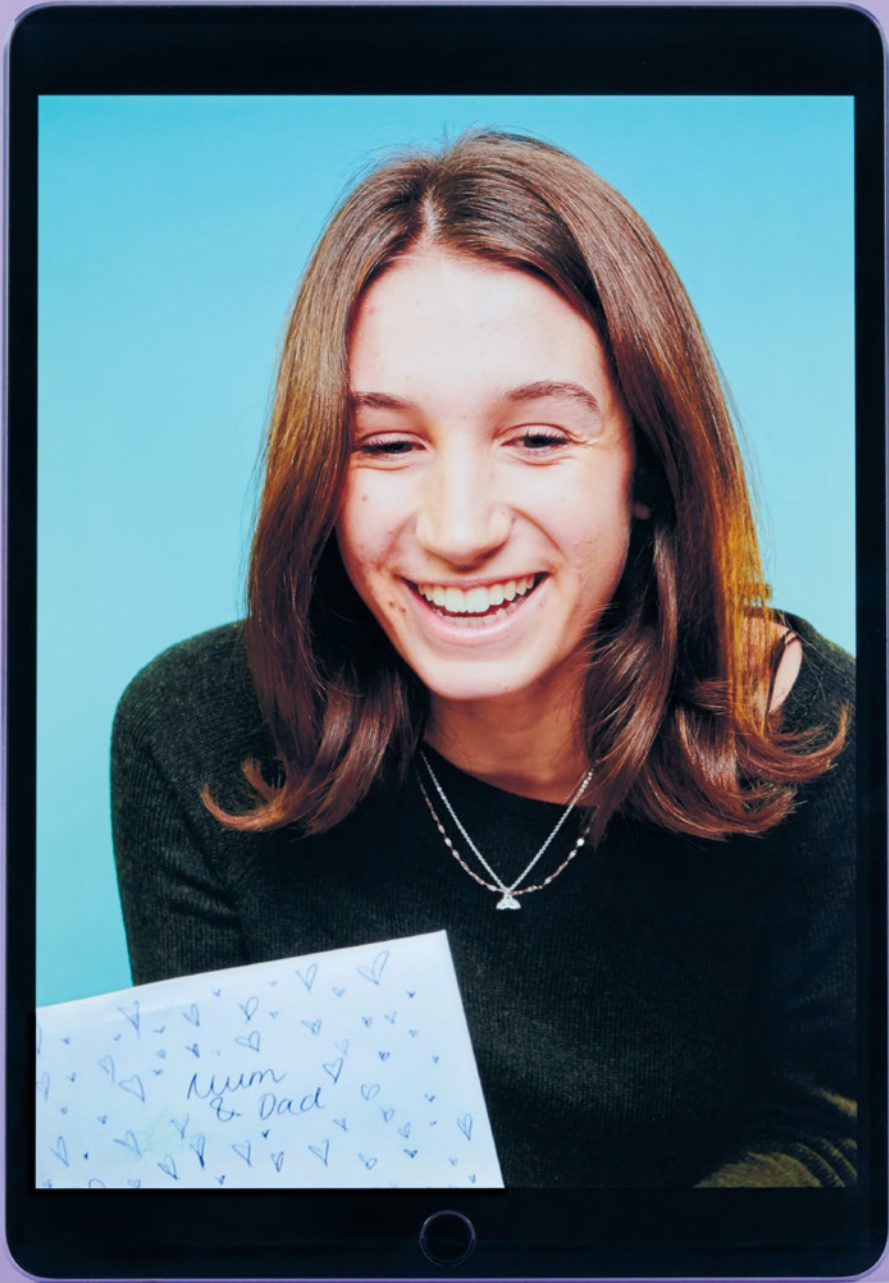
**Dominique Hess**, Class of 2005 (2003-05), is Swiss-Guatemalan by birth and has lived in different parts of northern Europe, has family in Central America, and has travelled widely in Asia and Africa. “I grew up as the internet was becoming ‘the thing’ and saw first-hand the huge improvements it made to the way we keep in contact with people across the world.”

Dominique co-organised the 2005 reunion for her year group, the impetus coming from her ZIS friends in London. “I still see a lot of people from my grade who live here, and we felt a reunion would be wonderful, but weren’t sure how many people would come. We did a poll on Facebook to find out who would be interested and the response was overwhelming.”

After some debate about whether New York or London should be the venue, Dominique, with her fellow alumni **Nick Bentley**, Class of 2005 (1999-2005), and **Alfonso Redondo**, Class of 2005 (1999-2005), decided it had to be in Switzerland, for old times’ sake. “We went back to Facebook to poll which city people wanted and Zurich won. I suspect people were as excited to experience the nostalgia of the ZIS Villa and Switzerland as they were to meet up with one another. People flew in from all over the world: Australia, South Africa, San Francisco. We organised it all through social media, and a lot of people reconnected, but we all wanted to see each other face-to-face as well. And many of us have kept in touch online since. One romance even blossomed from the reunion and the couple are now engaged!”

Nonetheless, current parent **Patricia Shelton** cautions that building relationships online can take time. She says: “Until we moved to Europe from the US, my children saw their grandparents every few weeks, so the transition to online communication was difficult at first. Small kids of four or five want to be running around the house and don’t understand why they should sit still in front of a screen to talk to their grandparents. We found that we needed to adapt and plan out our conversations more in advance, which was less spontaneous but worked better.”

Patricia herself also took a while to adjust. “Initially we were only supposed to be away for a couple of years, so we didn’t really put an effort into keeping up friendships. But then, as the years passed, I realised I was missing out. I have adjusted by sending notes or emails to smaller groups of friends or family both outside and within social media. ►



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**“Social media doesn’t replace human connections, but it can help you reach out and make new friends – and keep up with old friends. I am convinced my social media friendships have made me a better friend in real life”**

“With Facebook, I can glimpse what is going on in my friends’ lives without being in touch all the time. Instagram is great to see where people are going on vacation, but it is not the place to have a conversation. I message people individually and in small groups rather than sharing everything with the world. You have to set different levels of intimacy according to the media.”

Behind the emotional factors, there is also a degree of science to what’s driving our online activity. Dr Pamela Rutledge, Director of the Media Psychology Research Center and core faculty in the Media Psychology programme at Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, California, points out that social validation is a basic human need; simply by liking someone’s post, for example, you are reaching out and making them feel good.

“My concern is that we are not training people to understand what each of the different platforms are about,” she says, acknowledging, however, that there is a social media element to ZIS’ teaching. “A smartphone is a very powerful piece of technology to be given at a young age. We teach children to swim and later to drive in a safe way and we should approach social media in the same way.”

Dr Rutledge believes we need to learn to set our expectations of content around the platform. “We have to understand access and distribution. Our natural tendency is to visualize our audience when speaking. We can easily misjudge how public our comments or posts may be. This is particularly important when posts are permanent and searchable.

“Understanding how the platforms work and the type of information people expect on various channels allows us to use digital media in ways that support our intentions and don’t cause us problems down the road.

“You can be chatting away on Twitter and have no perception that you are having an internet conversation. If you want to get more personal, then text or email. Facebook tends to be more emotional and personal; LinkedIn is more business orientated; Instagram tends to be more aspirational.”

Ines was an early adopter of Facebook but now prefers to use WhatsApp groups. “I have friends all over the world and we don’t see each other very often so when Facebook first started becoming popular a decade or so ago, I leapt at it,” she says. “But I don’t like all the fake news, and in the last few years I have found myself using WhatsApp more and more. Even though I know it is owned by Facebook, it somehow feels more intimate, with a community aspect.”

Age and gender certainly influence the way we communicate online, she says. “Snapchat appears to be the only platform for teenage girls. My 16-year-old daughter lives by it, but I don’t use it as I don’t feel the need. My 14-year-old son watches YouTube all the time and loves gaming, so he has PS4 online chat groups. Each generation develops their own way to benefit from social media.”

And, it seems, women often lead the way. Dominique found that it was the female cohort who responded fastest and most enthusiastically when she reached out to set up her class reunion. “Women tend to be the ones who reach out to and stay in contact with family and friends anyway, so perhaps that is not surprising,” she says. Eline agrees. “In my experience, women are more likely to want to share their lives. And can be more susceptible to showing off their lives as well!”

So, is it a force for good? Dominique is in no doubt that it is. “Social media doesn’t replace human connections, but it can certainly help you to reach out and make new friends – and keep up with old friends. I am convinced my social media friendships have made me a better friend in real life.” 📍

# food

**It tastes good, yes, but for expats, a great meal can mean so much more – home, family and keeping a culture alive.**

WORDS MEGAN WELFORD PHOTOGRAPHY SARA LUCAS AGUTOLI STYLING SEIKO HATFIELD

# Start

What does home mean to you? The place you were born, or where you've spent the most time? The place your parents are from, or where your family is based now? Or is it something less tangible: a sight, a sound, a smell – or a taste? For many of us, home is less about physical location and more about family and friends coming together around... food.

“Home is no longer about geography for us,” says current parent **Rolla Choucair** (mum to **Julia**, Grade 4, and **Dany**, Kindergarten). “Rather it’s about flavours and fragrances, and moments we share with the community we build in our home away from home.”

Indeed, when you're in a new place, food is a way to meet people and an excuse to see them again. It's a way to recreate your old home in your new one and make the quirks of a new culture a bit easier to digest. Food is essentially social, and, for third-culture families, food is inextricably bound up with home. After all, home is where our relationship with food starts.

Rolla grew up in Beirut, and now takes a DIY approach to Lebanese culture. “In Beirut, the streets smell of za'atar (a herb and spice mix of oregano, thyme, sumac and sesame),” she says, “but in Switzerland they smell of croissants and fresh bread. So, I make our house smell of za'atar.” ▶

01



## Rose's pad thai

ROSE BEY, PA REPRESENTATIVE  
FOR ASIA PACIFIC COUNTRIES

Asian cuisine is rich in flavour as well as variety, and is an important way to remind our children of our culture, of family cooking and helping one another. All of our dishes are prepared with pride and with quite a bit of thought to make sure we get the best flavours.

The preparation of the typical dishes we enjoy from places such as the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and China are labour intensive and in many cases requires the help of the entire family. Things such as: bakwan (fried vegetable fritters from Indonesia); chicken curry and satay; a chicken and coconut soup called tom kha gai from Thailand; and Chinese dumplings.

The pad thai dish is based around rice noodles and marinated chicken. The noodles are soaked in warm water for at least 45 minutes to soften them, while chicken breasts or thighs are marinated in soy sauce, sugar and sesame seed oil.

To prepare other ingredients, peel and devein raw shrimp (with some added salt), and fry up some beaten eggs until firm then cut up into rectangular pieces. Drain the noodles once they are ready – they should still be a bit firm – and then it's time to cook!

In a non-stick wok, add the chicken to some sautéed cooking oil and crushed and minced garlic. Add some Thai paste (we get ours from the Asia Market in Zurich) and sauté until half-cooked. Throw in the shrimp and cook until slightly pink, then introduce half the noodles. Add a bit more Thai paste as per your preference and turn everything together.

Along with the eggs and remaining noodles, we then add some of our favourite ingredients for taste, such as fish sauce, half a lime, grated carrots, green onions, coriander, Thai basil and mungbean sprouts.

According to your taste – and don't forget to keep tasting! – you can add more Thai paste, lime or sambal oelek (spicy chili paste) to enhance the flavour. If the noodles look uncooked or dry, add a bit of water and turn them, making sure you scrape off any noodles at the very bottom of the pan.

We serve ours in individual bowls with crushed peanuts, and the tastes are amazing!



03

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## Carolina's churrasco with farofa

CAROLINA AND ROMEO LACERDA,  
CURRENT PARENTS

Churrasco to us is both a meal and an occasion. My husband, Romeo, and I both grew up in Brazil, and the *churrasqueira* – a purpose-built charcoal grill – has been a central part of our family lives, and a massive part of our culture. The tradition comes from the gauchos roasting meat on stone fires out in the fields, and it's something that is passed down across generations, often from fathers to sons. As well as being something that marks a special occasion, it's also a chance to get together with friends and family, so it's a really social event.

The actual cooking is quite simple, but it's all about the process and the traditions. We buy the meat the day before – the local butcher here in Switzerland knows Romeo by now and is always ready to give him the specific cuts of meat he wants. We usually go for rib-eye because it roasts so well in the *churrasqueira*, but in Brazil the picanha is really popular because the fat brings the best flavours out of the meat.

Depending on how we're serving it, we'll either cut the meat into slices or just leave it as it comes, and then slide a skewer or stick into it. The only preparation we do is to add plenty of gross salt, but otherwise it's just a case of getting the charcoal – *always* charcoal, *never* electric or gas! – just right. The fire is a big part of the process and we take lots of care and attention to prepare it carefully so that we get the best tastes. Serving is an ongoing thing – we'll take the meat off the fire and cut pieces for anyone that likes it rare, and then return the meat to the heat and keep roasting so that we get it just right for everyone's taste. It can go on for quite a while.

Alongside the meat we serve a Brazilian farofa, a manioc flour-based side dish. To make this, we fry some bacon, onion, garlic, salt and pepper in a pan, then add some butter and finally manioc or cassava flour (luckily, I have a favourite local Brazilian store that stocks this!). Stir continuously for three to four minutes, or until the flour is toasted to a light golden colour – make sure to constantly fold in the flour from the bottom of pan because it toasts quickly. Once it's nice and crispy, immediately transfer to a bowl, add chopped chives and mix well. Serve hot or at room temperature – it's a great accompaniment to the juices that come with the churrasco.

We've lived all around the world, but this simple taste of home always connects us back to our roots and brings back many great memories, as well as keeping alive the new connections that we have made in our home away from home.

**“Home is no longer about geography for us. It's about flavours and fragrances, and moments we share with the community we build in our home away from home”**

This brings back fond childhood memories. “I remember going to my grandmother's house for what you would probably see as a feast,” she says, “but for us, it was business as usual. We love you, we feed you – this is how it works! Families meet at midday on a Sunday for mezze and don't go home until the evening. Mezze is lots of different appetisers, cold and hot. The main might be grilled meat or fish or shawarma – chicken, beef or lamb marinated overnight in garlic, onion, sage, cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg and sumac (a sour, red spice) and fattoush (a type of salad).”

At home, Rolla cooks more simply – “comfort food like lentil soup or a stew” – but whatever they eat, she says, there will always be hummus. “I make it the Lebanese way, with chickpeas, salt, lemon, garlic, tahini paste and olive oil. There's always hummus, pitta and cut-up veggies on the table.”

Food writer and presenter **Claire Matern**, Class of 2008 (1997-2000), grew up in Brooklyn in the US, and Switzerland, and says food has always been a “driving force” in her life. Her dad, now a cheesemonger in New York, is a classically trained chef who ran the food hall of Zurich's Jelmoli department store. “Food was always important at home – we cooked and ate together,” says Claire. “Holidays meant poring over menus and spending hours at markets. It was, and still is, the fabric of our family life.”

During her time at ZIS, Claire's dad would get home from work and start cooking straight away. “He finished early on a Saturday, so Saturday night dinners were special,” she says. “I remember roast chicken with potatoes and vegetables – classic comfort food that filled the house with its smell. Zurich can have gloomy, rainy days, but being at home with the fire on and a chicken roasting was cosy and warm.”

Although Claire had her assigned tasks, like making the vinaigrette, or setting the table, she didn't learn to cook until she had to – at the London College of Fashion in the UK. “I'd have Skype calls with my dad from my kitchen or even

from the supermarket. I'd say, 'Courgette is on special offer, what can I do with it?' That's the way I teach cooking – you don't need a recipe. You need to learn what you like, learn some techniques, and then you need to trust yourself."

Claire is now back in New York, but admits that "food reminds you of home, then it reminds you of your second home". So, she now cooks *Älplermagronen* (Swiss mac and cheese) for American friends, and recently hosted a workshop where ZIS alumni made rösti and Bircher muesli together.

**Julia Newton**, mum to **Matthew**, Class of 2002 (1992-2002), and **Laura**, Class of 2004 (1992-2004), moved to Switzerland from the UK with her husband **Richard** and just "one carload of stuff". There was no room for recipe books so, pre-internet, Julia found herself ringing friends in England for birthday cake recipes. "We've always celebrated traditions," she says, "but it was difficult at first in Switzerland – you couldn't get turkey, so at Christmas we cooked a goose. It was not a success!"

Julia and her family have embraced internationalism – taking Japanese cookery courses and experimenting with Greek and Asian foods. But, she says: "I tend to revert to home cooking when it's for the family – traditional, British meals like shepherd's pie, a roast dinner, pastry and crumble. That's what I grew up with and it's my comfort food." The Newton's favourite family dinner is pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. "Richard will be standing by the hob making pancake after pancake and we get out everything that we wouldn't normally have: chocolate chips, lemon, cinnamon, maple syrup. It's always great fun."

Julia's daughter Laura is now a keen cook – "She has Ottolenghi recipe books rather than Richard's favourite, Delia Smith" – and she learned at home. "We used to watch *Ready, Steady Cook*, presented by Fern Britton. Aged six, Laura would be walking round the kitchen saying, 'I'm just putting this in the oven now, Fern!'"

Julia contributed to the cookbooks produced by the Parents' Association at the International Primary School of Zurich, before it merged with the American International School of Zurich in 2001 to form ZIS, and says initiatives like this were a social lifeline. "Parent **Sheila Creswick** was the editor and we all contributed recipes. We contributed our pancake recipe, of course, and Laura's raspberry crumble is in there. I used to make the sweet and sour pork a lot, and still make administrator **Marilyn Dewji's** risotto.

"Food was a way to talk to people from different backgrounds – swapping recipes, for example – and because there weren't really any communal areas to meet at the Villa, we'd have coffee mornings at each other's houses, where you'd bring your signature cakes and biscuits."

Julia was around for the first-ever WorldFest, the cultural showcase that is now one of the biggest events in the school calendar. She says: "It was started by a parent, **Mirja Pesola**, who is Finnish – I'm still in contact with her on Facebook. It began in the primary school, which was rather small, and quickly moved to the Upper School. If you ask a community to represent itself, food will be top of the list. It's a way of celebrating and embracing different cultures. People are proud of their dishes."

Current parent **Katy Cool** (**Will**, Grade 1, **Jack**, Grade 4, and **Grace**, Grade 8), together with her friend **Jenny Wismer**, an alumni parent, took charge of WorldFest twice. Katy says that, this year, she enjoyed actually tasting the food rather than "running around after the custodian staff because the power's just gone out" or, as happened one year, "chasing a tent that had blown away in the storm". It's a lot of work, she says, but worth it for the smiles on everyone's faces. "Food is something we all have in common, so it's an easy, simple way for us all to enjoy one another, and feel that sense of community." ▶

## Sonsoles' paella

SONSOLES DELGADO ROCA,  
PA REPRESENTATIVE FOR  
SPANISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

Originally from Valencia, paella has become one of the best-known dishes in Spanish cuisine. The dish takes its name from the wide, shallow traditional pan used in its cooking – paella means "frying pan" in Valencian.

There are two main versions: *paella valenciana*, the traditional and original recipe which uses meat (rabbit, chicken and occasionally duck or snails) alongside rice and green beans; and *paella de marisco*, which replaces meat with seafood and leaves out beans and vegetables.

For my version, I use a mix: boneless skinless chicken thigh fillets cut into bite-sized pieces along with calamari, mussels and shrimp.

After heating oil in a large non-stick pan or well-seasoned skillet (or paella pan if you have one), fry onion, garlic and capsicum together and cook until the onion is transparent.

Sauté the chicken until golden on all sides, and add some chopped tomatoes, salt and pepper to taste. Cook until the tomatoes begin to create a lovely sauce. Add some mussels (optional) and calamari rings. Allow to cook for a short time (five minutes or so) then pour in medium-grain or arborio rice, peas and saffron (powder or threads). Mix everything together until well combined.

After adding some low-sodium chicken broth or stock (or homemade fish stock), bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and allow most of the liquid to



absorb into the rice, while stirring occasionally to prevent the rice from sticking and burning to the pan underneath – my tip is to cook it all until the rice is almost completely cooked through. Finally add the prawns, mixing them through the rice,

and allow the prawns and rice to cook completely. Once cooked, remove it from the heat (we place strips of capsicum, fire-roasted bell peppers, over the top for enhanced flavour) and cover it – we use newspaper – for 10 minutes. Then serve and enjoy!



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## Maija's traditional Karelian pasty

MAIJA HIEDANNIEMI,  
PA REPRESENTATIVE FOR FINLAND

There are, of course, many traditional Finnish foods, but I think that the most traditional Finnish speciality is the Karelian pasty. Known locally as *Karjalanpiirakka*, these pasties, or pies, originated in the eastern province of Karelia, the mythical birthplace of *Kalevala*, the epic 19th-century poem that has become an essential part of the Finnish national identity. The crust was traditionally made with rye flour and filled with potatoes, rice or carrots.

For my recipe, I start making the rice filling by adding porridge rice to a pan of boiling water, simmering until the water is absorbed. Add milk, bring the mixture to the boil and let it cook for just a couple of minutes, stirring continually. Reduce heat to the minimum – or turn it off completely – cover the pan with a lid and let the mixture simmer for about 30-40 minutes, stirring every now and then. You'll know the filling is ready when it has thickened into a velvety, white porridge.

Mix in a knob of butter, then cover the pan again and set aside to cool. Finally, add an egg and season with salt. The filling mustn't be too runny – it should hold its shape when spread on pie disks.

To prepare the pasty dough, add oil and water, a little at a time, to a mixture of flour and salt to get a non-sticky dough. Divide this into 15-20 equal pieces and roll them into small balls. With a tapered rolling pin, roll out the balls into very thin disks – about 1mm thick and 10-15cm in diameter – then cover the disks lightly with plastic wrap to prevent them drying out.

You're now ready to spread the filling on to the centre of the pie disks. Remove the plastic and raise the edges of the disks towards the centre, pinching with your fingers to make an oval ridge – the centre will be open. Place the pasties on a baking tray covered with parchment paper and bake for about five minutes, or until the pasties start to turn darkish-brown.

Meanwhile, heat some whole milk with melted butter in a saucepan. Dip the hot pasties into the hot milk and butter mixture and place them in large bowl. Cover the bowl tightly with something like parchment paper and a towel, and let the pasties soften for about half an hour.

The warm pasties are traditionally served with an egg and butter spread (made by mashing warm boiled eggs with butter and a little seasoning), but they are also often topped with plain butter, cheese, ham, reindeer slices, gravlax or shrimps – or whatever you happen to like!

**“We’ve always celebrated traditions but it was difficult at first in Switzerland. You couldn’t get a turkey, so at Christmas we cooked a goose – it was not a success!”**

Katy's children have all grown up in Switzerland, but she and her husband are both from Georgia, in the southern United States. “So that’s fried chicken, Tex-Mex, barbecue ribs, fried okra and, mostly, cooking out, because where we come from, winter is just a cold snap,” she explains. Katy says sometimes cooking is just about getting through the week and preparing quick new family favourites such as spaghetti bolognese.

On summer weekends, however, they get their grill on. “We grill veg – zucchini and corn on the cob – and I make potato salad and grape salad. That recipe came from an old neighbour, I think, but now everyone asks me to make it for dessert. Then it’s ribs, steak and freshly made hamburgers. We play corn hole, where you throw bean bags – traditionally, bags of corn – through two holes.”

Another tradition that is maintained among American families is Thanksgiving. “There’s about 30 of us in my social group and we take it in turns to host. We take a divide-and-conquer approach to the turkeys, running them around people’s ovens, as we need quite a few!” says Katy.

Rolla says she, too, loves the way food can create an instant, positive connection. “When I say I’m from Lebanon, I love that people say, ‘Oh, I love Lebanese food’, rather than ‘I’m sorry about the war’! We have lived in different places and things are always changing, like recipes. I’m always adding something new and nice, to make it more flavoursome. We are Lebanese, but no longer only Lebanese. I love it when the kids come home and say it smells good, whether I’m cooking za’atar or lasagne. My daughter was saying the other day, ‘I am 25 per cent Lebanese, 25 per cent American and 50 per cent Swiss.’ If we go and live in Timbuktu, that equation will change again. But as long as some percentage is Lebanese, I am completely happy with that.”

# WORK, LEARN, GROW



MOKA ARCHITECTS



## Private offices. Open-plan offices. Pods. The design of working and learning spaces has transformed over the past 50 years and, in 2020, the focus is all about effective environments in which to grow.

WORDS BECKY ALLEN

Work in the 21st-century involves being able to handle change on a scale our 20th-century counterparts would have found unimaginable – and, perhaps, horrifying. From tech to big pharma, companies around the world want to hire people who are adaptable, thoughtful and willing to rise to the challenges of a fast-moving world. In other words, they want to hire learners.

Thriving in this new landscape demands different skills. Critical thinking, communication and being able to learn on the job are at a premium. But what does this mean for the workplace? Most of us still work in the open-plan layouts introduced in the mid-1960s, despite the fact that they are often not conducive to learning and development. (Back then, the idea was that open plan offices would break down hierarchies and improve creativity.) So, how can workplaces support a learning culture? How can we design new buildings and repurpose old ones to nurture these new skills? And where in the world can we look for inspiration?

For **Yassir Osman**, Class of 1982 (1979-80), founding partner of Zurich-based architect practice MOKA, flexibility and a cooperative approach are vital. Housed in a former factory that once manufactured supermarket scales, MOKA embodies the changing world of work. “The growth of European cities forced out heavy industry, leaving large, vacant lots,” says Yassir. “Converting these former industrial buildings into office space or mixed use was how MOKA made its name.”

MOKA’s office is designed for sharing; its light, voluminous spaces feel more like a workshop than a formal workplace. “There’s no walnut veneer here,” he jokes. “The walls are covered in industrial screed so that we can build models and stick stuff to the walls.” ▶

### Space to connect

*Double-height spaces were used for social areas at SBB’s offices to encourage people to come together in informal ways and create a sense of community across the company.*

The drive for openness – physical as well as mental – was what originally fuelled the move to open-plan offices, but, as anyone who has worked in one knows, they can have major drawbacks. To reduce noise and provide privacy, Yassir takes inspiration from village communities. “Breaking down large, open-plan spaces into different neighbourhoods and public squares, in the same way that a village works, lets people move around depending on whether they need privacy or interaction,” he says.

It’s an approach that’s worked well for many of MOKA’s clients, from insurance giant AXA to SBB Swiss Federal Railways. For AXA, the project involved transforming a 1960s heritage-listed building from small offices into a more flexible, space-efficient open-plan design. Fixed furniture was removed and relocated to the building’s core, noisy copiers rehoused, and the bulk of the space fitted with rails supporting heavy-duty curtains.

At SBB, where MOKA redesigned the offices of Swiss Federal Railways’ IT department, the brief was shaped by its staff’s love of Post-it Notes. “I had this idea that IT staff are supremely digital, but I’d never seen so many Post-its,” Yassir recalls. “This meant they needed lots of space to put them up, so we introduced grooved cladding and magnetic panels that double as whiteboards. These can be carried between workspaces, so teams can cooperate.”

To facilitate serendipitous meetings, double height spaces were added to act as social areas. Linking these every two floors lets staff move through the building without using the central stairs, allowing space for an atrium staircase with double-height steps that serve as seating. “It encourages people to meet and exchange in informal ways, helps build connections between departments and creates a sense of community in the company as a whole,” says Yassir.

Dr Peter Bacevice, a social scientist at the University of Michigan in the US and director of research at HLW, a global architecture and design firm, agrees that to design good workplaces, architects need a deep understanding of businesses and their staff. “Well-designed workplaces can help attract talent, promote health and wellbeing, and symbolise commitments to sustainability,” he says. “Start with developing a shared understanding of the business and then think about how the work environment can support it.”

Peter believes that variety in a workplace – in seating, space size and social areas – is important, and says that a learning culture, too, can be fostered by design. “Put work on display; every industry can do this in different ways, but showing prototypes and finished products, and displaying information and metrics, helps everyone learn,” he says.

According to Jim Childress, an award-winning architect and a director of Centerbrook Architects and Planners, it’s all about achieving a balance between sharing and being able to escape: providing people with spaces in which they can work alone, alongside breakout areas to work on projects with colleagues. “Being willing to work with others takes confidence and happiness – and intimacy is at the heart of that,” says Jim. “But it’s also about flexibility ▶

## OUR NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL

As Middle School Principal, **David Wood** has a keen eye on life after school. “Teachers often say that we’re preparing students for jobs that don’t yet exist, but I think that’s always been true,” he says. “What’s different now is the pace of social change: it’s so rapid, and future workplaces are changing too.”

At school, this means greater focus on concepts, interdisciplinary skills and values, and less emphasis on subjects in silos and content. Assessment methods are changing too, with grades taking a back seat to mastery.

“Kids learn naturally by trial and error. They don’t come to kindergarten obsessed with grades, we do that to them,” says David. “Providing a safe environment for kids to fail is incredibly important. Focusing on skill, competence and conceptual understanding is what motivates kids to learn.”

This has been a driving force behind the new project to build a purpose-built Middle School physically connected to the Upper School. According to Hans Fischer and Matthias Kneubühler of AMZ Architekten, the architects behind the project: “The building is planned as a ‘learning landscape’, with different-sized classrooms, outdoor areas and artistic spaces in different usable areas. By connecting the school buildings, various facilities can be shared by Middle and Upper School students. Close proximity makes learning very efficient.”

David is excited about the impact the environment will have on learning. He says: “Bigger art spaces and workshop areas will fuel students’ imagination and creativity and provide opportunities for working together. There are many great new features – flexible learning spaces, a media centre, a makerspace area, dedicated STEM classrooms, music rooms and a theatre, for example. There’s also an exciting new triple gym, part of a private/public partnership with the local authority in Adliswil that will mean we can share our facilities with the local community.

“And, importantly, sustainability is at the project’s heart. Our students are passionate about environmental issues and, as the building takes shape, they will be involved in the way their new environment looks and feels.”

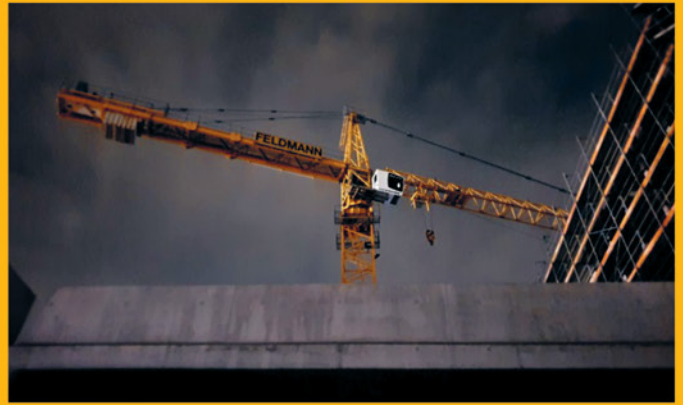
**To find out more about the new Middle School, visit [www.zis.ch/new-middle-school](http://www.zis.ch/new-middle-school)**



**“Bigger art spaces and workshop areas will fuel students’ imagination and creativity and provide opportunities for working together”**







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MOKA ARCHITECTS

**“Ideas are today’s most valuable commodities, but the days of the lone genius are over. Good ideas come from cooperative working – that’s why effective workplaces are vital”**

**Flexible space**

*Transforming AXA’s offices involved converting the floor plan from a traditional cell structure to a flexible, agile workspace – while bringing the qualities of the modernist architecture from the 1960s back to life.*

and having a clear identity. The modern, more global, mobile and connected workplace is all about working together. And as an architect, I believe that the right physical environment is crucial to enabling that to happen.”

Which is why at Centerbrook’s offices, in an old water mill on Connecticut’s Falls River, intimate spaces are standard. “The old factory has three major rooms. No-one has a private office, not even me, and we all have the same sized cubicles. We like them – they comfort people and provide a place people can personalise,” he says.

“A decade ago it was harder to hire young staff. Now we can’t hire everyone who wants to work with us. I put that down to our culture. Young people want to belong to something.”

Intimate surroundings are also important for the world-class scientific research carried out at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, one of Centerbrook’s long-standing clients. “The big thing I learned from Cold Spring is that science at this level is really intense. People are very driven, they work long hours, and the

intensity of their work requires solitude. They need to be able to close the door,” Jim says.

To translate this into architecture, he designed a workplace with small, intimate spaces, as well as places where groups of five to 10 colleagues could gather. There’s also a dining hall where scientists can meet regularly, while the outside environment provides space to think.

“The building provides a protective cocoon where you can concentrate on work, and when you need to escape from that, there are these small group spaces and the outdoors. It’s had a big influence on me, and it’s a big contrast to other warehouse-like labs that make it hard to feel you belong,” he says.

In a world where boundaries between work and home, and public and private, are blurring, and many people can – and do – work almost anywhere, Yassir argues that physical workplaces are becoming more, not less, important. “Ideas are today’s most valuable commodities, but the days of the lone genius are over. Good ideas come from cooperative working – that’s why effective workplaces are vital.”



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**Cambridge**

English Teaching

### Providing challenge and building resilience are the cornerstones of preparing our students for the future

I believe students can do far more than we ask of them. When they leave here, life will hold challenges they will never have imagined, and we need to find ways of stretching students. Research shows that if you don't, those students who are ready to be challenged become just as disengaged as those who find the work difficult.

In my first-ever job as a principal, I had the challenge of leading the lowest-performing middle school in Washington DC. There were two or three fights a day, and academic achievement was low. But what I learned there is that the children weren't lazy or difficult. Their teachers had given up on them; they'd been written off and they were bored.

So, I've been working with curriculum leaders to find out how to provide the right level of challenge – so that students aren't coasting but they're also not burning out. We're sending a message to parents and teachers that we want students to tackle unfamiliar material, to push them into new ways of thinking, even if that feels uncomfortable. In the real world, this is the kind of thinking that leads to success.

We have to teach our children to cope with failure too. Speaking at ZIS VOICES *Live*, Professor Manu Kapur, Chair of Learning Sciences and Higher Education at ETH Zürich, suggested that failing is often the quickest way to learn a new skill or grasp a new concept. When a teacher wants a student to learn something new, instead of telling them what it is, they take the student through a set of activities that are designed for them to fail. Making learning easy does not ease learning. Parents here recognize the value of resilience, but we can't build that if children aren't challenged.

If anything, that means mental health is even more important than ever. Over the next two years, we'll be training teachers

to be able to identify the struggles children face – how to spot the signs and how to listen without judgment. It's a sort of first aid for mental health. In the last 15 years, there's been a huge increase in depression and anxiety among teens. We need to combat any stigma and fight the idea that mental health problems are something to be embarrassed about.

We need to help children recognize warning signs among their friends. The child in front of you is a learner and a person, and we must attend to both. When you see students as simply vessels for content, you will fail. We've taken the first steps with things such as our mental health week, and I'm looking forward to building on this next year.

I want our school to serve students of all abilities. My first months in ZIS were about getting around classrooms, listening to parents and teachers. I want a highly successful school that helps all students to go as far as they can.

Finally, it's a huge joy that part of my role is to be a teacher of teachers. At many faculty meetings and in the weekly e-newsletter to parents, I've been introducing something new, sharing what I've learned at the best schools I've worked at. They say never trust a leader who believes everyone else is excited by his or her vision. But I've seen here that there's a real intellectual hunger to continue to make ZIS the best school it can be – and I love that.

**“I want our school to serve students of all abilities. There's a real intellectual hunger to make ZIS the best school it can be, to help all students to go as far as they can – I love that”**

David Markus  
Upper School Principal



## PERSPECTIVES

# We know flexible working is good for employees – but is it good for business? Four members of the ZIS community tell us how to make it work.

WORDS PETER TAYLOR-WHIFFEN ILLUSTRATION MICHAEL KIRKHAM



**Anthony McFeely**  
Head of HR Robotics  
ABB  
*Current parent*



**Shanthi Flynn**  
Business Consultant  
C-Suite  
*Current parent*

As employers and employees we all need to challenge our own mental models, considering different ways our teams can work. So, most of all, it's about flexible mindsets. There are well-known benefits to working flexibly – for employees it makes better use of time and helps maintain a work/life balance, and for organisations it can improve and enable diversity engagement, productivity and retention – but you need to be confident in your framework. Transparency is crucial so that it's clear what everyone is doing, when they're working and, importantly, when they're not working.

We know flexible working can take many forms: flexitime, a compressed work week, telecommuting, remote working, part-time hours, job-sharing. Every one of these – just as in a traditional nine-to-five working environment – requires clear, objective performance metrics to make it effective. And a manager still needs to ensure staff remain connected to the organisation's ecosystem. Those working remotely can experience disconnection, maybe even isolation, and this needs to be managed.

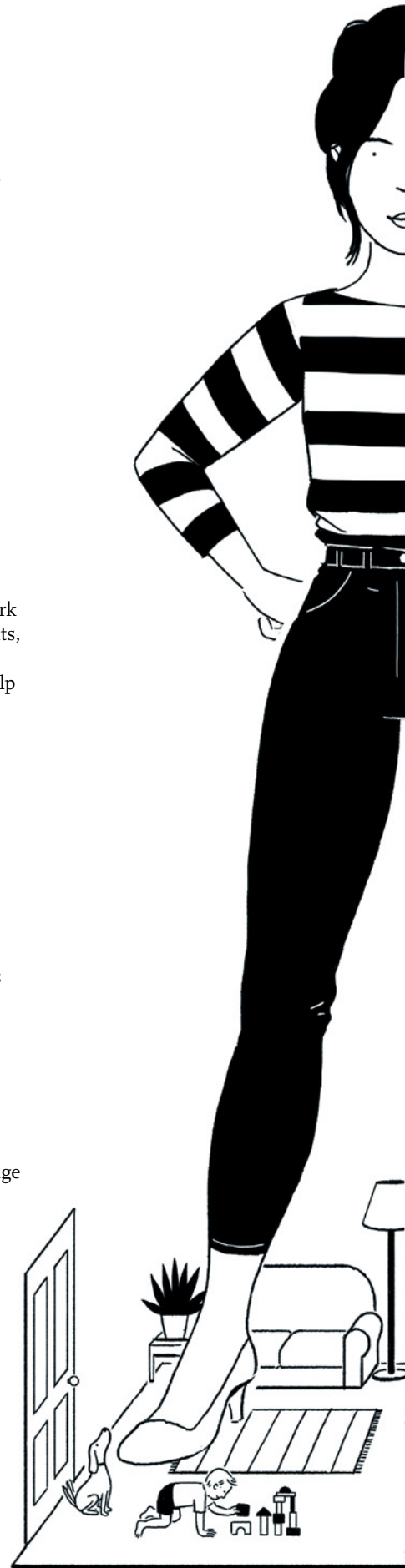
Success of flexible working depends on the job, the individual and the location, and needs to be looked at in a specific context – public transport, infrastructure and the local culture. It also attracts a more diverse pool of potential job candidates. We have almost 150,000 employees in more than 100 countries around the world, and our focus is attracting, developing and retaining the best people. Promoting flexible working enables us to do that.

Being able to offer flexibility benefits performance, creating engaged and motivated employees who want to stay.

There are so many opportunities to work flexibly nowadays, but trust is vital and that has to be earned. There's usually a trigger behind wanting to work flexibly – young children, elderly parents, caring for relatives – and a good solid relationship with your manager can help you do this.

Of course, there are times when flexibility isn't possible because your employer needs all hands on deck: IT system crashes, customer deadlines, end-of-year accounts. But outside these times, it's essential to protect your own space. Even if you're a senior manager who needs to be kept in the loop all the time, if it's your downtime, learn to skim those emails and respond only to the urgent ones. The best organisations will ensure someone can cover, so that a flexible employee on their downtime doesn't feel obliged to read that email for fear they'll be judged if they don't.

Flexible working can change throughout your career. On the way up, you can feel obliged to always be available, that not being so might damage your career – but a good manager will value your right to a personal life. As I got older I had more confidence to self-determine my availability – if I had an international conference call at 2am I'd block out my diary later in the day, and not feel obliged to defend that. But the key was letting people know. People get far too consumed by others' expectations – if you are transparent and tell people when you're available and when you're not, and your manager supports and facilitates that, flexible working can be very beneficial for everyone.





**Bilge Ogut**  
Managing Director  
Partners Group  
*Current parent*



**Marcel Cobuz**  
Executive Committee Member  
LafargeHolcim  
*Current parent and trustee*

Working flexibly is all about deliverables – can you complete a project to a good standard and on time, and does flexible working help or hinder this? For example, if you're visiting five clients, working flexibly could give you the time and energy to always give those clients the utmost attention and best service. But if that flexibility means you don't have the time in the office to prepare for that client meeting, you risk missing your goals. It's the joint responsibility of employer and employee to ensure flexibility works for everyone.

You and your boss also need to work out how and where to make the best use of your time – some people need the structure of the office; others are more productive on their own where there are fewer distractions. Having said that, working from home can potentially limit the opportunity to develop your skill set, so managers need to be aware of this.

Productivity also comes down to your comfort level and the reaction of your peers. Increased connectivity is great, meaning more of us can work flexibly, but does constant access to emails mean you're always "on"? You have to protect personal time – some organisations discourage email contact between certain periods to prevent staff from overworking.

If done right, flexibility can develop and progress the individual and the organisation. But we should recognise that certain ways of working suit us differently at particular times of life. If you have a young family, your children's need for you to be around changes as they get older. True flexibility means having the ability to change as needs dictate.

Flexible working is no longer just about the technology but about how people interact with each other. There was a time when everyone was in their own small offices, but then we moved to open-plan offices with kitchens in the middle and hotdesking, designed to make human interaction better and easier for exchanges of ideas.

At my company, we have introduced a system where flexible working represents 20 per cent of an employee's time. There are times when it is optimum for all staff to be together. It's very important to have touchpoints; these are the glue that keeps the workforce together. You have phone calls, video calls and other tech, but face-to-face is very important.

Flexible working means we can have virtual teams, where projects can run across time zones. Having virtual staff all over the world means our international customers always have dedicated teams within their proximity. The challenge for a company with many virtual workers is to ensure its values remain consistent and that the team acts as one. So, the challenge for managers is to find ways to team-build and create a sense of oneness.

Flexible working can give staff autonomy, freeing them to pursue passion projects, explore R&D or to spend time on products that aren't part of their core skills. It works for people with an established framework, and if you're a flexible worker and new to a company you have to create one – you need to reach out and collaborate, make yourself accepted among fellow virtual workers who may be of different ages and have a different engagement with technology. Using that initiative can make a great contribution to the company.

## ATHLETICS AND ACTIVITIES



### Ever feel like life is driving you up the wall? When it does, the climbers of ZIS couldn't be happier.

WORDS SARAH WOODWARD PHOTOGRAPHY KATE PETERS

Many athletes talk in negative terms about “hitting the wall”, but for a select group of ZIS students, that’s exactly when they’re at their happiest. Once a week, you’ll find them dangling off ropes on the climbing wall in the Upper School gym, pushing themselves on to reach new heights.

“I really like challenging myself by trying to climb a route I already know blindfold,” says **Alexander Rollinson** (Grade 7). “Or I climb a route using only one specific colour of marker, to make it harder. I like climbing difficult tangential routes, where you can end up hanging from the rope almost upside down. And even when you have climbed all the routes, you can set yourself a new goal by trying to beat the time record.”

Alexander does climbing as part of the Athletics and Activities (ATAC) programme – something that’s also open

to students in the Upper and Lower School. It’s led by experienced climber **Diego Madurga Diez**, who has summited all over the world and is proudest of conquering the 200m sheer Humanity route on the Tonsai Wall in Railay, Thailand. “I find climbing very zen,” he says. “You are present, living in the moment. I believe that is why children who are not necessarily super-sporty find a role here at the club. When you climb on the wall, you are competing against yourself rather than others. You develop your own path by trying different routes each week, continually testing yourself.”

Diego describes Alexander as a natural, who moves “like a tiger” on the wall. But, he says, each child is given the opportunity to develop their skills at a different pace. “We teach new moves gradually and we wait for them to say they feel ready to go on to the next level, such as leading a climb.”

With a maximum of six to eight children on the wall at any one time, a typical climb will involve a team of three: the lead; the belayer; and the ‘sack of potatoes’, whose job it is to give extra ballast and provide another set of hands. “Being the sack of potatoes is actually quite fun,” says **Isabelle Politzer** (Grade 6), “because you don’t have to work as hard and you can watch the others. When you are belaying, you have to really concentrate.”



**On the up:**  
Bea Chapman  
(Grade 7), Isabelle  
Pollitzer (Grade 6) and  
Alexander Rollinson  
(Grade 7) on the Upper  
School climbing wall.

Safety comes first, as Diego points out. “The children mostly climb attached to a rope at the top of the wall, and if the lead climber does slip, it will only be into the last clip, a couple of metres. When they first start, the introductory lessons can be a bit of a downer. Some kids just want to get on the rope straight away, while others freeze. But they cover the basics in the first few weeks and from then on they can climb at their own pace.

“It is very physical,” he adds. “They start off thinking it is all about having strong arms to pull yourself up with, but soon learn to climb with their legs. Climbing is about balance and positioning.”

Isabelle started at ZIS this year and has made friends through the club. “It’s really cool. There are some people in my class who I didn’t really know until I got to meet them here. It’s fun learning new moves together and being taught how to use different devices. We’ll do a couple of easy climbs to warm up, and then try a specific route.”

It is important that the children learn to relax on the wall. “I often have to look for a bit to get the

## “I find climbing very zen. You are present, living in the moment”

right hand-hold,” says Alexander. “Having strong arm muscles helps a lot but my feet are really important as well, so I have the time to work out my next move.” For the moment, Alexander will stick to perfecting his moves on the indoor wall but hopes one day to apply his new skills to real mountains. His time will come: Diego is already planning to take climbers from the Upper School to Kalymnos in Greece on one of the Classroom Without Walls trips this summer.

“I just love it,” says Isabelle. “It feels like you are flying through the air! So far, I have got about halfway up the hardest climb – and, of course, I have slipped and fallen. But I feel very safe with my harness. The wall is quite high at the top – the trick is just not to look down.”



## MY PASSION



### Henrik Kaas, Grade 6, on his love of public speaking.

WORDS HELENA POZNIAK PHOTOGRAPHY KATE PETERS

#### Model citizen

*Henrik says before the MMUN conference, the biggest crowd he had spoken in front of was a school assembly.*

Facing a 1,500-strong crowd would be enough to give most adults pause. But 11-year-old Henrik Kaas was undeterred. Last March, as a Grade 5 student, he was selected by organisers of the Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN) conference in Rome to speak in front of the entire assembly.

“Was I nervous? Yes!” he says. “I stuttered a little. There were way more people than I’m used to but I think it went OK.” In fact, by the end of the conference, the Lower School MMUN advisers **Alice Sikora** and **Jamie Raskin** say that Henrik had emerged as a highly competent speaker.

At the MMUN conference, the young delegates take the role of national representatives, presenting, debating and brainstorming. Henrik was allocated Cuba as the country he had to represent, and he was challenged to argue for fair trade. “Until that point, I knew nothing about Cuba and I knew nothing about fair trade,” he says. With the help of the UN’s resources, online information and some guidance

from his teachers, he put together a presentation that he delivered, first to other delegates before presenting to the entire assembly.

This isn’t the first time Henrik has been away from home with the school, but this trip, he says, was the best so far. “I was lucky to share a room with my friend, but I made friends from other countries and I learned a lot during those few days. We talked about completely different stuff from normal.”

It was an intense experience – to qualify to attend as one of a dozen ZIS delegates, Henrik had to present in front of a panel of ZIS teachers. “Probably the biggest thing I can remember from the whole experience is that there’s an island of plastic in the ocean twice the size of Texas!”

He returned to school “more informed about the world” and with a determination to speak up. “I learned that it’s not only adults that go to conferences; children also get the chance to have a voice. And that it’s stressful to talk in front of big crowds – I’m amazed by the number of people that do it and don’t appear stressed or panicked.”

But he’s ready for his next public-speaking engagement. “I’ll definitely feel calmer. When you do something for the first time, it’s scary, then you get the hunger for it and want to do more, so I can’t wait.”

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