

WINTER 2021

RISSUE

ROTTERDAM INTERNATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL MAGAZINE NR. 3

New
Editor
in chief

MUNRO
2020

Project
Schooltrip

Mental
HEALTH

The 500-Word
Story Challenge



ROTTERDAM
INTERNATIONAL
SECONDARY
SCHOOL



Message from the Student Editor-In-Chief: Nabihah Zaheer

That's right – we have yet another edition of the **RISSUE** at our doorstep. The editorial board has worked hard to create this edition, which celebrates how the **RISS** community cares and looks out for its members in these difficult times. Rather than focusing on the hardships, this edition aims at summing up and representing all the different aspects of life at **RISS** so far into the year, and I am proud to say that, with our enthusiasm and hard work, we have done exactly that.

Let's all admit it – the 2019-2020 school year ended somewhat abruptly. I'm sure that whilst most of us started the lockdown with relief and glee, everyone ended up greatly missing the joys of coming to school, meeting new people, and making new memories. This new school year, **RISS** has, whilst ensuring the safety of all students and staff members, yet again continued to prosper and grow as a community, by unifying through the school's core values: responsibility, courage, relationships, and respect.

The making of this magazine has brought this community even closer together into a tight-knit family. We explore every story, every idea, from every corner of the school, to create a piece that equally represents all opinions, views, and thoughts. The student writers, together with professional publishers, then turn these diverse stories into detailed, adventurous feature articles for you to read. The photographers work just as hard – capturing hundreds of memories, to convey messages which words can't quite describe.

I would love to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has worked hard to make the creation of this magazine possible: the writers, photographers, and supporting teachers who worked hard every single day. A big thank-you goes out to the Principal, who envisioned and arranged the main idea of this magazine and created this unique opportunity for us. I'd especially like to thank last year's editorial team, which has so warmly handed over the magazine and supported us throughout this process.

I would also like to thank the entire school community for their support and input. I hope we can all continue to grow and evolve as we progress through these times as a family.

Nabihah Zaheer
Student Editor-In-Chief



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Message from the Former Editor-in-Chief

It brings me great joy, once more, to present to the school community our RISSUE. The past year has been interesting, to say the least; we have had to adapt and evolve and overcome new challenges. It has been an exciting few months of hard work by the students, in collaboration with teachers and staff of the school as well as the external publishers, to bring this magazine together. We are very proud of all the astonishing contributions that are featured in this edition.

As a team, we have had a great journey thus far, but all must come to an end. Last year, it was a great honour to be Editor-in-Chief of the RISSUE and to work with my amazing team in producing the first and second edition. This year, we have had to pass that on to the new generation. A new team have taken over and have worked hard towards producing this edition. I am so proud to say, that I leave the RISSUE in good hands.

I personally want to thank the school for this amazing opportunity that I have had. I have gained many good and valuable skills from this experience. Producing this magazine has given us the opportunity to work with professionals, while also providing an opportunity for students in the community to share their creativity – whether that be written pieces, poetry or art. The making of this magazine has brought the community closer together.

I would lastly like to thank the whole school community for their contributions and support. I look forward to the next edition of RISSUE magazine.

*Geoffrey Antonio Mathias,
Former Editor-in-Chief*

*“I am so proud to say,
that I leave the RISSUE
in good hands.”*

MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL:

By Dr. Gilbert-Sáez



Writing for the RISSUE is always an absolute pleasure – especially as its creation and organisation rest so much on students guided, minimally, by their teachers and the help of the XPat Media publishing house. Real hands-on experience from concept to actual product. This type of experiential learning is very much the focus of the next stage in our provision and we are looking forward to wider developments within the Middle and Foundation Years. I promise that when the time comes, we will tell you more...

I do not want to make the current pandemic the star of this article. While it has taken over so much of our lives, my revenge is that it won't steal the limelight here. Instead, I would rather emphasise the great things we have done despite – even thanks to – its presence in our lives. After all, it is not freedom that fosters creativity, but constraint. Such has been our commitment this year, to ensure as much as possible that we continue delivering our best to our students, regardless of what is going on around us. Lessons, quality of instruction, planning meetings, pastoral care, events, co-curricular activities – all have carried on thanks to the perseverance of students and teachers to continue in their work for what matters so much to us all. In this way we can hang on to a sense that life will go on, regardless, and that – despite the circumstances – education will prevail at RISS.

With us entering December 2020 and the end-of-year festivities approaching, I would like to reiterate here what I said in one of our bulletins:

Our community is wonderfully international and this is one of the big reasons why RISS is so special. But I know that many of our dear ones will be far from where we would like them to be at the moment, as we come to the end of a really challenging year. At least we have the virtual world to keep us connected and I know it will provide us all some solace and closeness as we work to protect everyone. After all, ultimately, this is what it's all about – protecting ourselves and others.

In previous years we may have lost sight of what is really important in a material world full of complexities with, in so many countries, leadership that seems intent on taking us even further away from what really matters in life.

Whether it is our deep religious convictions or our moral compass or our sense of hope and optimism, we all use what we have to keep us going and we know we will get through what has been, in so many ways, the unimaginable.

You, as parents and students, are doing a great job and we will all come out the other side stronger, I know. We will not let circumstances get in the way of our dreams. That said, I know that, as you read this, loss will have touched some of you. We wish you strength, we remind you that time will help, if not heal, and we know your loved ones will live on in your memories. After all, in the words of Chilean writer, Isabel Allende:

“There is no death... People die only when we forget them... If you can remember... [them]... [they] will be with you always.” Isabel Allende, Eva Luna

We have learnt so much about ourselves this year, it is true, but we have also learnt about others and the potential for leadership that lies in us all. In a world where direction, action and compassion have undoubtedly been significant, we have learnt how to work together as a community and be successful at it. And where leadership has been sorely lacking, this has enabled us to comprehend that we need to be active and committed participants in the civil life of a country. We cannot remain inactive and let poor decisions go unnoticed, as they ultimately will impact the current and the future lives of our children.

On the subject of impacting children's lives, I would like not only to praise our RISS Teachers, especially, but also all my colleagues across the world who have neither been on the receiving end of doorstep applause nor generous thanks from

political leaders. They have served students around the world day in and day out, complying with whatever has been thrown at them and keeping their student's education at the heart of their actions. Teachers have gone above and beyond their call of duty when it comes to planning, preparation and assessment, and have worked tirelessly at the forefront of every single country as they have lived up to their educational vocation. Their response cannot be understated, nor can it be forgotten.

And, as I write this, I also think about teaching colleagues whose lives have been taken or who are in hiding as a result of forces more dangerous than Covid that entered their lives when they stood up for the belief that education is about the right to free expression and discussion, by its very nature. Education is a force for change and it must and should provide a space for enriching exchanges, one in which our teachers feel that they are safe to do their job.

Finally, moving back to the pandemic, I would like to praise the new developments (a genuine source of hope in a challenging year) that have taken place of late in relation to effective vaccines. Of course, such an outcome is reason enough to celebrate, but my focus is on the women and men of science whose personal stories lie behind the headlines. These were the people working behind the scenes as we slept and whose dedicated years of academic study were put in the service of fighting this virus. And they did so not to win some international vaccine race but – as Dr Sarah Gilbert, Professor of Vaccinology at Oxford University, suggested – to cure our communities in a way that is not driven by financial gains. In her words, “We should be vaccinating the whole world and not just the high-income countries.” Our scientists must not be forgotten and, in saying that, we need to encourage more of our students to engage in scientific research and studies and show them the rewards that their sleepless nights can bring to the wider world.

With science being the brightness in an otherwise sombre year, it seems appropriate to mention our 2020 Festival of Lights. This wonderful celebration of childhood seems all the more important this year and I know the lights we see shining at RISS this December – our children and young people – will go on to illuminate a very different world, even from what we would have envisaged just a few months ago. Their education in the values we all believe in at RISS means their light will continue to shine brightly, regardless of what lies ahead.



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Aphrodite's Rock

Roman ruins at Paphos and beautiful coastline

By Aarushi Ganguli

A Throwback to Happier Times

Life is a series of experiences, which help us learn and grow as a person. However, there are some experiences that stand out as being extraordinary. For four other students and me at RISS, this came in the form of the Erasmus + project school trip that completely changed my outlook on academics and helped me develop skills that will later prove very useful, especially in university.

As we were presenting our final exhibition at the end of a week-long trip to Cyprus, I cast my mind back to the amazing opportunities I had been given, and the things I had learnt that had helped me in so many ways. The Erasmus + project was a collaboration that took 25 students from across Europe and gave them an opportunity to participate in a national project. Along with the five of us, there were five students from Italy, Denmark, Germany and Cyprus each. We made an exhibition of our findings that focused on propaganda in Europe after the Second World War, a process that had its roots many moons

ago as we practiced for the presentation we would eventually make. The project helped widen our worldview as international students and made us humble in the way we saw the world, and aware of how much we still didn't know.

We had come to Cyprus for a week, during which time we were able to discover more on a topic that interested all of us; fake news, in historical times – and how that had changed. Though each group was given a separate topic, such as historical conservation, we were given the opportunity to be creative with our giant tri-folds and, therefore, each group had a specially unique take on 'Once the power of propaganda'. The fact that we got to present to many people also helped us understand the way in which other people understood our separate presentations, while also fostering our inquisitiveness on the subject.

While there, I was able to spend time with my host family. Kiara, my host, was one of the sweetest people I have met and I am still in contact with her. Her life has been very different from mine and it was interesting to see all the different experiences that people go through – just based on where they live and what they have experienced living in a particular country.

The trip to Cyprus would not have been complete without the day trips to see the sights and sounds of this beautiful country, which is surrounded by the beautiful blue of the Mediterranean Sea – the same shade as the Delft Blue pottery made here. We travelled to Larnaca, Paphos, Limassol, and Nicosia and experienced the island's culture, which was significantly different, depending on where we were. This mainly has to do with the fact that the northern area of Cyprus is home to Turkish Cypriots, while the rest of the island is home to Greek Cypriots. This is a conflict that goes back decades, and as we were lucky enough to visit both sides, I was able to see how continued political struggles can divide a country while its people are still fighting to save it, an allegory of other conflict areas. Through these trips, we were also able to see many of the attractions that Cyprus is known for, such as Aphrodite's Rock and the Roman mosaics at Paphos, allowing us to experience the vibrant civilization that was founded so long ago, something which I have been interested in for a very long time.

This project made me proud to be part of something that encouraged so many young students to think about a topic that many would be interested in. It gave us the opportunity to grow and help each other and helped us connect with a wider audience, while also forging life-long friendships and engaging us in a new experience. So, next time you experience such a wondrous event, share it with the world and never be afraid to try new things, as they all help us thrive in life and learn – also from the mistakes we make.

The Erasmus + Project School Trip

“Every new experience brings its own maturity and a greater clarity of vision”

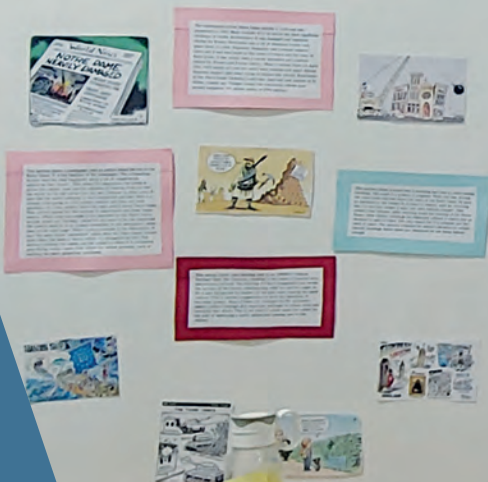
Indira Gandhi

The Final Exhibition

The Erasmus + Project School Trip



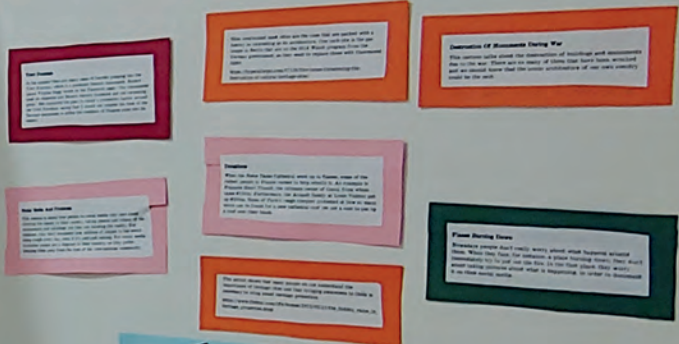
Cartoon Analysis



Final Cartoons



Our Cartoon Analysis



Feedback

Your

Who is presented?

Who is not presented?



RISSUE and Our School

You may have wondered, while reading the lines of the previous RISSUE articles, who's behind them, how the magazine arose, how the articles came about and how the magazine adapted to changes in school and times. In short – you might have wondered how it has evolved to become such an important part of our community, allowing students to express ideas, share experiences and, overall, make it the showcase of our RISS community.

Starting as a small, informal collection of articles produced and written by students a few years ago, the RISSUE perfectly reflects the evolution of our school community and is nowadays a bi-annual magazine which students have carried over the years. In the beginning, it used to be a bunch of articles written by students who wanted to share their interests in various topics – until very recently, when the school started changing things a bit.

The very first editions used to be printed out in school in a non-formal way – until, in 2019, the school Principal took the initiative to print a paper version and, at the end of the school year, to combine the RISSUE with the yearbook to make it one magazine that would gather interviews of our school community's fellows, as well as interesting articles on issues concerning students and RISS. This mission was entrusted to 2019 editor-in-chief Geoffrey Mathias and his team of photographers, reporters and editors. Together, they accepted the challenge and came up with the first rebranded magazine, amazingly edited, using a rather neat format, like any professional magazine. This new format was in keeping with the ambitions of the school board and was to bring RISS to another level in terms of size, visibility and education. Indeed, just like the

first editions of the RISSUE, the RISS community used to be a small familial community, where students evolved in small classes – however, over the past four years, members of our community have witnessed an ever-growing number of students and teachers joining the RISS family, and the school has renewed itself to become more visible in Rotterdam and in the world of international schools.

Geoffrey Mathias, the first editor-in-chief of the printed RISSUE, has a great interest in journalism and saw this as an opportunity to experience not only what journalism and editing could be like, but also to reinforce communication and bonds within our school and our community. According to him, the idea of the first non-digital RISSUE was to “create a platform for those who wanted to share talents, ideas and experiences” and to create more unity within our school community.

Like Geoffrey, members of the RISSUE team are passionate about different aspects of writing a magazine. The first non-digital edition was warmly welcomed by students, teachers and other members of our community and later on in the year, another magazine was issued.

By Quentin Frisch

For this year's editions, the position of editor-in-chief of the team of (largely) grade-11 student editors and writers has been taken over by Nabihah Zaheer.

Just as the magazine has changed, our community has seen itself change – and throughout the years, RISS has continued to welcome new students and teachers, arriving from every corner of the world, by creating a safe and respectful environment. This has turned the community into a family that is now more tight-knit than ever, thanks to the RISSUE.

Sude Bozcal, one of the writers for the magazine, says that the appreciable thing about the RISSUE is that – pretty much like our school community – everyone is respectful of one another and that every voice is heard and is considered. Sude describes the RISSUE as the best way to represent our school community, ideology and atmosphere, as it serves as a great tool to raise awareness on issues such as climate change, about which she has written a passionate article.

According to Sude, educating younger fellow students through the accessible articles we write is not only what makes the RISSUE so special, but it also represents the close relationship between younger and older students within our school community. Here, grades and years do not impose barriers between students – allowing older students to interact with younger students, reassure them about their future years at RISS and educate them on global issues concerning not only students but the whole environment that surrounds them.

Among the writers and editors, the vibe is really good and encouraging as everyone is passionate about the different topics they want to explore and write about – allowing diversity, and the inclusion of perspectives and ideas.

At least a month before issuing an edition, the writers and editors meet to decide what the format will look like, what topics they are going to write about and eventually share opinions and advice on each other's articles. Currently, most of the writers are from Grade 11, giving them the opportunity to work with professionals – enjoying the challenges of this task, and also escaping from the stress of everyday school life. The supportive approach of teachers and the motivation of students to be successful make this magazine and this school a well-balanced environment in which to learn and progress.

Articles vary from interviews of students and teachers to instructive articles and stories about our school community – and, in general, try to focus as much as possible on our school by summarizing what has happened over the year, covering events and trying to stimulate the interaction between members of our community. The magazine owes its success to the unconditional will of students to share, communicate and create.

Since the first paper edition, only three editions have been published, but the atmosphere and the motivation among the magazine's editors and writers remains encouraging and positive, as they aim to produce the best for our community and to continue this amazing legacy – one that best reflects RISS and its community.

2020



2021



What Is Special About International Schools?

Having lived in more than five different countries, each with its own unique culture, I have never been at a loss when it comes to appreciating diversity.

At RISS, I have been able to experience my first international school setting, and boy, what an experience it has been, being in the middle of this 'melting pot' of cultures. As in many international schools, students 'are from over 80 or more different countries, all coming together in a perfect, diverse blend.' [The international school community blog.]

Many international students wish to study at a university abroad, a concept which the majority are already used to. Studying at an international school is a great way to prepare oneself for this, as it allows students to develop a sense of independence, which is a necessity. TOK makes us question the nature of knowledge, while IAs and the EE prepare us for higher education; they teach us to organise ourselves, work within our time frame and to work to find answers instead of waiting to be told. All of these are factors which contribute greatly to the development of a critical-thinking mindset.

'The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally-minded people... common humanity... shared guardianship...' – Official IB website

I'd say we're all at least half-way there. Maybe.

As international students, we have all volunteered to take on the many challenges that arise during the course of the IGCSE and IB programmes – though some of us were volun-told! At the end of the day, earning the diploma will show universities, prospective employers and ourselves that we were capable of successfully completing an extremely rigorous course – and that is definitely something to be immensely proud of. Who knows, a good final grade may mean actually getting that much-deserved PS5..?

As well as the challenging curriculum and the obvious rewards of successfully completing the programmes, international schools provide students with the opportunity to form relationships with students from all over the world. I mean, where else – outside of a UN building – can you turn around in the same room and have at least six different international perspectives? Collectively, we are indeed internationally minded, so much so that it is odd to me when someone hasn't lived in another country. Even if someone is attending an international school and hasn't lived in another country, studying with students who have experienced a different learning environment and who have different strategies for problem solving, will enable them to become accustomed to a diverse environment and to learn to appreciate other cultures, which would benefit any student in the future.

Although it can often take some adjustment, constantly being surrounded by people who have formed their own individual opinions born of very different experiences to one's own, provides insight into how others think. It prompts, or rather forces, us to understand that the world does not revolve around us and our opinions. People have their own beliefs. In taking in these different perspectives, we begin to understand that.

In international schools, we are a community, and an atmosphere of harmony is more important than forcing your individual opinions on others. There is a huge amount of diversity within international schools, and RISS is the model of this!

In international schools, many relationships are forged during the time spent in both the junior and senior grades, which help us to get through the years. The difficulties that we go through together as IB students, create strong bonds within grades and foster the formation of friendships that will last a lifetime.

At RISS, we are educated for 'self-awareness, curiosity and integrity in a changing world', and because the world is changing so quickly and drastically, now more than ever, we, as international students, are at an advantage. We are taught to be open-minded, accepting of others and tolerant of disparate opinions. These values are the foundation of international schools. If, in the future, we instil these same values in our children, they will, in turn, exhibit these characteristics with their peers in kindergarten, primary school and on, throughout their academic careers and their lives.

There are enough problems in the world at the moment caused by people who are disinclined to see things from another's perspective; we do not need to make more problems.

RISS is sending young people out into the world who have a global view-point and experience in working and living alongside people with vastly different ideas of what 'normal' looks like, and this is what makes international schools special.



By Amalia Villacis Miranda

Review of Munro 2020

What's So Great About MUN?

We've had MUNs at our very own school for the past few years, and even this year we held a small MUN, just for RISS students, at the Junior Campus. MUN is the perfect opportunity to practise your public speaking skills, because you don't always have to make very big speeches. You can make short speeches, or express your support for an amendment – and you get to dress up and discuss global issues. You can even sign up with your friends, and it's very funny hearing them speak so seriously and formally when you know how they really are. But it also allows you to meet new people and catch up on global issues you don't usually have the time for.

I went to this year's MUN and asked some students in the Security Council what they thought of it. Here are their responses:

■ "MUN is a very fun environment to be in, as you learn about global issues, and it's fun to be in an environment where you can act as if you're the delegate of a nation." (Anonymous)

■ "I think MUN is a really great experience for students, because we learn about how to research effectively, and we also learn about global issues and discuss them with other students. I think that really helps our knowledge and our experience grow. It also really helps us improve our public speaking skills because we learn to step out of our comfort zones, even if we're afraid or shy. We learn to talk in front of others. I just think it's a very good experience." (Hyeju Hwang, G11, Co-chair of the Security Council)

■ "I believe it's a valuable opportunity to share our ideas and have a broader perspective and knowledge of the world's issues. [I would recommend students to go to MUN] because you can become more confident at speaking." (Anonymous)

■ "It's really interesting to see how different perspectives counter each other and it's really cool to debate with people about globally significant issues, and it's really instructive for us. [People should sign up for MUN] because it enhances their speaking and debating skills." (Quentin Frisch, G11)

■ "[MUN is] a really fun activity at RISS, even though COVID-19 is here and half the country is closed down, RISS still continues with the tradition and it's really fun, with a lot of kids ranging from Grade 9 to Grade 12. [People should sign up for MUN] because it's a great way to meet the rest of the community, to interact with people from a different campus, talk to people you would not usually talk to, and it's a great way to bond with people." (Pieter Teszelszky, G11)

As you can see, MUN is a fantastic experience. It may take some getting used to, maybe your first few minutes there will be awkward, but suddenly you'll find yourself having very strong opinions on subjects you never gave a second thought. It enriches your thinking and makes you change your perspective, as you represent a country that might be foreign to you. There are also really fun parts that deserve to be mentioned. For instance, you can send confidential notes to other delegates, form alliances and you get to gossip too. There are gossip boxes (this year they were Google Forms) in which you can write anything – but keep it nice, no need to be rude. One of the best parts is the punishments (unless you're the one being punished). If you're not dressed formally or you speak using personal pronouns, you'll most likely get punished. The punishments aren't that bad; you can sing Let it Go at the top of your lungs, or you could dance the macarena, which is pretty embarrassing if it's you, but hilarious if it's someone else. It can get more embarrassing, so I hope for your sake that your committee spares you, but you'll have a funny story to tell and it'll feel nice to break out of your comfort zone.

You'll see that it's a great opportunity to grow and meet new people. (It's also a good CAS experience if you're in IB). If you sign up with friends it'll be even better, as you'll get to see a side of them you've probably never seen before. I mean, how often do you see your friends all dressed up and representing a nation? **If you don't believe me, ask around, and you'll hear just how fun MUN can be.**





MUNRO 2020

I couldn't possibly do MUN justice in a single article and with a few interviews, while it all also depends on your personal experience, which is why you should definitely sign up when the next MUN comes around.

Why You Should Read the Student Charter

How often, as you go about your life as a student here at RISS, do you think about your student rights? Most likely, not very often. You may not think it, but a read through the student charter could save you from a lot of stress and uncomfortable situations. Perhaps you know the general idea of a few of the rules in the charter, but I'm here to convince you to take a few minutes of your time and read the student charter from start to finish. I know, it sounds boring, but consider this:

It's Monday morning, the beginning of a long week of assignments and deadlines. Today you have two tests that you have studied hard for, but are still anxious about. As you dread the coming week, you walk into your first class of the day. Humanities, first period. You enter the room and look around to see the desks spaced out and a piece of paper laid out on each desk. Instantly, you realise what is happening. As more students swarm into the classroom, standing and looking around, coming to the same realisation as you, the teacher walks to the centre of the room, and announces that there will be a pop quiz.

In this situation, what would you do? There are two scenarios, and they depend on whether or not you know your student rights.

Let's say **you don't know** your student rights. You reluctantly take a seat at a desk and complete the unannounced quiz, now discouraged for your next two tests today, knowing you didn't do well on this one.

Had you known your student rights, you would have known it is not permitted to have two planned tests as well as an unannounced quiz on one day. You would have informed the teacher that you had two other tests that day, and you would have been the hero of the class, saving everyone from extra stress and possibly a bad grade.

Are you convinced now? If not, imagine this:

While you didn't know your student rights, one of your classmates did and spoke up to the teacher. However, your teacher brushed it off and insisted that the class sit down and take the quiz regardless. Once again, there are two situations here.

Situation A: You know your student rights, and inform the teacher that you are also invoking the right of complaint, rule 29 of the student charter, and that you do not agree with how they are not complying with the rules of the charter. If the teacher continues to insist, you know that you have the right to go to your tutor and report this situation.

Situation B: You don't know your student rights, and now have to take the quiz. The difference from before is that your classmate speaking up gave you a glimmer of hope that perhaps you wouldn't have to take the quiz. However, this hope has been brutally crushed as you let yourself raise your spirits only to be let down again.

Clearly the superior situation here is situation A. Unless, of course, for some sadistic reason you enjoy pop quizzes and don't have a crippling fear of failure like the rest of us. Moving on, let's examine this next scenario.

You're in your maths class, when someone in the seat behind you pokes you with a pencil. You turn to see who it is. "Hey, psst," they whisper. It's a guy you know from around school. "You wanna skip 3rd with us and go to Albert Heijn?" he asks. His buddies look at you eagerly, anticipating an answer. "Come on, it'll be fun," one of the other guys says. The classic peer pressure situation. You can roll your eyes, but hey, it really happens. What do you do? Do you even know the rules about leaving the campus during school hours?

You could say **yes**, and leave school before 3rd with those guys. Risking an encounter with the police, and getting detention. Leaving school grounds during school time is a violation of rule 17.2 of the student handbook.

Or, if you knew the rules, or just wanted to obey the rules, you could say **no**, and spend 3rd period furthering your education.

If you haven't read the student charter, there are so many rules that you likely have no idea about. Imagine all the stress that could have been avoided, all the arguments that could have been settled, and all the time that could have been saved. At the end of the day, it's up to you to make the decision on whether or not you want to be informed, but hopefully after reading this article I've encouraged you to take the time to educate yourself. It's not only in the interest of the school, but also in your own best interest.



500-Word Story Challenge

By Sude Bozcal

Did you know that Graham Greene, a very famous and talented English writer, would write 500 words a day and then stop writing at exactly the 500th word – even if he was in the middle of a sentence? You probably didn't. But surely you've heard of the '500 Word Story Challenge' our school launched for our future writers in the Junior Campus, to allow them to show their skills and creativeness. Well, even if you haven't, you are about to learn all about it!

This year, for the first time, RISS set up a writing event for the Foundation Years, based on the successful model of the BBC Radio 2,500 Words competition in the U.K., hoping that it will become an annual tradition for our school. Budding writers were invited to join this event with their own fictional stories. But there were some challenges. The stories had to be written within the limit of 500 words and they had to be written individually. The stories were judged based on originality, plot, characterisation, language and enjoyment.

After a lot of thinking, coming up with ideas, working and writing, the stories were finally ready to be read and judged by Kim Lloyd. She honoured us with her presence and we are very lucky to have such a wise person on our side. She has spent her life reading and writing stories, some in a radio newsroom, some on the prestigious MA Writing for Young People at Bath Spa University. She is currently working on a

YA novel which will be submitted to publishers in the coming months. She is a great advocate of free writing in schools and its benefits for young people, their mental health and their creativity.

Our English teachers read every precious story and had a hard time deciding on the four finalists. However, a decision had to be made and the four finalists were finally chosen. Now their stories will be read and recorded by professionals in the world of theatre, radio and voice-overs, to be shared on Instagram and the school website. The four finalists and their stories are: Mystery Substitute by Hugo, Life in Chaos by Ella, The Mirror Legend by Tana, and Chapter 1 by Swapna. The four creative writers will be presented with book tokens and certificates from the Principal and the overall winner will be announced by means of a video recorded by our judge, Kim Lloyd.

Now, go ahead and read the very enjoyable winning story...



The Winning Story: 'Chapter 1' by Swapna Nair

I ran through the dark alley. Were they following me? I took off down the path. It was nighttime, with the full moon shining like it was trying to drown me with its light. The shadows were creeping towards us, like they were calling us, calling me. With the blessing of the dark, how could they not?

"Jewel!" Raven, my sister, panted.

"Shh," I hissed.

"Jewel! In here!" She darted into a building, with me right behind her. She closed the door as I looked around. Chairs were overturned and broken, lights were smashed, with the glass shards scattered across the ground. Wooden boards had fallen off the walls, and cobwebs stretched across the rusty windows. I took a shaky breath and sat down.

"We have a place to stay for now," Raven said soothingly.

Yeah, for now...

Now, you're probably wondering; What in the world, Jewel?! Who's chasing you?! You're just an 11-year-old girl! Just an 11-year-old girl, I wish! Let's start from the beginning.

My name is Jewel Iminia. I'm 11 years old and I live with my sister, Raven. My mother had left after we were born, so we lived with our dad for five years. Yes, just five.

Dad was very fidgety that day, and the constant glances over his shoulder, along with the worried looks he was shooting us, were enough to keep me and Raven alert. I was 5, Raven was 8. We were coming back from our vacation, and as we were about to land, the pilot lost control of the plane. Clouds were a blur of white as it spun.

"Stay calm," my dad said.

Raven looked at him, her mysteriously purple eyes wide with fear. She opened her mouth, probably to make some sassy retort, but then I felt the plane dip downwards, and we were falling...

When my eyes opened, I was lying on the ground. I got up, ignoring my dizziness, and went to find my sister. I found her in a crumpled heap. I shook her and Raven's eyes flew open. "W-what happened??" she asked.

I shook my head, "Dad?"

Raven turned her attention to him. She did her best to wake him, but he didn't stir. Tears started rolling down her face, "Please, please, please..." she whispered. She placed her hand on his chest, feeling for his heartbeat. "No!" She wept, "NO!"

I dug my fingers into his pocket as my sister grieved. I found a piece of paper and handed it to Raven.

Dear Raven and Jewel,
I am so sorry, but I knew it would end this way. Go home, find the key under the carpet, and unlock the door. Take what's inside and run. Your mother was cursed to never find peace again, and that curse has been passed on to you. You are being hunted down. Don't trust anyone except each other.

Love,
Dad

...

"Rose!" Her mom called, "It's lunchtime!"

Rose snapped her book shut with a sigh, and set it on her bedside table.

Should the School Mandate P.E. Lessons for All Grades?

Allow me to sketch the scene:

It's finally time. The dreaded P.E. lesson. You have been preparing mentally all morning for another inevitably traumatic class – although it doesn't seem to have worked. The second you set foot into the change room you are surrounded by the smell of sweat and deodorant which, unsurprisingly, isn't very encouraging either. You reach into your gym bag – you know, the one you have had to lug around all day, to be used during these mere forty-five minutes – only to discover that you have forgotten your sweatpants. **Jeans it is.**

Your lesson begins with a lap around the field. Fun. You are going to smell great after this. The main activity of the day is a sport that you are normally good at but, of course, not today, it would appear. It's not your fault the ball is a different size than you're used to.

As the end of the period approaches quickly (but not quickly enough) you remember that you have to spend the rest of the day in your now sweaty jeans. **Yay! Can't wait 'til next week.**

Okay, so that was kind of a worst-case scenario, but for a lot of people, P.E. is torture. They have to change out of their pre-planned outfits, ruin their hair and makeup and are then forced to do physical activity. People just aren't comfortable with the idea of exercising in front of a group of people they don't know very well – or the idea of exercising in general. What could be worse than being the one who's picked last in dodgeball and then having to play with a group of teenagers who MUST have superhuman strength, because that rubber ball feels like a bowling ball when it hits you square in the stomach? But I promise, the positives vastly outweigh the negatives.

Let's be honest, as teenagers, we tend to live somewhat sedentary lifestyles. Don't get me wrong, sometimes extreme lack of movement is exactly what we need in order to finally catch our breath, but physical activity is an amazing stress reliever – and I know we all have an abundance of stress.

“The benefits of sport for all age groups are extensive and well known and include both physiological and psychological influences. For our students at RISS, the challenges of trying to maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle are a difficult undertaking and require significant energy and commitment. They are worried about health, friends, grades and family to name just a few central components.”

Mr. Marshall, curriculum leader for sports science and extra-curricular activities.

Studies have shown that exercise reduces anxiety, improves self-esteem and can increase your mood and mental state – all of which together could improve the standard of your work and how you revise. Regular exercise will also reduce your chances of developing serious health conditions such as heart disorders, obesity and Type II Diabetes.

“Think of exercise as medicine,” says John Ratey, MD. He's a professional, so listen to him. Take your medicine. It doesn't have to be a marathon for it to benefit your general well-being. A five-minute walk, a bicycle ride, kicking around a football; all will have a positive impact on your mood, cognitive processes and overall level of fitness. Doing this during school time will be a good way to begin a life-long habit of exercise and leading a non-sedentary lifestyle. If there is a mandated period of movement during your day, you will likely develop a habit of exercising even when you're not at school.

As IB students, we are constantly under massive amounts of stress, and it only gets worse, the further into the rabbit hole of DP we fall. We, as IB students and as teenagers, need a time, other than breaks, during which we can discard (most of) our stress and feel like teenagers again – instead of university students functioning on two-and-a-half hours of sleep and three red bulls, which, you know, is the opposite of healthy.

I asked some students how they would feel about P.E. lessons becoming mandatory. A current grade 12 said, “Making physical education mandatory would contribute to students feeling as though they are being forced to partake in something that they aren't comfortable with. Extra lessons would also take away from the study periods that students need, especially in grade 12. It would be better to make P.E. an option rather than making it mandatory.”

A current grade 11 however, felt very differently, stating, “Yeah it's a great idea, students should engage in physical activity as much as possible. It's a great form of stress relief from all of our IB work and it's a great way to have entertaining interactions with our friends.”

Personally, I feel that structured exercise at school would be a good thing. As someone who has grown up doing exercise my whole life, from rugby to gymnastics, I enjoy physical activity and feel that exercise is an essential part of my day. Mandating physical activity during school hours would free up the time I usually spend exercising at home for other interests, and doing it with my friends would make it that much more enjoyable.

It seems that it depends on the grade you are in. Grade 12s are under constant pressure, with deadlines and multiple projects going on at once. They need as much time as possible to stay on top of their work – and introducing another lesson that takes away one or more of their study periods, could negatively impact their plans for success. In contrast, grade 11s appear to experience less pressure in comparison to grade 12s, though still a considerable amount. P.E. lessons could improve relationships within grades, especially during team sports.

There is evidence that having a break during study sessions to 'stretch your legs' improves the quality of study and refreshes the mind and body, resulting in a more successful study period.

The reason Shaolin monks study Kung-Fu with such intensity is because they need to be very physically fit to sit and meditate for hours on end – which, like studying, requires great concentration. While RISS shockingly doesn't have a Kung-Fu class (yet), kicking a ball around for a few minutes should suffice in the interim.

An allocated period during which students have the option to 'reset' and use all of their pent-up energy would make it easier for students to sit still and concentrate during other lessons.

“The lessons will allow students to engage in physically challenging lessons designed to promote social interaction and physiological conditioning. The benefits would be a decrease in stress and anxiety and hopefully instil in our students the desire to engage in life-long physical activity.”

Mr. Marshall, curriculum leader for sports science and extra-curricular activities.

This time you are prepared:

The weekly P.E. lesson is here. You didn't feel like going last week, but you're not as busy today and a nice game of football wouldn't hurt – it might even be fun.

You packed your gym bag the night before, so no jeans today!

The changing room appears to smell less offensive – or perhaps today is going to be a pleasant day. The teacher tells everyone the various options for today's lesson and you're free to pick. You choose football – the ball is regulation-size today, so no complications there. You spend 45 minutes thinking about something other than school, and by the end of the lesson your brain no longer feels like it's melting; you actually feel like a teenager again.

Maybe you'll do this again next week.



Why Does Climate Want Privacy? We Are in a Fight With Nature, if We Win We Lose...

You might be wondering what climate has to do with privacy. Well, climate wants privacy... because it is changing. Funny? No? Well, maybe it would be funny if our time wasn't running out. Recently, a farmer realized this when he went out to check his crops and found 150 acres of popped popcorn. You might have realized it when you learned that a seat belt makes a pretty good branding iron or if you haven't, you will realize it when you go to Cappadocia and discover that hot air balloons can't fly because the air outside is hotter than the air inside. But look on the bright side. Apparently, the Earth will heat up so much that sea levels will rise and you'll finally live in a warm place by the sea.

All jokes aside, climate change is a big problem and should be one of the foremost topics that the world tackles. Even if all nations were to take immediate action to prevent climate change, the consequences are inevitable because we have already done more damage than you can imagine. In the near future, climate change will come to a level that will seriously threaten human security in many parts of the world, especially in the least-developed countries.

We all have heard of the example of the melting ice in the Arctic. Yes, this is a result of global warming – but that's not the only problem. Melting ice is also a cause of more warming in the future. As the ice melts, the surface of the ocean expands, creating more surface to absorb the sun's energy. Warming temperatures also lead to the melting of glaciers. The glaciers are now melting five times faster than they were in the 1960s and are losing more than 1 percent of their mass each year. This is causing a rise in the sea levels, which has been accelerating since the '60s. However, climate change won't only affect the environment. It will also trigger social, political and economic challenges.

Despite all this upsetting stuff, we shouldn't forget that it is never too late to start fixing things. We, RISS students, are lucky in this way because we have our beloved Green Team that is already working for us and for our future. If you haven't already heard of them, which would be quite shocking, the Green Team is a group of students from grade 11 and 12 whose mission is to raise awareness amongst students and staff about the causes and effects of climate change and how we can change our behavior in order to reduce our environmental impact. The team is composed of 3 sub-teams: recycling/reducing, awareness and events. The recycling/reducing team is in charge of finding ways for the school to dispose of its waste in a more environmentally friendly way, as well as of fostering the reduction of disposable and single-use items. The events team, on the other hand, organizes activities that enable students and staff to personally engage in reducing their environmental impact. The awareness team is responsible for providing data and tips in order to broaden our awareness about climate change and about which daily actions can be undertaken to reduce our impact.

They have already accomplished a lot, yet they are still working on other projects to make our school as green as possible. Last year, they organized Green Week, which involved activities like Meatless Monday, Sweater Day, and talks about sustainable clothing during tutorial time. Right now they are working on a project to change our school's water fountains.

WE TALKED TO THE GREEN TEAM PRESIDENT LUDOVICO KOOL ABOUT HIS THOUGHTS ON THE GREEN TEAM:

Why do you think the Green team is important?

People need to understand what's going on in the world and school is a great place to start making changes, because it is easier to convince young people. They are more open-minded and willing to take action. That is why the Green Team is so important. We want to make people realize that it is easy to make small changes.

How do you feel about being the president of such an important organization?

It comes with a lot of responsibility, but the satisfaction of knowing that we are doing something very important and influential makes me proud.

Are you happy with the things you have accomplished so far?

Right now, our main focus is the water fountain project; this will be the Green Team's most significant achievement. What we have accomplished so far have been mostly in terms of sharing information or one-time initiatives, though they were also very beneficial to our school.

What do you suggest RISS students do?

I think that there are a lot of students at RISS who are aware of what's happening around them – but I would suggest they find out what the real causes of climate change are and further educate themselves. We are also trying to help them do this, but it is always better to dig deep and learn more yourself. Especially about a topic that is as important as this one.

Don't forget to follow them on Instagram and if you have any suggestions, thoughts or complaints, don't hesitate to send them an email!

Instagram:

@riss.green.team

Email:

129498@wolfert.nl (president),

128307@wolfert.nl (vice president)

“People need to understand what's going on in the world and school is a great place to start making changes, because it is easier to convince young people. They are more open-minded and willing to take action. That is why the Green Team is so important.”

Ludovico Kool

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How Does School Impact the Mental Health of Teens?

Tears. Stress. Mental breakdowns. There is no point in denying that school significantly affects your mental health. Whether it be from the pressure placed on you by teachers and parents, demanding that you perform well academically, or the social aspects of school, school can be quite overwhelming. We spend these years of our lives trying to find ourselves – and in the rush of it all our positive mental health might just slowly slip away.

Poor mental health in students should never be ignored; it should be actively discussed and addressed in school – as otherwise students may not even be aware of the fact that their mental wellbeing is deteriorating. The issue of mental health is often pushed aside and regarded as laziness or unwillingness to try harder to improve your life. In reality, mental health issues are so much more complex than that. It is important to recognize that you are struggling and to prioritize your own wellbeing. The consequences of not addressing teenage mental health concerns continue into adulthood, and can impair your future mental and physical health. This can lead to limited opportunities as well as an unfulfilled life. In addition to that; if unnoticed, mental health can have many more negative consequences for a person's life. Short-term consequences include being alienated from friends and the people around you, causing sadness, fear, anger and pain. Poor mental health can also lead to feelings of helpless and of being all alone. Long-term consequences of mental disorders can drive a person to suicide. According to the National Institute for Mental Health, over 90 percent of suicides have depression or another mental disorder as an underlying factor.

So what is a school's role in all of this? Well, you cannot solely blame a school for a student's poor mental health. However, it is important to discuss the influence a school has on its students' mental health in order to try and minimize these negative consequences. One of the most important aspects of school that contribute to poor mental health is likely the workload and pressure to perform well. For most students, the desire to perform well academically, combined with still having to have a social life, can become a bit too much. Having to complete five assignments in a week can become very stressful – and it is in moments like these that we may sometimes feel ourselves slowly slipping away and being consumed by all the work and expectations. Many students also feel extreme pressure to do well in school – so that, when they are overworked and overwhelmed – they may not perform as well as they would like to, leading to more frustration. Unfortunately, this can become a never-ending cycle. In addition to that, the social environment at school isn't always the best; feeling alone and not having someone to talk to at school can be a huge problem for some students and it certainly doesn't make going to school on a daily basis any more enjoyable.

Now, I know there is no simple solution that will make everything go away. However there are some little things that may make you feel better if you feel that you have been struggling lately:

- Talk to your friends. They say the best thing you can do is talk to people around you whom you trust and feel comfortable with; they may be able to offer you some great advice. Even if they can't, at least you will be able to go through things together and have someone to talk to.

- Exercise regularly; it may also help with some of that stress you are experiencing.
- Try and get as much sleep as possible. It will make you feel refreshed and ready to start the day. In addition to that, studies show you are able to learn better if you are well-rested.
- Beat the stress by starting on time and organizing your work so that it doesn't build up and lead to pulling an all-nighter.
- Don't just try and find time for hobbies. Make time. Carving out time to do something you enjoy (like drawing, reading or even watching something like Netflix) is important, as it gives you a chance to take a step back from the school work load and relax for a bit.
- If that test or assignment is really stressing you out, talk to your teachers or tutor. They understand how you feel – a lot more than you think.
- Take a breather if you need one. There is no shame in taking some time to mentally recover, even if it means failing that one test. Your mental wellbeing should always come first.

Over the past few years, the school has taken the mental health of teens into serious consideration. We now have social media workshops as well as workshops about making good choices at the beginning of each year. During these workshops, professionals come in and talk to the grade and share their advice and knowledge. These workshops help students, as it isn't teachers telling them what to do, but professionals who understand and offer a different perspective. Although there is no mental health workshop, the school has started to make mental health a conversation point in little ways and will hopefully continue to do so.

Finally, if you are struggling and wish to talk, the school counsellors are Ms van der Kooy and Ms Papeveld. Their emails are lko@wolfert.nl and spa@wolfert.nl. The national suicide hotline is available by calling 113 or you can go to this website <https://www.113.nl/english>. Both are available 24/7.

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Is a Picture Really Worth a Thousand Words?

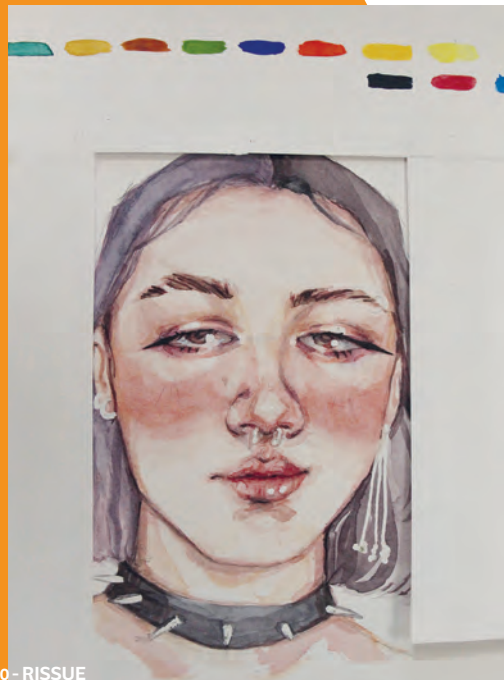
An Interview with an Art Student

*“Nothing can be loved
or hated unless it is
first understood”*

Leonardo Da Vinci

Imagine this: you're in class, first period, Monday morning. Your teacher hands out pictures, pieces of art by an array of famous artists – Picasso, Van Gogh, Da Vinci. You're asked to find what the artist is trying to say, the deeper meaning. The deeper meaning? What's that supposed to mean?

How should we know if artists actually think about what they're painting and don't just sketch the first thing that comes to mind? To answer these questions, we sat down with Clara, an art student here at RISS, and asked her about her opinion on the matter.



First off, tell me a bit about yourself.

My name is Clara. I'm currently 15 years old. I am Spanish and Chinese, and I'm in grade 10.

Do you find art fun?

Yes, of course. I want to do things I enjoy, since it is, after all, what I do in my free time. It's something you can always come back to when you're feeling stressed.

When did you first get into art?

This is a little cliché, but when I was very young, I developed an interest in art.

How would you describe your art style?

Realism with pop culture influences. My works are often inspired by what I'm listening to. Running off of concepts and lyrics; I enjoy doing that.

How do you decide what you want to make?

Whatever I fancy. I always try my best to make something that I would personally be proud of. I try to prioritise something that is interesting for me first, because as of right now my goal is not to produce sellable art or anything of the sort. So I've got this time to really just enjoy what I do.

Do you have a purpose for your art?

No, I wouldn't say so. What I create depends on what I would like to create. I don't believe that my art is necessarily deep. I have tried to work with deeper meanings, but it feels quite laughable when I do. If I get too deep, it almost becomes shallow. One could try and think about the nuances of art, but sometimes there just isn't a deeper meaning. At least for my art there isn't. Likewise, if you haven't experienced something, then why would you make an art piece about it?

Would you consider art to be a form of communication?

Yes. It's a visual way of communicating. Art is a powerful tool that can be used to make political statements or tell people about who you are as a person. Everything you create says something about you, in a way. Take my art, for instance – I think if you look at it, you could find something in there about me.

Do your emotions ever affect your work?

Art can be quite therapeutic when it goes right. But when it doesn't, it can be very frustrating. I think I tend to do more art when I'm upset. On the other hand, if I were to feel overcome with emotion I wouldn't be able to simply sit down and peacefully draw.

Does that mean that you need to be in a special kind of mindset for art?

It honestly depends. Sometimes you do it because you have an assignment due. Occasionally it takes you by surprise. I may only have around 20 minutes to spare, for instance, and I could start drawing on a whim. But that unplanned drawing could turn into something of actual substance.

Do you ever worry about what people will think about your art?

Yes, to a certain degree. It's not as if my art is controversial, but sometimes I do wonder: Is it too gory? Do people actually want to see this? As I said, the reaction that most concerns me is my own – I try to make my art so it suits my tastes best, and so that I can feel that feeling of accomplishment when I finish a piece that started off as an experiment. But when you post your art online you do wonder what other people think, which can be harmful. From an objective standpoint, some pieces are not very impressive to look at, but for me they are, as I know what I'm making.



Art is a powerful tool that can be used to convey messages, and also gives us a glimpse into the identity of the artist themselves. Ultimately, one of the great aspects of art is its subjectivity – its ability to be open to interpretation. There isn't always a deeper meaning. Art doesn't have to be an emotional experience that brings tears to your eyes. If anything, it depends on how deep you want to go. So the next time you look at a piece of art, ask yourself: what does it mean to you?



Waiting for when you can
all come back in person...



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