

STRIDES

The official newsletter of  **Esol Education**



BAHRAIN CALLING

Esol Education successfully ventures into the island kingdom with the launch of American School of Bahrain and a new strategic partnership with the American University of Bahrain

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STRIDES

The official newsletter of Esol Education – ISSUE 7 | Spring 2021

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

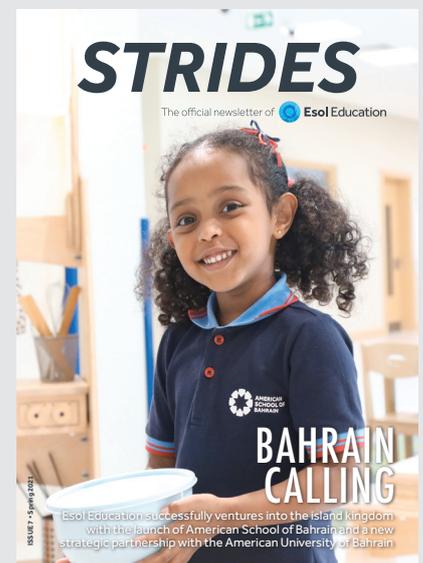
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PANTA RHEI

“Everything flows.”

~ Heraclitus, Greek Philosopher

Like every school across the world, Esol Education school communities have experienced a sea change over the past year, with both temporary and long-term disruptions to the ebb and flow of normal school life. While resilience in the classroom has long centered on learning from failure and persevering to learn new concepts, this historic year has been a true test of resilience as a critical life skill for our students, teachers, parents and leaders. Still, we are proud to say that the 2020-2021 school year has brought with it some wins, expected and unexpected, within and beyond classroom walls.

We have proudly witnessed our schools' impressive mobilization of home learning programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, swiftly adjusting to rapidly changing regulations in each of our host cities. Teachers have worked tirelessly to upskill themselves with new technologies and create engaging and relevant lessons. This has given rise to exciting innovations in teaching and learning, many excellent examples of which are shared in The Brief section of this issue, which covers news from our schools around the globe.

Our cover story highlights the inaugural year of Esol Education's American School of Bahrain, which opened the gates to its 17-acre state-of-the-art campus in Riffa on schedule, in September 2020. Staying in Bahrain, *STRIDES'* One-to-One section features a discussion with Dean Joyce Feucht Haviar of California State University, Northridge (CSUN), on the heels of Esol's recently announced role in the American University of Bahrain (AUBH) and in the university's educational partnership with CSUN.

Our In-Class features showcase some of the remarkable learning happening within classrooms at Fairgreen International School in Dubai and The American International School in Cyprus, while our High Flyers section spotlights our best and brightest students already making their mark upon the world around them. Elsewhere in this edition of *STRIDES*, Gamification of Learning takes center stage as Dr. Joseph Nettikaden, Esol Education CIO, shares insights on this rising phenomenon and its implications on teaching and learning in the years ahead. We also meet with Mr. Patrick Rich, Director at American International School in Abu Dhabi (AISA), who shares reflections on his journey thus far and his aspirations for the AISA community.

Since travel is off the cards this year for most of us, join us in an armchair exploration off the beaten trail in Cyprus, as we uncover a treasure of Byzantine art nestled within humble village churches in the central mountains of the island. Lastly, Dr. Kaponi Ciotti, Director at American International School in Egypt – Main Campus, analyzes ways in which we can use the disruption caused by the pandemic to accelerate innovation in education.

Thank you for being part of the Esol Education community! We wish you all a successful year ahead!

The Esol Education Team

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN ABU DHABI (AISA)

CHANGING THE WORLD WITH MUN

Students from AISA's High School Model United Nations Club (AISA HSMUN) decided months ago to dedicate their time, prepare and go on an enlightening adventure. MUN conferences usually involve travel; however, during this pandemic, our students harnessed their energy in a risk-taking, intense 3-day international virtual conference, GWAMUN Conference 2021, without leaving the comfort of their homes. The result? Students left feeling incredibly challenged and inspired as changemakers under the ambassadorship of H.E. Ban Ki-Moon, eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations. Through a mindset of change and international cooperation, our AISA leaders took on the role of country ambassadors in the UN to collaboratively develop solutions to some of our planet's most pressing issues, and many received prestigious conference awards for their hard work and efforts. From position papers and resolutions to inter-governmental debates and dialogue, the conference and the club was a paradigm-shifting experience for all participants.

MENTAL WELLNESS IN A TECH WORLD

The counseling team at the American International School of Abu Dhabi have made student, staff, and parent wellness a priority this year. Some of these activities include parent presentations throughout the year on wellbeing and mental health topics. For students, the team organized activities around International Kindness Week and Stress Awareness Week, including videos made by students talking about the strategies they use to manage stress. Wellness days were organized for staff, with yoga, meditation, a scavenger hunt, funny videos contests, and "Tea and Talk" sessions. During Sunday PD time, staff are provided brief "wellness tips" at the start of meetings. The team also offered wellness presentations on how individuals can safeguard themselves, as well how to be a mental health first aider during these times. The counseling team's motto states: "you can't pour from an empty cup," so as a department, they make sure they model their beliefs and take care of each other through regular check ins!



DESIGN & INNOVATION

At AISA, Design & Innovation (D&I) provides students with an open space to try new things without fear of failure. Students combine their classroom learning with their natural enthusiasm for exploration. While the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic made things especially challenging, with innovation at the heart of the program, one can see opportunities where others may see obstacles! Students have risen to meet these challenges head on and continue to amaze their teachers. Driving through simulated severe blizzards, flying in a socially distanced hoop glider derby, and learning 3D design have all contributed to the success of the D&I program. Whether designing soft landing lunar probes, or improving animal adaptations, students are able to collaborate using the Internet and share their learning on myriad platforms. While there is much work to be done, the D&I team will continue to improvise, adapt, and overcome in the "new normal!"

DUNECREST AMERICAN SCHOOL

2021: A YEAR OF GROWTH

2020 was a year of reflection. It was a time for prioritization and gratitude. 2021 is a time to harness this awareness and to be an agent of growth, change and solidarity. For this reason, Dunecrest American School has launched a series of "growth" events focused on strengthening our community and supporting one another's successes. In early January, IBDP Coordinator, Mr. Eric Barrett, and four IBDP candidate students hosted a "How to Study Effectively" webinar for Middle and High School students and their parents. The over-subscribed, 90-minute event was also open to the public and aimed at understanding how students learn and how this translates into actionable organization, note taking and study strategies. Attendees have been effusive in their enthusiasm for the session! This has now inspired an upcoming series of live and pre-recorded executive function coaching sessions for students at Dunecrest and in the broader community.

THE CLEAN TECH WAVE

Staying true to its core mission of helping students to realize their power to change their communities and the world around them, Dunecrest American School has partnered with Million Solar Stars (MSS) Founder and our Middle School Science Teacher, Adam Hall to launch the Million Solar Stars Science course in Middle School (MSS MS). MSS MS connects students with tools to design and engineer hands-on solar power models and engage multiple stakeholders to increase the number of schools powered by solar energy. Term 1 has been incredibly busy for our budding clean tech engineers and community leaders! Students began the term by analyzing the feasibility of using solar power on our very own campus as well as using Minecraft and TinkerCAD to model different panel installation designs. Proposals were presented to school leaders and to the local power authority. Students also attended a week-long workshop with Photovoltaic Specialist from Namene Solar as part of Namene Solar's new student outreach program. The 4-day workshop included sessions on the history and physics of light, how solar power works, building SM100 hand held solar lights for rural communities and improvement of the SM100 model itself.



STEAM BEES ARE BUZZING AT DUNECREST

At Dunecrest, students in Grade 2 are exploring how human's choices impact the survival of plants and animals. Children harnessed cross-curricular tools to explore this over-arching question. The topic took students from non-fiction to research, experimentation to procedural papers and eventually to technology and its ability to help solve man-made problems. Students began their unit by looking at the conditions plants need to survive. They tested their hypothesis by planting radish seeds in the sun and in the closet. Children then selected an animal and researched its food supply, habitat and the impact the environment had on its survival. Using Evernote, children created books for Grade 1 exploring how positive choices could make a positive impact on the environment. Following their foundational study, students examined the role that technology can play in supporting the survival of plants and animals. Incorporating their Science standards, Grade 2 students studied bee colony collapse disorder. Using design thinking they explored the possibility of using drones to pollinate plants. This exciting unit leveraged the PARROT Mambo Drone, Apple's SWIFT Playground coding language and our students' future-focused problem solving techniques!

FAIRGREEN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

ROOFTOP GARDEN GROWS INQUIRY

This year, Fairgreen International School made a mindful addition to its campus with a new rooftop garden. Due to COVID-19 precautions students were restricted from leaving campus to use their community biodome and garden plot so this new space is very exciting. Students were part of every step of the process, from planning, designing to building the new garden. They donated materials, recycled useful items from home, and repurposed unique items to use as planters, such as used tires. Friends from Diamond Developers in The Sustainable City donated custom planter beds they built from recycled wood. Students even came to school over the winter break to start building a greenhouse, which they hope will extend the growing season.

The rooftop garden allows students to experiment with plant species, test hydroponics systems, solve water conservation challenges and use the information they have learned in class to solve real world problems. The addition of the greenhouse allows students to use design principles and engineering skills to build something that will be used by the rest of the community. In the future, students can plan and add items they think would improve the building. It's not just a rooftop garden, it's a science lab for real world experiments!

REALIZING DREAMS

In a continued effort to support the overall wellbeing of its students, Fairgreen officially launched the DREAMS Wellbeing Program. Led by Head of Counselling Jackie Greenwood with the support from Inclusion Lead Alison Scott, as well as the school's Wellbeing Team, DREAMS stands for Drive, Relationships, Emotions, Accomplishment, Mindfulness, and Service. The program encapsulates the culture of care and many ongoing efforts the school initiated since its inception to prioritize student wellbeing.

DREAMS fosters wellbeing through classroom visits, one-to-one meetings, group activities and special celebrations and programs, including Wellbeing Week, Anti-Bullying Week, and World Teacher Day. The team started a Wellbeing Champions Club where students spread cheer across campus, and they designed and created the Fairgreen Wellbeing Hub, a special room within the school that is used as a calm space for DREAMS and other mindfulness activities.

Through this programme, Fairgreen's Wellbeing Team provides a service that is both preventative and responsive to students' needs, supporting the aims of the school's social and emotional curriculum. The team strives to know the students' strengths and challenges while helping them to develop their values, character and social skills.

COMMON SENSE® RECOGNITION FOR FAIRGREEN

In November 2020, Fairgreen International School received recognition as a Common Sense® school by the namesake nonprofit organization dedicated to helping kids and families thrive in a world of media and technology. Led by the efforts



of Design Teacher, Mr. Samuel Landete, Fairgreen is one of only a handful of schools in the region that holds this distinction. "We're honored to be recognized as a Common Sense® School," said Graeme Scott, Fairgreen's Director. "By preparing our students to use technology safely and responsibly, we are providing them an opportunity to build lifelong habits to help them succeed in a tech-driven world."

Fairgreen has demonstrated its commitment to taking a whole-community approach to preparing its students to think critically and use technology responsibly to learn and create. Fairgreen implements Common Sense® Education's innovative and research-based digital citizenship resources, which were created in collaboration with researchers from Project Zero, led by Howard Gardner at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and are grounded in real issues faced by students and teachers. The resources teach students, educators, and parents tangible skills related to internet safety, protecting online reputations and personal privacy, media balance, managing online relationships, and media literacy, amazing energy from the sun!

AMERICAN SCHOOL HONG KONG (ASHK)

A NEW PARADIGM FOR IB AUTHORIZATION

Many aspects of a school's operations have been altered as a result of COVID-19. At ASHK, we have toggled between e-learning and face-to-face learning over the past 12 months. With that, we have successfully learned to transition our parent/teacher conferences, assemblies, awards ceremonies, coffee mornings etc. from live sessions to virtual.

One additional aspect has been our application for IB authorization. Whereas, in a world without the need to grapple with a pandemic, schools would typically gear up for a live, multi-day visit

from an IB visitation team, our consultation visit in November and our authorization visit in March will be held virtually. This changes the dynamic and requires the preparation of a series of videos and live Zoom sessions that capture every aspect of the school's authorization process - from a tour of the school, peek into classrooms, examination of facilities and resources, study of assessment practices, etc.

Through the efforts of our leadership team, dedicated staff, enthusiastic students, and supportive parents, the consultation and authorization process has been a dynamic, positive experience and an opportunity for growth. We consider ourselves fortunate to be part of such a close and caring community who embrace the new paradigm.

ASHK EXPANSION PLANS

The research is quite clear with respect to the characteristics of successful schools. Always at or near the top of the list of factors are high standards and expectations along with a clear and shared focus. In addition, there is a body of evidence which indicates that school climate, resources, and facilities aligned to best practice programs are critical factors for school success and that these have been associated with higher academic achievement and healthy behavioral outcomes for students.

At American School Hong Kong, the school has begun an exciting building project to coincide with the expansion of the secondary school program. This will result in the full renovation of the top two floors of the 7-story building. Additional facilities will include a library, music room, blackbox theatre, rooftop garden, student lounge, 12 classrooms, and a secondary school cafeteria.

THIRD GRADE CONTENT CREATORS

Like most schools around the world, ASHK has toggled back and forth between learning at home and learning in school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of this, the Grade 3 students have become incredibly proficient at using EdTech! After learning about different cultures, students worked on Apple Clips, a free and easy-to-use video creation app. Students worked to combine pictures and videos with captions and music. They showed incredible engagement while explaining their understanding of cultures, then they enjoyed sharing their original and informative creations with each other even while at home. When asked for feedback on creating their videos, their answers consistently contained the words "fun," "interesting," and that this allowed them the opportunity to be "more creative." Miles H wrote, "I like it and I get sucked into the app." Authentic use of EdTech can help students develop their confidence to share their voice in the world. And based on their recommendations, it's undeniably fun!



AMERICAN SCHOOL IN EGYPT-MAIN (AISE-M)

READY, SET, CODE!

In Middle School Coding class at AISE, students learn how to break down problems, organize their thinking, and construct solutions. The focus of the course is on drawing and animation, which are the building blocks of video games! Students first outline their ideas using flowcharts. The outcome of this process is finding out the basic requirements of each design. What shapes are being used in my drawing? How can I break down complex shapes into simpler ones? Using these requirements, students create modular functions – pieces of code that perform a single action – that are used directly (e.g. to draw a square) or indirectly to build more complex functions (e.g. drawing a window using multiple squares). They then start constructing the program while continuously evaluating and redeveloping their code following the design cycle. Students learn how to think critically and algorithmically while collaborating on challenging, self-directed projects.

THAT CHRISTMAS FEELING

This December, first graders at AISE-Main started off their Social Studies unit, "Connections and Conflict," by exploring feelings. They focused on how they feel, how others feel and how their actions contribute to these feelings. As the unit coincided with the holiday season, Grade 1D further learnt about the importance of spreading kindness around this time. A Christmas tree in class was decorated with a "light of kindness" (paper bulb) whenever an act of kindness was done or received in class. Additionally, a holiday kindness challenge saw each family receiving a Santa cutout, with his long beard divided into 12 sections, each a challenge. The aim was to spread kindness by cutting off the whole beard, section by section as the challenges were completed! One student, Ryan Ball, took the mission to heart, firmly embracing that spreading kindness, not presents, was the true spirit of the season. Together with his family, he completed the entire challenge earnestly, with a mini celebration marking the end. His elder sister was inspired to create her own Santa's Beard challenge as well!



OUR COVID STORY: SETTING THE TONE

Several months ago, the first staff member at AIS Egypt – Main Campus tested positive for COVID-19. The human impact reverberated throughout the school as contact tracing began. In a profound act of courage and selflessness this educator said to use her name, in communication to the community, as a way of mitigating the stigma around contracting the virus. As hindsight brings clarity to much of the human experience, this act set the tone of how AISE as a community would address future positive cases. By giving permission to use her name others followed suit. Instead of suspicious glances, staff felt empowered by the support they knew they would receive when bad news came. Sometimes a few simple words bring a community together in support of each other. AISE – Main is proud to have Ms. Mary as a part of the family, and is even happier that she has fully recovered and rejoined the school. Ms. Mary has made the community happier, healthier and safer.

AMERICAN SCHOOL IN EGYPT-WEST (AISE-W)

AISE - WEST GOES GREEN!

The AISE - West PTO Community Building Committee first announced their "Go Green" campaign in January 2018. It was the first school in Egypt to install a hydroponic system on campus. Today this produces 120 crops that grow in 4-5 weeks. The "Go Green" campaign was a huge success! Students were part of the entire process, helping with with seeding, planting, harvesting, and even selling the crops. They sold more than 300 lettuce heads, and are planning to continue planting and running their farm to raise more funds in order to expand their project. They are excited to spread and share their enthusiasm about Urban Agriculture. This year, the PTO team was able to install a new system in the school's desert garden. This system uses automatic irrigation with a water tank. Both systems are water and energy efficient, thus reducing resource consumption, subsequently reducing pollution and minimizing the environmental impact of excess water and energy use.

HAPPY NEW BEGINNINGS AND BOOKS!

2020 was a year of challenges and changes. The AIS Egypt-West Secondary School Library has a new librarian, Maureen Johnson, and new ideas. Some of these changes have included re-organizing and brightening up the Secondary School Library. Housed under our fabulously naturally-lit dome, eye-catching book displays make the space more attractive and user friendly for our students and faculty. Christmas came early this year with 44 gorgeous new books recently purchased from the American University in Cairo Press. "Meet Someone New," is a newly created biography section which includes many interesting and famous people. We invite visitors to get reacquainted with or discover a new personality. Lastly, if you liked the movie, you will love the book! This January we are featuring over 100 amazing books in our collection which have been turned into films and TV series. We can't wait to have our school community come by and visit us soon!



ART'S POSSIBLE!

AIS West Middle School defied all odds by launching our first ever Arts Week during Hybrid Learning, safely in the middle of the pandemic. Creative Arts students impressed the student body by sharing their talents during the weeks of December 6 and December 13. Visual Arts students displayed art in an outdoor, socially distanced gallery, which included a group doodle mural. Drama students performed one act plays, including an original piece written and directed by Grade 7 student, Hassan Kandil. Our dance team entertained classmates during lunch with live performances throughout the weeks. The Lynx Band wowed an outdoor audience with full band performances of "Eye of the Tiger," "Party Rock," and "We Were Young." We are all so proud of our young artists and are excited for an even better COVID-free 2021 Arts Week next fall.

CAIRO ENGLISH SCHOOL (CES)

ACADEMICS VS. REALITY

To create well-rounded and well-educated graduates, CES has been making links with the Nestle company to help engage students in their business curriculum coverage. On a trip to the Nestle factory students had the chance to experience firsthand how a real-world company implements marketing, production, supply chains, and to gain an insight into the operational management process.

The experience had a direct impact on the subject understanding and led to several work placements. The impact of this visit also motivated several senior students to enter the World Economic Cup, WEC, making them the first and only Egyptian competitors in a worldwide competition, where a CES student proudly placed in the top 30 students among competitors across 33 different countries.



COMPANY OF THE YEAR

VOSS TECH, a company created by IB2 students at CES, participated in an inter-school Egyptian entrepreneurship competition organized by INJAZ, successfully obtaining the title of "Company of the Year 2020." VOSS TECH introduced high-tech pet products that aim to facilitate an easier life for people globally. Students identified a niche market by noticing that Egyptian consumers have become more aware of the joys of keeping pets along with responsible ownership. The students created a machine, "pet-time," that not only dispenses food but also has a self-activated timer and facial recognition options. Pet-time allows users to feed, communicate with and watch their pets whilst outside their home to make sure they were safe and well cared for when owners were not at home.

BREAKING NEWS! DINOSAURS INVADE CES

One of the challenges of Early Years education is to provide opportunities for writing that are both purposeful and meaningful to the child. By planning around students' interests and providing hooks that engage their imaginations, Early Years practitioners can provide the stimulus for children to do their best independent writing. Based around the fascination that CES' current co-hort had with dinosaurs, the EYFS team planned a Dinosaur Invasion in the Early Years. With an e-mail from the head that led to an investigation of our outdoor environment, students uncovered dinosaur footprints, bones and even dinosaur eggs! The excitement caused by these discoveries was immense. Students were inspired to think critically about how these dinosaurs had entered the school. They wanted to find the best way of sharing the news with the rest of our school community! Even the quietest children were bursting with ideas, and the most reluctant writers were eager to write their breaking news reports. Proof, if any were needed, that the best learning really does take place when children are excited about their experiences.



AMERICAN SCHOOL BAHRAIN (ASB)



WATER SMART

ASB recently announced a collaboration with Royal Life Saving Bahrain (RLSB) to jointly facilitate a robust swimming and water safety program for all ASB students, in line with international standards. The partnership will also work towards utilizing the outstanding facilities at ASB to serve as a community hub for swimming and water safety education. RLSB was established in Bahrain with the vision of preventing drowning related death and injury and prospering from the waters surrounding the island. With this collaboration, all ASB students receive professional swimming lessons at the school pool during regular school hours. One of the pillars at ASB is "community leadership" and the school team is looking forward to working side by side with RLSB to give local schools without access to a swimming pool, an opportunity to learn to swim and save lives in the process.

DESIGNING WITH EMOJI

The ubiquity of emoji symbols in our popular culture is so undeniable, one even made it to Oxford Dictionary's word of the year in 2015: "face with tears of joy!" From ASCII emoticons in the 1980s to emoji keyboards on mobile phones, they now universally convey emotion in a text driven world. Originally meaning "pictograph," the word emoji originates in Japanese: e (絵, "picture") + moji (文字, "character"). This year Grade 5 Art & Design students at ASB looked at emoji as a subject matter. This unit of work provided them with an opportunity to develop an understanding of this 21st-century global language, paying close attention to emotion and color theory. Students explored a range of media and techniques from collage to ceramics, and many enjoyed the novel experience of sculpting with clay: "Using clay for the first time was a wonderful experience and helped develop my artistic skills in a new area," remarked Dilnaz, one of the student artists. Most recently, students also embarked on an Adobe Illustrator outcome.

STUDENT COUNCIL 2021

As a new school, ASB's Student Council has been very fortunate to be involved in many foundational activities and start new traditions! It has been a year of firsts. These include the school's mascot (go Eagles!), special activities at the school, a selection of charities to support and develop ASB's brand new House System. The senior Grade 9 class held elections in early December in order to put together an executive along with classroom representatives, in order to lead school initiatives. Their first task was to build a "House System." Students decided on the theme of mythical creatures to represent the houses. The student body provided names and designs for these four different creatures. Over twenty students submitted their artwork for the design of the creatures. The senior students on each team decided the best name and design for their house. The names will be announced to the student body very soon. The ninth graders will be ASB's senior-most class for the next four years, an honor that gives them a special privilege as well as the unique opportunity to leave a lasting impression on the future of the school!

AMERICAN SCHOOL IN CYPRUS (AISC)

AISC SAFETY MEASURES LAUDED BY MINISTRY

At the beginning of the school year, the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth, Mr. Prodromos Prodromou, visited AISC to observe the school's health and safety measures. He was accompanied by the Director of Secondary Education, Dr. Kyprianos Louis.

Congratulating the staff and management of the school, the Minister noted that AISC "provided simple but very effective practical solutions, ensuring, first of all, that all the rules of health care are observed, but at the same time we have the regular and comfortable attendance of classes in the classrooms. The whole school is proof that if there is the will and the right framework for cooperation, solutions can be found for all the issues that the extraordinary circumstances bring before us." He added that the whole school effort, supported by parents and students following the rules of health care and mask wearing would be the island's best defense during these extraordinary times.

BRINGING HOPE TO CHILDREN WORLDWIDE

AISC High School student, Kasra Mulet, has been hard at work advocating for children's rights in partnership with Hope for Children (HFC), an international independent charity working towards a world where every child has a happy childhood that sets them up for a positive future.

As a Children's Rights Ambassador, Kasra attended the Council of Europe's international conference on "Redefining Power: Strengthening the Rights of the Child as a Key to a Future-Proof Europe" in Strasbourg, France. Representing HFC, AISC, and the children of Cyprus, she delivered a speech to the entire conference delegation on "The Power of Speaking up Against Violence".



Last year, he led a delegation to meet with Strovolos Mayor Andreas Papacharalambous to present their proposal for cooperating with the municipality to make Strovolos a "Child Friendly City" and to raise awareness and educate other children on their rights and responsibilities, and the mayor agreed to move forward with the initiative.

Over the summer, he furthered his advocacy work as an intern at the charity, and designed HFC masks that were launched as part of a fund-raising initiative in November marking World Children's Day. According to Kasra, "Children are full human beings in their own right. They have their own lives and experiences and most importantly, they are more vulnerable with less experience than adults. They should be entitled to the same rights as adults and even more. My favorite children's right is the right to be heard. I think no one can decide better than children about children. We are brave, dynamic, fearless, and full of hope and energy and we have a lot to offer."

HAVE YOU BEEN TO PANDALOGIA?

AISC students participated in the first ever Minecraft Global Championship held in 2020, designing spaces that support a healthy environment for both humans and animals. Eight entries were selected for the championship, and participants were asked to develop their ideas through different biomes including the forest to protect honeybees, the jungle to save from habitat loss and fragmentation, and the beach in search of ways to save sea turtles from the impact of coastal development and beach traffic. And so was born the city of Pandalogia, built by AISC students, where citizens live in caves so they do not disturb the pandas and help them by bringing them food. In return pandas do not disturb them and also bring food to the citizens. Structures like the Generator Guard take care of generators that run 100% on solar energy and at the same time

ensure that pandas are not harmed. While building their world on Minecraft, students reported that they learned more about the UN Sustainable Development Goals, nutrition preferences of pandas, and improved their Minecraft skills! They are very much looking forward to participating in the 2021 championship later this year.

UNIVERSAL COLLEGE - ALEY (UCA) PBL: THE ONLINE SAVIOR!

UCA's adoption of online learning would not have happened as rapidly, had it not been for the multi-faceted crisis experienced by Lebanon: economic, social and political instability in addition to the global pandemic. Living in the midst of chaos, pedagogically, Project-Based Learning (PBL) has been a silver lining. It set the foundations for teamwork and provided a constructive opportunities for students to stay connected with their classmates, and teachers with their colleagues. Adapting to the new norm of online learning via PBL has not only involved parents in their children's education but also developed students' 21st-century competencies faster.

Students' projects have reached a wider audience and they have built core knowledge and skills. Flipped classroom strategies have also motivated students to become more creative in the delivery of their work. Appreciating students' voice and choice, continuous feedback and peer critique has also encouraged students to strive harder to produce better outcomes. By creating a positive learning environment in classes, where mistakes are welcomed, PBL has truly been a stepping stone to online learning success.



COMMUNICATE. COLLABORATE. CONNECT

As schools globally grappled with preparations for the 2020-2021 school year, UCA's Professional Development Team quickly focused on the two "Ps" of "Platforms" and "Pedagogy" for online and blended learning which included Microsoft 365, Project Based Learning, Flipped Learning and Authentic Assessment.

Teachers experienced remarkable success due to the ongoing support of the PD team and constant school-wide collaboration of instructional staff. PD team member Janna Chehayeb, remarked, "In keeping with our UCA belief that lifelong learning is important, teachers were ready to extend their own learning by connecting and collaborating with

each other. They did not give up even when they experienced difficulty with certain concepts."

Comprised of teachers, academic coordinators and principals, the UCA PD Team was founded in 2017 for the explicit purpose of developing high-quality, prescriptive professional development, fostering collaboration and leveraging internal subject matter experts. Over the past four years, the team has developed into a cohesive unit, identifying areas where support is most needed, then designing and implementing PD modules that equip teachers to successfully address the needs of students while continuously building into and refining their practice throughout the school year. UCA is incredibly proud of this team and appreciative of their servant leadership!

TRIBUTE: MRS. SARVER

It is with a heavy heart we announce the passing of Mrs. Esther Sarver, former Deputy Director and High School principal at UCA. Mrs. Sarver was a teacher and Instructional Coach for 20 years in Dallas, TX before joining Esol in 2015 to serve as the Assistant Director of Universal College in Aley.

Mrs. Sarver served the UCA Learning Community faithfully until the end of the 2018-2019 school year when her illness forced her to return to the U.S. Mrs. Sarver was a passionate educator who was tirelessly committed to the success of each individual student and the growth and development of our teachers. Her contributions to UCA and the UCA learning community were significant and their impact will be felt for years to come.

"Esther Sarver was the consummate educator, student advocate and capacity builder for teachers. Her addition to the UCA team in 2015 set the stage for the significant progress we have made as a school in cooperative learning, authentic assessment and teacher professional development. Her impact on UCA is only rivaled by the loss we feel of her absence."





BAHRAIN CALLING

With an auspicious new school opening and its first university partnership, Esol Education deepens its commitment to bringing American international education to students in Bahrain and the wider region, while expanding its global reach to a network of 11 schools and universities.

NEW STATE-OF-THE-ART SCHOOL FOR BAHRAIN

American School of Bahrain (ASB), the newest addition to Esol Education's global family of schools, is situated on an expansive 60,000 square meter, state-of-the-art campus. Located in Riffa, near the Bahrain National Stadium, ASB is home to one of the most advanced learning environments on the island.

Designed to facilitate innovation, academic excellence, international mindedness and happiness, American School of Bahrain aims to foster students who will be leaders within their communities and beyond. The school's facilities include technology-enabled classrooms, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) labs and maker spaces. A multi-level library, equipped with the latest digital resources, will serve as a research space and learning hub, while art studios, music rooms and performance spaces build visual and performing arts skills. ASB's sizeable athletics complex boasts excellent sporting facilities, with a swimming pool, large indoor gymnasium, basketball courts, regulation-sized soccer field and a 400-meter track.

"The Esol Education and ASB teams have worked diligently over the past three years to bring their vision for the school to life. I'm proud to say that thanks to their efforts, undeterred by the ongoing pandemic, ASB opened its doors on schedule with a healthy enrollment, and is already gaining acclaim as one of the best schools in Bahrain," remarked Mr. Walid Abushakra, Chairman and Superintendent of Esol Education. "Over the past forty-five years we have built a strong reputation of educational excellence in the world of international education. With its experienced leadership team, ASB is on track to become a leading center of education in Bahrain, equipping our students with the essential skills they need to excel at top universities worldwide and in their chosen careers," he added. ASB is a joint venture between Esol



Undeterred by the ongoing pandemic, ASB opened its doors on schedule with a healthy enrollment, and is already gaining acclaim as one of the best schools in Bahrain.

Education and Elm Education Fund (Elm), a Bahrain-based education platform, established by Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company (Mumtalakat), the sovereign wealth fund of the Kingdom of Bahrain. Elm establishes and co-invests in world-class educational institutions in partnership with leading global operators.

"Local demand for high quality education continues to rise with private school enrolment growing at almost twice the rate of public school enrolment in recent years," explained HE Khalid Al Rumaihi, Mumtalakat CEO. "The American School of Bahrain is a promising venture for Elm and Mumtalakat as it addresses the changing needs of an ever-changing world, from the skills for tomorrow to quality academic and

vocational education," he added.

Established in 1976, Esol Education currently operates ten schools across five countries, and is the largest operator of international American schools in the world. The opening of the new school in Bahrain is a major milestone for the organization, following closely after its entry into East Asia in 2016 with the opening of American School of Hong Kong (ASHK), and the opening of Dunecrest American School and Fairgreen International School in Dubai in 2018. Each Esol Education school is a close-knit community, bringing families together with the values of multiculturalism and dedication to helping students discover their individual talents. 



Architect's Notes

Featuring state-of-the-art and innovative facilities, ASB aims to combine real-world, inquiry-based teaching with the latest educational technology, bringing key 21st century skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity into its classrooms.

Designed by Jeff Bennett and his team at THA Architects Engineers, the school's campus supports its future-focused ethos by incorporating collaborative learning spaces and informal student presentation areas.

From its Early Childhood Center and Elementary School to Middle and High School, the campus incorporates purpose-built, age appropriate learning environments while maintaining a natural flow throughout. Classrooms are interconnected with common areas such as the student commons, athletics complex, playgrounds, learning hub and cafeteria. Break-out areas allow teachers to divide students into smaller groups enabling them to share ideas and build on one another's experiences while large, covered outdoor learning spaces offer students the chance to extend their learning beyond the classroom walls.

Other notable on-campus features include the orientation of the buildings to incorporate natural light and minimize the environmental impact of solar heat gain with majority of the classrooms having north and south facing windows to reduce direct sun exposure while maximizing solar energy control. Furthermore, spacious covered exterior areas provide shaded gathering points to beat the summer heat while the gym and auditorium facilities are accessible to students from the interior of the campus with separate access for the public through the parking area, thereby contributing to a safe and secure environment.

ESOL EDUCATION ACQUIRES STRATEGIC STAKE IN THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BAHRAIN (AUBH)

Esol Education is excited to announce that it has concluded a strategic partnership with the Elm Education Fund in respect of the American University of Bahrain (AUBH).

Along with the newly acquired strategic stake, Esol Education will play an active role in the development of the institution with two of its representatives joining the Board of Directors of AUBH. Speaking on behalf of the Elm Education Fund, member of the AUBH Board of Directors, Mr. Marwan Tabbara, shared, "We are excited to welcome Esol Education as a strategic partner in AUBH and expand the scope of their involvement across the fund. Their reputation for academic excellence, experience in the region, and longstanding relationships with American-based academic institutions will be a great asset to the partners and academic leadership of AUBH, and further support the University's development and growth."

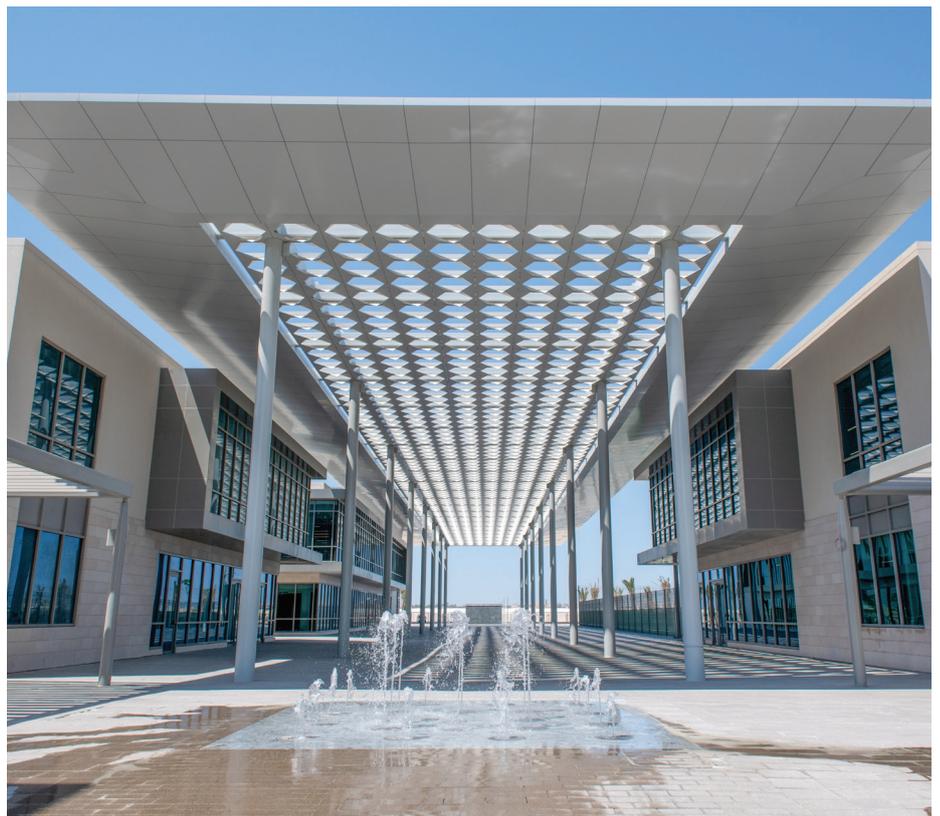
Through this new partnership Esol Education seeks to provide an attractive regional higher-education pathway for students enrolled in its K-12 schools across the Middle East and internationally. It also intends to leverage its established network in the development of new educational partnerships for AUBH, as it has most recently done with the introduction of California State University Northridge (CSUN) as a proposed academic partner to AUBH, providing AUBH students with opportunities to study abroad in the United States of America and complete their studies in the State of California.

Renowned for its commitment to advancing high quality American education within the Middle East for over 44 years, Esol Education has earned its status as a trusted partner. Its Superintendent and Chairman, Walid Abushakra, commented, "We are excited to be playing a role in AUBH, which is destined to become the Kingdom of Bahrain's leading institution of higher learning. The planned academic partnership with CSUN will support the University in fulfilling its promise to produce thousands of young graduates with the skills needed to contribute to Bahrain's future success in the global economy. Esol Education's strategic stake in AUBH underscores our long-term commitment to the educational landscape in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the wider region."

Esol Education has also recently established the American School of Bahrain (ASB) in

[Esol Education's] reputation for academic excellence, experience in the region, and longstanding relationships with American-based academic institutions will be a great asset to the partners and academic leadership of AUBH, and further support the University's development and growth.

partnership with the Elm Education Fund, which opened its doors to students in the Kingdom of Bahrain in September 2020. ASB offers a holistic and challenging American and international educational program with experienced leadership, dedicated and caring educators and state-of-the-art facilities. 📍



EXPANDING HORIZONS

Dean Joyce Feucht-Haviar from CSUN's Tseng College discusses the evolution of a new partnership with Esol Education and American University of Bahrain (AUBH) and the future of higher education in a post-COVID world.

Following the recent announcement of Esol Education's strategic educational partnership with American University of Bahrain (AUBH) and California State University, Northridge (CSUN), *STRIDES* caught up with Dean Joyce Feucht-Haviar, University Senior International Officer & Dean of The Tseng College for Graduate, International, and Midcareer Education at CSUN. Under her leadership, The Tseng College has won many accolades, establishing itself as a leader in innovative program design, winning awards for program excellence; developing the capacity to create and manage distinctive custom-designed and contracted programs; expanding its degree, certificate and professional development programs; and establishing innovative international partnerships. Here, Dean Feucht-Haviar shares some insights into the future of higher education:

Can you tell us about the history of CSUN's relationship with Esol Education and the factors that led CSUN to pursue collaboration with Esol?

I was first introduced to Esol Education by a colleague at CSUN over 15 years ago. The organization had been working with CSUN on programs and services to support teachers at its international schools. Esol's Chairman, Walid Abushakra invited me into the world of international schools, and we seemed to find many things to talk about in the world of education, at all levels. I soon discovered that he was highly regarded in this sphere as a visionary committed to educational excellence, not only at his own schools but in the overall field of international education; as well as a remarkably astute businessperson. He made his vision a reality by prioritizing excellence and educational values as the foundations of a highly successful school network. Walid and I shared that odd combination. . . In my field, institutions must be innovative and self-supporting if they are to harness the transformative potential of higher

education. When Walid contacted me some years ago about exploring a new university project with CSUN in Egypt, I knew that we could count on Esol being a solid partner that shared a commitment to educational excellence. Esol also had the capacity and experience to make a new university work on all administrative fronts. Without CSUN's and my own personal experience with Walid and Esol, embarking on a sizeable project halfway across the planet would not be something CSUN would normally consider. However, with Esol we found a partner that shared our purpose and values, and it seemed like a perfectly sensible thing to do. When the organization began another collaboration in the Kingdom of Bahrain, it invited CSUN to help implement a higher university model through an educational partnership with the American University of Bahrain.

What do you see as the key priorities for the future development of the American University of Bahrain (AUBH)?

I don't think that it has escaped anyone's notice that the worlds of work and professional practice are changing in fundamental ways. The knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for success in that changing context are, in turn, changing



too. Individual employers need to evolve with increasing agility. Organizations are transforming and pivoting, and may evolve into a completely different business model in the future – car companies become transportation companies or mobility companies and reimagine what is possible. What will engineering be when it is shaped by virtual reality, living materials, and or AI? The university-prepared workforce is now expected to be far more conceptually agile the ever before. Innovation, solution design, breadth of education that empowers imagination and analytic capacities are now essential professional capabilities across nearly all fields and disciplines.

COVID-19 has forced a time for invention, creative problem solving, mutual support, and more. As COVID fades from the planet in the years ahead, I predict that all educators would have been pushed to rethink the role and application of technologies in achieving educational outcomes.



The national and international conversations about the future of higher education, the future of the economy, and the future of the global world of work have all recognized these challenges. However, recognizing it is one thing and making radical change is another if you are a well-established university. AUBH, as a new university with an expansive vision, can aspire to model what higher education needs to be to prepare students for success and leadership in the world today – thought leaders and creators as well as leading professionals. Working in partnership with CSUN, one of the largest universities in California, AUBH and CSUN faculty will together create a purposefully interconnected breadth of education that links to college majors in a way that is designed to prepare a different kind of graduate – one that is conceptually sophisticated, committed to values and to making a positive difference. A knowledgeable, innovative and engaged professional that is a ready explorer of new information and possibilities, expecting tomorrow to be different than today and to play a meaningful part in making it so.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has had huge implications for traditional education for schools and universities, accelerating the availability of online offerings. How has the current learning framework at CSUN supported its students?

While CSUN has a very big and impressive campus (you should visit sometime), it has delivered distinctive fully online/virtual

programs for more than 20 years. Those programs are carefully crafted, and, in turn, have exceptionally high student success rates. To make that happen, CSUN has built a team of instructional designers to work with faculty developing and teaching in CSUN online programs. Further, CSUN had the good fortune to literally “fall down” in an earthquake in 1994! I say “good fortune” because all such natural disasters (likely including COVID) are unimaginably painful and destructive, but the world that emerges after is not the same. While that includes the hardship of dealing with things lost, it also opens a path to new possibilities. CSUN’s new impressive campus is in part due to the fact that the university was able to rethink and rebuild its campus over the ten years that followed. CSUN faculty had to learn to teach in new ways and in new spaces, including exploring the potential of online education. CSUN today has a large number of faculty members who have embraced and taught one another to use virtual options. This has led to a particular approach to faculty development and a faculty technology center. With the onset of the pandemic, CSUN called on all its online/virtual education resources starting in March 2020 to support faculty in changing instructional modes. We offered lots of professional development programs, acquired some of the latest educational technologies, and provided those who needed it (faculty and students) with laptops and hot spots for expanded Wi Fi connections.

In general, students at CSUN are very comfortable with technology, but having their classes all online was a challenge, not because of the technology, but because of the isolation and disconnection from their usual ways of engaging with other students to work their way through challenging classes. The increasing online instructional skills, which included a lot of focus on approaches to expanding student engagement, has helped. Because CSUN also has students from diverse economic contexts, some students did not have their own laptops and their residences didn’t have Wi Fi. The university acted quickly even with increasingly constrained resources to ensure students had what they needed to keep their education moving forward. No small challenge.

I should also mention that the CSUN instructional design team offered several series of webinars on instructional strategies for delivering online courses, including syllabus development, assignment design, student engagement, and the like. These webinars were also made available to AUBH faculty, just one of the ways we put our collaboration in action!

What changes or innovations should we expect to see in higher education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

COVID took away a lot of the ability to “assume.” It is a quiet kind of natural disaster. You sit in your home – you don’t see it outside, you don’t hear it, and yet

it changes everything in inconceivable ways. Many faculty thought their particular discipline and/or a course of a particular type or level could never be taught in a virtual mode of any kind. Now they know it can. It may not be ideal, but it is possible. And, as each term goes by, faculty are pushing the possibilities further – even if they were new to it, they are getting better at it.

COVID has forced a time for invention, creative problem solving, mutual support, and more. As COVID fades from the planet in the years ahead, I predict that all educators would have been pushed to rethink the role and application of technologies in achieving educational outcomes. And at university level, how to use face-to-face instruction in a more purposeful and impactful way (not just as the assumed default option). I expect that higher education will be in a place that might have taken another decade or more to achieve without COVID. Every faculty member would have added some powerful educational tools and strategies to their skill set. They will be ready to consider new possibilities as they emerge. To use a wider range of tools not just to teach but to collaborate and expand educational experience. Virtual is not just one side of LA to another, it is international – there's no reason an Esol student couldn't be in a CSUN class (Summer Session 2021 is all virtual).

I think those new tools and openness to modes of collaboration will impact research and scholarship too, especially for CSUN faculty teaching fully online graduate degree courses in assistive technologies, engineering, virtual reality and digital prototyping.

What advice would you have for Esol Education's graduates about future career choices and making the most of their time at university?

What will really make the difference for students entering college today is a realization that their careers in the professional world will be in the habits of mind, analytic skills, creative problem solving and innovation. The ability to ask a lot of significant questions and expand possibilities will be essential career skills.

When it comes to choosing a career, few people do well in a field that does not make good use of their talents and connect in some way to their passions. That has long been true but lots of students arrive at a university with the notion that only certain career fields offer a path to more certain financial success. By and large that just isn't true.

It is important for each student to know themselves well but not think too narrowly about what their own talents and passions

mean for career options. For example, someone who is drawn to design and/or the visual arts can find an engaging path forward in media design and development, urban planning and design, architecture, civil engineering, and more. I recommend reading through the websites of several major universities and exploring the full range of majors, even those in which one believes there is no appeal. It's also important to take a good look at what is on offer at the university you plan to attend – not just academic courses and majors but support services, organizations and community engagement programs. The more you know about the place you will spend time, the better you will be at getting the most out of it. Each university is its own world.

Higher education at its best is truly a remarkable journey. It is hard to imagine a greater gathering of possibilities than a good university. Build up your capacity to ask good questions. Whether you ask them of others or just use them as a spark for your own reflection – good questions are an essential part of learning, innovation, scholarship, and more. The questions others have asked over time are at the heart of every field and discipline. Be prepared to explore. And, if you can, take several courses over your time at university in a field that is completely unknown to you. Overall, have a great time! 🎓



QUICK FACTS

California State University, Northridge

California State University, Northridge is a vibrant, diverse university community of 38,310 students and more than 4,000 faculty and staff, sited on a 356-acre campus in the heart of Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley. The university is committed to serving the needs of applicants from all over the world. Students from more than 93 countries join our student body of over 38,000 to create a vibrant, international campus.

Location: Los Angeles, California, USA

Year Established: 1958

Campus Size: 356 Acres (144 Hectares)

Enrollment: 38,000+ students

Colleges: 9

Faculty: 2,000+ full-time equivalent faculty

Alumni: 370,000+ alumni

Website: <https://www.csun.edu>

STRIKING A BALANCE

Our featured achievers work hard, while also maintaining a healthy balance between their goals, academics and personal passions.

EYAD ELSAFOURY

Grade 12

American International School in Egypt – Main Campus

Eyad ElSafoury is a senior IB student at AISE – Main, excelling academically despite all challenges in a very critical and unprecedented year. Eyad is currently working towards attaining both an American Diploma and an IB Diploma, and has a cumulative GPA of 4.0 with an IB predicted score of 43/44 points. His stellar academic records vouch for his hard work and commitment to achieve. Eyad is hoping to attend either London School of Economics or University of Warwick to major in Economics. When asked about his success habits, Eyad said that he considers time management and goal setting the most important factors for his success. He sets his goals and works hard to achieve them and whenever he has a deadline for a big project, he spends time working on it days in advance, completing small tasks every day. He does not like to rush his work and he sets high standards for himself. Eyad believes that finding the right balance between work and play is essential for sustaining his performance, so he always makes time for things that he enjoys doing such as meeting up with friends, playing soccer or traveling.



Finding the right balance between work and play is essential for sustaining performance.

DARIA GUSAROVA

Grade 11

American International School in Cyprus

AISC Eleventh Grader, Daria Gusarova, is a student on the move! Having discovered a love for beach volleyball at the age of 9, Daria is the top-seeded Under-18 champion in the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) world-rankings. She participates in many tournaments around the world. Part of the Cyprus National Volleyball team, Daria has her eyes fixed on bringing home Olympic metal to the island. Her coach, Andreas Savvidis said in a recent interview that "the Olympic Games are a big goal, preceded by the completion of Daria's studies at university and before that, the first goal of landing the Continental Cup." Hard work and team spirit also brought her the honor of being awarded as the best Beach Volley player by the Cyprus Olympic Committee last year, which has inspired her to work even harder at the sport: "I feel proud and at the same time I believe that my responsibilities increase...I want to continue my effort and successes to be worthy of this honor." Daria is a star AISC scholar, leader in the school Eco-club, and has also joined the Esol Education cohort at the summer programme at Stanford University.



REAL-WORLD CONSTRUCTS

What does an ancient Chinese philosophy, dating back more than two millennia, have in common with a future-forward design class in Dubai in 2021? The fundamental principles of human cognition have endured for thousands of years, with great minds from Plato to Piaget exploring how learners effectively acquire, retain and apply knowledge.

Xunzi 荀子, a Confucian philosopher who lived in the third century BCE, believed that deep learning evolves in three stages, from perception to thinking and finally, application. In his eponymous collection of essays, he wrote "having heard (something) is not as good as having seen it; having seen it is not as good as knowing it; knowing it is not as good as putting it into practice." While the concept of learning by doing, especially when embedded with elements of 21st century science, technology and design, seems like a novel idea, ancient philosophers such as Confucius, Xunzi, Aristotle and Socrates have all advocated applied learning, inquiry and critical thinking!

Fast forward to Fairgreen International School, where eighth, ninth and tenth graders are participating in the award-winning, accredited STEM program, Design, Engineer, Construct!® which uses a project-based approach to connect pure academic subjects with the latest construction industry practices, and teach students about sustainability in the built environment. Emerging as a vital global sector, the "built environment" refers to man-made or modified structures and spaces for living, working and recreation, an industry that consumes more than half of the non-renewable resources in the world today. As the consumption of materials continues to increase worldwide, there is a substantial environmental impact associated with the extraction, transportation, use and disposal of these materials, including emissions, energy and petroleum consumption, as well as the use of non-renewable mineral resources, fresh water, land and habitat. As the first school outside the United Kingdom to launch the DEC program, Fairgreen offers students an opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge of the built environment sector, gaining real-world practical experience in a field they may not otherwise get to know and explore. Level 1 of the DEC program challenges Grade 8 students with designing an Eco-Classroom using real-world architecture software from Bentley. Students explore issues related to sustainability in the building



industry, understand the different roles in construction and the importance of teams, create a 3D model of their design to communicate their intentions and consider legislation, controls and procurement. In Grades 9 and 10, students complete DEC Level 2, which guides them in the design of a building to benefit a community. The students will have to understand their client's needs, the constraints of the project, formulate a project brief, draft a plan, develop a proposal, produce technical

support collateral, respond to technical issues, deliver the project and test their design.

In addition, workshops led by industry professionals provide hands-on learning opportunities alongside first-hand knowledge about the roles and responsibilities of the different actors: architects, facilities managers, building service engineers, landscape designers and site engineers. For example, a visit by

a professional land surveyor from Topcon, a multinational company that manufactures and sells land surveying equipment, taught students how Pythagoras' Theorem relates to building construction. Students also used professional land surveying equipment to see how a building outline is plotted out. They learned how precise and intricate this process is, and just how crucial this step is in the design and engineering process.

When designed well, project-based learning (PBL) increases long-term retention of content, helps students perform as well as or better than traditional learners in high-stakes tests, improves problem-solving and collaboration skills, and improves students' attitudes toward learning.

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Like in Fairgreen's DEC program, PBL involves students learning concepts to find real-world solutions to realistic problems. It offers learners a self-directed approach with increased control over their learning and opportunities to work collaboratively with fellow students.

"DEC allows me to investigate both sides of architecture at Fairgreen while accounting for factors in Sustainability and how the buildings we design affect us," said Sreya Gauravarjala Srikanth, Fairgreen ninth grade DEC participant. "It has shown me that the only way to make a sound argument is through hard evidence. I have to look at past examples and precedents of my products and see what their outcome was and whether the projects were considered successful. This allows me to look at the future with the knowledge of the past."

In a PBL scenario, teachers serve as coaches and facilitators of inquiry and reflection, allowing students the freedom to experiment and learn through an iterative process. Mr. Samuel Landete, IB MYP Design Teacher & IT Integration and DEC program lead at Fairgreen shares more: "DEC is a unique program that introduces students to the building industry, and has them practice with real software used by architects like Bentley's OpenBuilding Designer. Students go through all the design

phases of an actual construction project as mandated by the Royal Institute of British Architects i.e., RIBA Plan of Work 2020, such as strategic definition, design brief, concept design, technical design and costing. Each student designs his or her own building from scratch." While there is a definite learning curve, especially with using the 3D software productively, students all enjoy seeing their designs come alive in 3D and being able to navigate around them. The same is true about the sheer number of decisions students need to make to create a feasible building design, and to communicate their design intentions. "It is a hard process," said

Mr. Landete, however the program delivers a high level of engagement and ownership, adding "Students own 100% of their design and can exercise agency at the top level."

Does the DEC program inspire a future career in the built environment? It's a resounding yes from Sreya: "As someone who has always relied on analysis for her judgement, and loves pushing the boundaries of creativity, careers related to design and engineering align with my interests, while forcing me to push my limits." 📍



IMMERSIVE LEARNING UNPLUGGED

In an age where we are increasingly relying on augmented reality and virtual reality to create simulated opportunities for immersive learning, the unique Cultural Heritage Program at American International School in Cyprus provides students and faculty a conduit into the island's history allowing them to truly immerse themselves in its fascinating culture.



In an age where we are increasingly relying on augmented reality and virtual reality to create simulated opportunities for immersive learning, the unique Cultural Heritage Program at American International School in Cyprus provides students and faculty real, tactile opportunities to take a deep dive into the island's history to truly immerse themselves in its fascinating culture.

From a 700-year old castle to a 4000-year-old Neolithic settlement, the AISC community has been discovering the history of Cyprus through AISC's unique Cultural Heritage Program, in partnership with the Cyprus Department of Antiquities. The program includes visits and educational

learning activities by the entire school aimed at introducing the students and teachers to the rich cultural heritage of Cyprus. Focusing on selected iconic monuments and sites from all periods of the island's layered history, the program aspires to engage international students and their families with the culture of Cyprus and to help local students reflect on the global significance of Cypriot heritage.

Dr. Rachel Iannacone, program lead and a teacher of Social Studies at AISC shares, "The Cultural Heritage Program envisions the study of heritage as a learning thread that can help bond AISC's culturally diverse student body together. Whether they consider Cyprus their permanent or short-

term home, understanding and relating to the universality of heritage sites can be a most effective path to help the school's families connect with the local community."

The program's core structure hinges on the adoption of a heritage site for two academic years, during which time Dr. Iannacone completes a comprehensive study of the monument, faculty create innovative hands-on curriculum appropriate for students ranging in age from 5 to 18, all students visit the site for a full-day field study, and finally the school collaborates with the Department of Antiquities to create a lasting contribution to the site.

The Department of Antiquities and



its Director, Dr. Marina Solomidou-Ieronymidou, also provides critical support to the program, including the supply of academic resources and curation of an exhibition at the selected site.

Since its inception in 2013, faculty and students at the school have studied Choirokoitia, the village of Fikardou and the medieval castle at Kolossi. Five years ago, the school raised over one thousand euros to plant trees at Choirokitia after fires destroyed hundreds of acres. Last Spring, Dr. Iannacone, along with Despina Papacharalambous, of the Cyprus Institute and two AISC students, unveiled an exhibition at Kolossi Castle that focused on fun learning activities designed for children and families.

Last year a faculty retreat was held at the House of the Dragoman Hadjigeorgakis Kornessios Ethnographic Museum, the only monument in Nicosia that teaches the history of the eighteenth-century. Constructed in 1793, the house is an example of upper-class domestic architecture of the period. Restored,

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maintained and managed beautifully by the Department of Antiquities, the museum is among the most interesting monuments in the historic walled city and an iconic remnant from a most important period in the long history of the island.

A committee of faculty, including Elpiniki Papageorgiou, Ourania Costi, Pantelis Charalambous, and Antonia Poyiadjis developed six flexible learning opportunities designed for different age groups. These include discovering the house, its inhabitants and habits through a short play

and scavenger hunt, learning about the dome of the small hammam by building a geodesic dome out of newspaper, discovering the textiles of eighteenth-century Nicosia by learning to weave on hand looms, developing architectural vocabulary to describe elements of the building, mapping the mansion within its contemporary urban context, and debating the legacy of Hadjigeorgakis Kornessios using primary documents. Activities like these are essential in order to cultivate a deep and lasting love of history, learning and Cyprus. 

GOT GAME?

Everyone loves playing games, and once caught in loop of challenge and reward, the human brain, hard-wired to respond to rewards with a dopamine hit, is hooked! Technology today, omnipresent throughout modern lives, has made gamification even more pervasive. Dr. Joseph Nettikaden, Chief Information Officer at Esol Education takes a closer look at the phenomenon of gamification and how educators can harness its power to motivate learners both inside and out of the classroom.

By: Dr. Joseph Nettikaden, Chief Information Officer, Esol Education

If you have ever received a stamp on a loyalty card with your favorite coffee house, bookshop or grocery store, collected miles on a frequent flyer program, walked a few extra rounds around the block to meet your steps goal for the day or scrolled repeatedly on your social media feed, you have officially entered the world of gamification!

When game mechanisms are applied in non-gaming environments with the goal of enhancing processes and participants' experience, gamification is at play. By applying the act of playing a video game to everyday functions, game elements are used to make routine activities more enjoyable, where users are motivated by the engagement levels and entertainment values of the game.

Gamification is an emerging trend in many sectors, including business, organizational management, in-service training, health, social policy, and education. It is used as a driver to promote learning, employee performance, customer engagement, and even crowdsourcing initiatives. The widespread interest in gamification lies in its potential to strengthen engagement, change behaviors, and support innovation.

IN A K-12 LEARNING CONTEXT

The What?

Gamification in education incorporates game design elements and gaming experiences in the design of learning

processes with the aim of motivating students, by maximizing enjoyment and engagement through capturing the interest of learners and inspiring them to continue learning.

The Why?

The growing popularity of gamification stems from the belief in its potential to foster motivation, behavioral changes, friendly competition and collaboration in education. Research has shown that creating a game like atmosphere in a classroom with points and leaderboards increases student engagement in classrooms. The same concept can be applied using sophisticated learning technology for the gamification of learning.

Gamification helps establish flow by presenting students with a novel experience, breaking out of routines with a series of tasks that are engaging enough to prevent students' minds from wandering. Flow is both a technique of gamification and, due to the increased focus of students on the educational material, one of its objectives.

The How?

Motivation is among the important predictors of student academic achievements, which influences the effort and time a student spends engaged in learning. As games enhance motivation and engagement, incorporating game mechanics and principles to motivate learners seems a natural extension of the concept. Gamified learning techniques have emerged as a promising area of imparting

education. This innovative learning approach addresses the need for interactive and collaborative education by applying game design strategies to deliver an immersive learning experience to students.

In addition, the fun aspect of gamification will encourage future generations of students to improve their technological skills as well as encourage public-private collaboration in the investment or design of gamified curriculums.

Elements of Gamification

Gamification can be broken down into individual elements, each with advantages and disadvantages to educational processes. These include triggering greater engagement through their internal design, fostering student engagement, and ultimately creating an environment of intense focus, or "flow" that stimulates learning and retention of information.

ELEMENTS OF GAMIFICATION



MECHANICAL

Incremental Progression
Onboarding and Instant Feedback
Goals, Sub-goals and Quests
Badges



PERSONAL

Avatars
Collective Responsibility
Leaderboards



EMOTIONAL

The concept of "flow" that keeps players focused and engaged in the game



In education, flow can be achieved at both the basic educational and skill-based levels. However, achieving flow is challenging in a classroom settings where students can get distracted easily. Gamification helps establish flow by presenting students with a novel experience, breaking out of routines with a series of tasks that are engaging enough to prevent students' minds from wandering. Flow is both a technique of gamification and, due to the increased focus of students on the educational material, one of its objectives.

Gamification is on the cutting edge of innovation in an ever-changing education system, and arguably, here to stay. Where digital tablets offer an efficient and cost-effective means of disseminating information and computer algorithms offer instant feedback, game-based motivations can offer increased engagement and focus, allowing educational systems to better utilize teaching contact time for improving student outcomes. It's up to us, as educators, to harness the possibilities provided by digital learning to make gamification a powerful learning tool, with the goal of creating meaningful and impactful educational experiences for students that motivate them, keep them engaged and foster a love of learning. 

PROS AND CONS OF GAMIFICATION OF LEARNING

PROS

Four Freedoms of Play

The primary advantage of gamification are that it encourages what Scot Osterweil, Creative Director of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Education Arcade, calls the "four freedoms of play".

The freedom to fail: games allow mistakes to be made with little consequence;

The freedom to experiment: games allow players to explore and discover new strategies and pieces of information;

The freedom to assume different identities: games encourage players to see problems from a different perspective

The freedom of effort: games allow players to go through periods of intense activity and relative inactivity, so that players can pause and reflect on tasks they have accomplished.

Enhancing Teaching

Another advantage of gamification is that it automates many tasks that would otherwise fall upon the teacher, freeing up precious contact time to focus on addressing any learning challenges faced by students. For example, rather than a series of quizzes and tests taken in class that requires a teacher to manually grade each, a gamified course can automatically evaluate questions that have definite answers. This allows the student to practice on the device, and when in the class with a real teacher, time can be devoted to more difficult issues that cannot be addressed by software.

Personalized Learning

One of the most crucial ways in which gamification can serve the educational process is by offering a cost-effective way for school systems to personalize the learning process. It is generally accepted among educational specialists that smaller class sizes lead to higher student achievement. In a gamified environment, the student, by choosing the pace of learning (through an incremental progression system and a freedom of effort) or the area of learning (with a freedom to experiment), tailors the educational agenda to his or her own preferences. This has the effect of simulating a class size of one student, allowing school to offer the benefits of small class sizes without hiring additional teachers.

CONS

Gamification should not, however, be viewed as an all-encompassing solution, as it can lead to a less than conducive learning environment if misused, or deployed without enough attention to process, a thorough basis in pedagogy and testing.

Distraction from Learning

Gamification works by providing alternate pathways to learning, designing a system in which the pursuit of a game-based goal, such as points or badges, is accomplished through learning. This technique works by aligning the objective of the student (points) with the objective of the teacher (the educational material). However, if the course is poorly designed students may discover a path to their game objective that does not require learning. Gamifying education can therefore redirect attention from a student that would otherwise have gone to the subject matter and transfer it into discovering enough loopholes in the game to succeed more easily.

Social Tension

Team-based video games tend to have a solo 'onboarding' system that allows a player to learn the game before playing with anyone else, where the new player's mistakes might hurt the veteran player's ranking. This permits the player the freedom to fail before triggering any social responsibility. While games have foreseen the social dynamics in cooperative games, classroom exercises often neglect to do so. Group exercises can be a powerful tool at encouraging learning and teamwork. But group activities also generate challenges, such as when an entire team receives the same grade despite some members of the group contributing more than others. When poorly executed, gamification can therefore create strains in the classroom and inhibit learning.

Extrinsic Rewards

Perhaps the largest risk with gamification is that it prioritizes extrinsic rewards over intrinsic rewards. If learning is distilled simply into a basic search for points, badges, or levels, this may de-emphasize the personal gratification and sense of accomplishment that is results from learning a new skill. This can be a serious impediment to learning, especially as one of the fundamental goals of education is to create a lifelong love of learning that will lead to continued self-directed learning. In the attempt to increase the time students devote to study in the short-term, gamification may reduce the long-term drive for education.



Dr. NettiKaden is responsible for setting the technology vision and strategy for Esol Education, overseeing the integration of technology into Esol schools' curricula, with a strong focus on the administration, operations and implementation of technology programs. Dr. NettiKaden also explores new, innovative technologies to enhance teaching and learning at all Esol Education schools. He manages the technology departments at all Esol schools, which strive to provide an exceptional user experience to students and teachers, by taking advantage of organizational synergies and the standardization of operational processes. Dr. NettiKaden earned a Doctorate in Education from Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California, MBA from Northern Illinois University and MS in Information Technology from Northwestern University. Apart from spending time with his family, he is passionate about new technologies and understanding the impact of these technologies on the daily lives of people.

WORLD VIEW

Mr. Patrick Rich joined as the Director of the American International School in Abu Dhabi (AISA) in August 2018, when former Director, Mr. Gareth Jones, began his retirement. Mr. Rich and his family relocated to Abu Dhabi from Korea, where he was the Assistant School Director and had worked for the past 8 years. Mr. Rich has worked overseas since 2006 where he was an administrator in Malaysia and Korea. *STRIDES* caught up with AISA's leader to learn more about his experiences.

1. Tell us a little about your background and the roles you had prior to your directorship at AISA

Prior to joining the AISA family I was serving as the Assistant School Director at Korea International School in Seoul, South Korea. I joined the KIS team in 2010 as an elementary principal and was asked to be the Assistant Director in 2014. My International career began in 2006 at Mont'Kiara International school in Malaysia where I served as a teacher and administrator. Prior to moving overseas I was a public educator serving as an elementary teacher and administrator in the state of California.

2. From USA to Malaysia, Korea and now Abu Dhabi! How has your international experience shaped your leadership style?

Many of my experiences have influenced and molded my beliefs around what it means to be International Minded. Living the life of an expat and serving the international community has helped me understand the importance of being responsible and empathetic toward others. As a parent to two beautiful Third Culture Kids (TCK) I have enjoyed learning about diverse communities

through the eyes of my children and have enjoyed learning more about the influence that international education has on young people.

3. What has been your most unforgettable experience as an educator?

I am fortunate to see this often in my work, but there is nothing more exciting than seeing a child make a connection to their world around them and spark a curiosity and passion for something that they will empower them to make change in the world.

4. What aspirations do you have for AISA for the coming years?

I hope to continue building upon a climate and culture that is warm and inviting while identifying pathways for all learners to follow their passions and positively impact the lives of others.

5. Three things that you think teachers need to do to stay on top of their game?

Love the students they serve
Be risk takers
Collaborate and empower those around them 🍀



RAPID FIRE

1. What book would be at the top of your must-read list for educators?

Most Likely to Succeed by Tony Wagner and Ted Dintersmith

2. The best advice you ever received?

Lead by example

3. Tech you would like to master?

I have always thought about starting an educational blog, maybe this is the year for that?

4. Your favorite movie of all time?

Braveheart

5. Don't leave Seoul without visiting...

Seoraksan National Park

AIS students leave us knowing the importance of being a caring human being and knowing the importance in being a good citizen and community member.



Scattered around quiet villages within the Troodos mountain range, the Painted Churches have remained unchanged for centuries, shrouding within them the largest treasure trove of religious art from the Byzantine Empire.



Photo credit: This file is made available under the Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication courtesy Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, D.C.

BYZANTINE BOUNTIES

The year is 1192. The island of Cyprus, seized from the waning Byzantine Empire but eight years earlier, is witnessing a quick succession of events, which includes: a somewhat accidental conquest by the English king, Richard the Lionheart, enroute his crusade to recapture Jerusalem; its subsequent sale to the powerful Knights Templar; an uprising by Cypriot rebels; followed by an almost immediate concession of the island to Sir Guy of Lusignan, vassal of the king. Against the backdrop of these tumultuous occurrences along the Cyprus coasts, the Cretan monk, Theodoros Apsevdís, a renowned artist of the time, is laying finishing touches on a breathtaking series of frescoes, in a church high up in the mountains.

Housed within a small monastery nestled within the Troodos Mountains, near the sleepy village of Lagoudera, Apsevdís would have started the church decoration project with a complex method of plastering the walls with a special mix, followed by painstakingly drawing and then etching a series of panels re-telling the stories of Christian saints and icons. Building on ancient Greek and Roman methods, he would have selected his pigments: for faces, a mix of Constantinopolitan ocher, cinnabar, vermillion, lead white and a hint of celadonite green; azurite and lead white for garments and folds, yellow and red earth for landscapes, black carbon for details and outlines. He would have then mixed his powdered pigments with a special blend of lime or lime wash and casein to adhere to the walls, techniques perfected over the years he trained as an artist in Crete and Constantinople. Along with his apprentices, he would have proceeded to wash the drawings delicately with colors, adding layers upon layers for subtle tinting, shadows, garment folds and transparencies. Characterized by elegant postures, gentle mannerisms, swirling folds and graceful forms with sophisticated gestures, Apsevdís' decorative artistry was appreciated and paid for by local aristocrat and church patron, Leon Afthentis. Both their names are immortalized in the inscriptions found within the paintings today, giving the modern traveler a rare, tantalizing glimpse into the lives of generations past.

This church, Panagia Tou Arakou, is hailed as one of the finest examples of Byzantine art, the last truly Byzantine exemplar, as the island found itself thrust into political and religious turmoil while power transferred to the Frankish Lusignan dynasty. Unbeknownst to him, however, Apsevdís was a true artistic trendsetter of his day, with his style of painting influencing later frescoes found throughout the island, which also



incorporate Italian and Constantinopolitan influences. The church itself is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, along with nine other churches found hidden within the same mountains, collectively known as the "Painted Churches of Troodos."

One would be forgiven for strolling unwittingly past these churches whose outer structures belie the treasures they hold within, a stark contrast to the rich murals decorating their interior walls. These unassuming rural buildings present a humble brick façade, rustically thatched to protect them from the winter snowfall descending from the peaks of the nearby Mount Olympos. Scattered around quiet villages within the Troodos range, they have remained unchanged for centuries, shrouding within them the largest treasure trove of religious art from the Byzantine Empire. They are unique in that they are also living monuments, used continuously as religious sites of worship and ceremony, some carrying forward the Eastern Orthodox monastic tradition for hundreds of years. While the sites themselves are protected by Cyprus' Antiquities Law, and fall under the Church of Cyprus, the local priests and villagers are fully involved in managing access and upkeep, and visitors often have to pop into the local keeper of the keys, whether a coffee shop owner around the corner, or a priest next door!

"Cypriots are delightful, friendly and joyous," shared Mr. Misha Simmonds, Director at Esol Education's American International School in Cyprus (AISC), who was introduced to the monuments by an AISC staffer whose husband is a researcher and an expert on the churches. Describing the experience of journeying to see the Painted Churches, he said, "Each church is in or near a different village, each known for something different like apples or wine, which is celebrated each fall at local festivals. Inside the churches, my wife, daughter and I were all awed by the detail, emotion and stories told by the paintings." If you're traveling to Cyprus, Mr. Simmonds recommends these as a must-visit - the villages are an easy one-hour drive from Nicosia or Limassol. He adds, "Overall, be ready for the diversity of the country: mountains, beaches, classical ruins, medieval churches, and more!" 📍



Photo credit: Misha Simmonds

SITES TO VISIT

1. Panayia tou Araka, Lagouderia

A truly stunning building which appears bigger than it is from the outside, what's really unique about this little church is its steep-pitched roof which extends beyond the main structure on three sides, with a wooden trellis concealing the building within. And that's not to forget the other equally impressive and unique feature with the dome covered by a separate wooden roof; something unique amongst the churches of Troodos. Have a look at the inscription above the north entrance and you'll see that the church was decorated with the donations of Leon Afthentis in December 1192.

2. Agios Nikolaos tis Stegis, Kakopetria

About two kilometres south west of the popular Kakopetria village, a little church built in the 11th century calls out for attention, standing as the only surviving katholicon (monastery church) of an 11th century Byzantine monastery on the island. With its steeped pitched roof a real site to see, made from a flat tile common in the Troodos area, its name 'tis stegis' directly translates to: 'of the roof'. But it's not just the outside, the interior is often hailed as a museum of Byzantine painting. Step inside to ogle at an inside space decorated with frescoes that cover a time span of about 600 years, with the oldest part of the mural decoration dating back to the 11th century and hailed the most significant wall painting which survives on the island from this period in time.

3. Agios Ioannis Lampadistis, Kalopanayiotis

With Kalopanayiotis having become a real hot spot with locals and foreigners alike, one of its key attractions is Lampadistis Monastery. A complex made of three little churches dating back to the 11th century, the building is dedicated to a young monk named John Lampadistis buried on the grounds. Legend has it that a man suffering from epilepsy once touched the grave and was miraculously cured. News

spread quickly across the country, and his tomb has been credited with special healing powers.

4. Panayia tis Asinou, Nikitari

Three kilometres south of the village of Nikitari on the north foothills of the Troodos mountain range, this church used to be the monastery church of the Monastery of Forbion. Built with the donation of Magistros Nikephoros Ischyrios, he then became a monk known by the name Nikolaos. While no traces of the monastery survive today, it's known that it was built in 1099, and was abandoned at the end of the 18th century. Step inside the church and you'll be looking left and right, up and down, taking in the splendour of a place covered in wall paintings. With some dating back to the 1100s, they beautifully reflect Comnenian period style.

Opening times are seasonal and subject to change, please check before visiting.

-Panayia tou Araka, Lagouderia: 9am- 12 noon and 2pm- 5pm daily. Closed on public holidays.

-Agios Nikolaos tis Stegis, Kakopetria: Closed on Monday and public holidays. Weekdays and Saturdays: 9am-4pm. Sunday 11am-4pm.

-Agios Ioannis Lampadistis, Kalopanayiotis: Closed on Monday and public holidays. Weekdays and Saturdays: 9am- 1pm and 2pm-5pm. Sunday: 10am-1pm and 2pm-4pm.

- Panayia tis Asinou, Nikitari: Weekdays and Saturdays 9.30am-4pm, Sundays and public holidays 10am-4pm.

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LEARNING DISRUPTED

The immeasurable challenges of COVID – 19 also bring about the exciting opportunities for transformation and innovation in teaching and learning. If there is, indeed a silver lining to be found, you can count on educators finding it, as are the teachers at American International School in Egypt, by re-examining the role of content coverage, and exploring the new frontier of student protagonism.

By: Dr. Kaponi Ciotti, Director of American International School in Egypt – Main Campus

The world has seen two school years that will be recorded in history books. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted education systems internationally, and the negative impact on schools and families is undoubtable. However, can we leverage this disruption in the field of education to evolve more quickly? online learning can be powerful, but certainly isn't the best for all learners - we know it's particularly tough on our youngest students. Yet there is an interesting positive with regards to the constraints that online learning places upon schools: we might not be able to "cover" as much content as we were going to, but might that not be a good thing? Just because something is covered does not mean it is learned - and our job as educators doesn't end at something being taught.

It is true that the various curricula such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program require a significant degree of coverage, and indeed there are facts, skills, and concepts that we strongly feel are of the utmost importance for students to acquire. However, coverage is the lowest level of learning. We can see this in that the verbs associated with coverage such as "identify," "recall," "recognize" are at the bottom of Bloom's Taxonomy and in Level 1 of the Depth of Knowledge framework.

Furthermore, content is now ubiquitous. Today, a kindergartener with a smartphone has access to more information than President Clinton had during his presidency.

What if the global connectivity of the Internet meant we designed learning in ways that students could safely engage with peers and experts around the world, connecting and making a real impact?

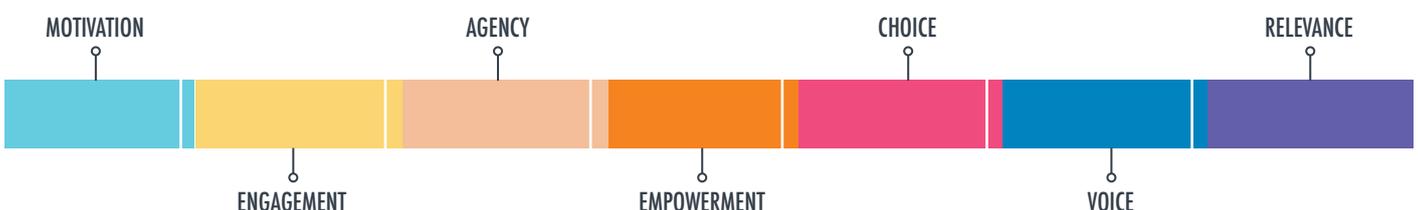
If we can Google it, it is no longer the priority for learning, and most importantly, coverage is not learning. COVID should be the catalyst for schools to examine the low relevance of covering content. More coverage is no longer the goal.

It goes back to the most important question in education: "What do you teach?" Do you teach a subject to children, or do you teach children that subject? That small difference changes the world for our students. At AISE, we teach children: we teach them Math, and Reading, and Writing, and Art, and Music, and languages, and how to be healthy, and communicate effectively, and be passionate change makers, how to think for themselves, analyze and critique. We teach them how to be good friends, how to be kind, and how to learn.

We are teaching children a positive disruption of going online is that we must critically examine the role of content in our educational program. At AISE we are using this opportunity to make more room for hands-on learning, application, relevance, projects, and the development of our students' character.

A related area of disruption is "student protagonism," the concept of student-as-the-main-actor in their own learning. In this model of learning, the teacher is the coach, and the student is not just the learner, but is the lead actor in their course of study. The key elements of protagonism include: motivation, engagement, agency, empowerment, choice, voice and relevance.

THE KEY ELEMENTS OF PROTAGONISM





What do you teach? Do you teach a subject to children, or do you teach children that subject? That small difference changes the world for our students.

Moving online has, in some cases, created difficulties for student engagement. While screen time can be enchanting and hypnotizing, true and deep minds-on engagement is not something most educators were trained for during their teaching certification. Schools could try to recreate their physical classrooms in a digital space, and those that are, are struggling to keep students engaged. Rather than use the digital space as one might use the physical space, what if we designed the digital learning environment to prioritize protagonism?

What if the global connectivity of the Internet meant we designed learning in ways that students could safely engage with peers and experts around the world, connecting and making a real impact?

This is the question being asked at AISE as we develop strategies for protagonism. A classroom where protagonism is alive leverages intrinsic motivation, a student's natural interest and feeling of purpose, to power learning. This might look like project-based learning, or a science experiment, a service project, or creating an original

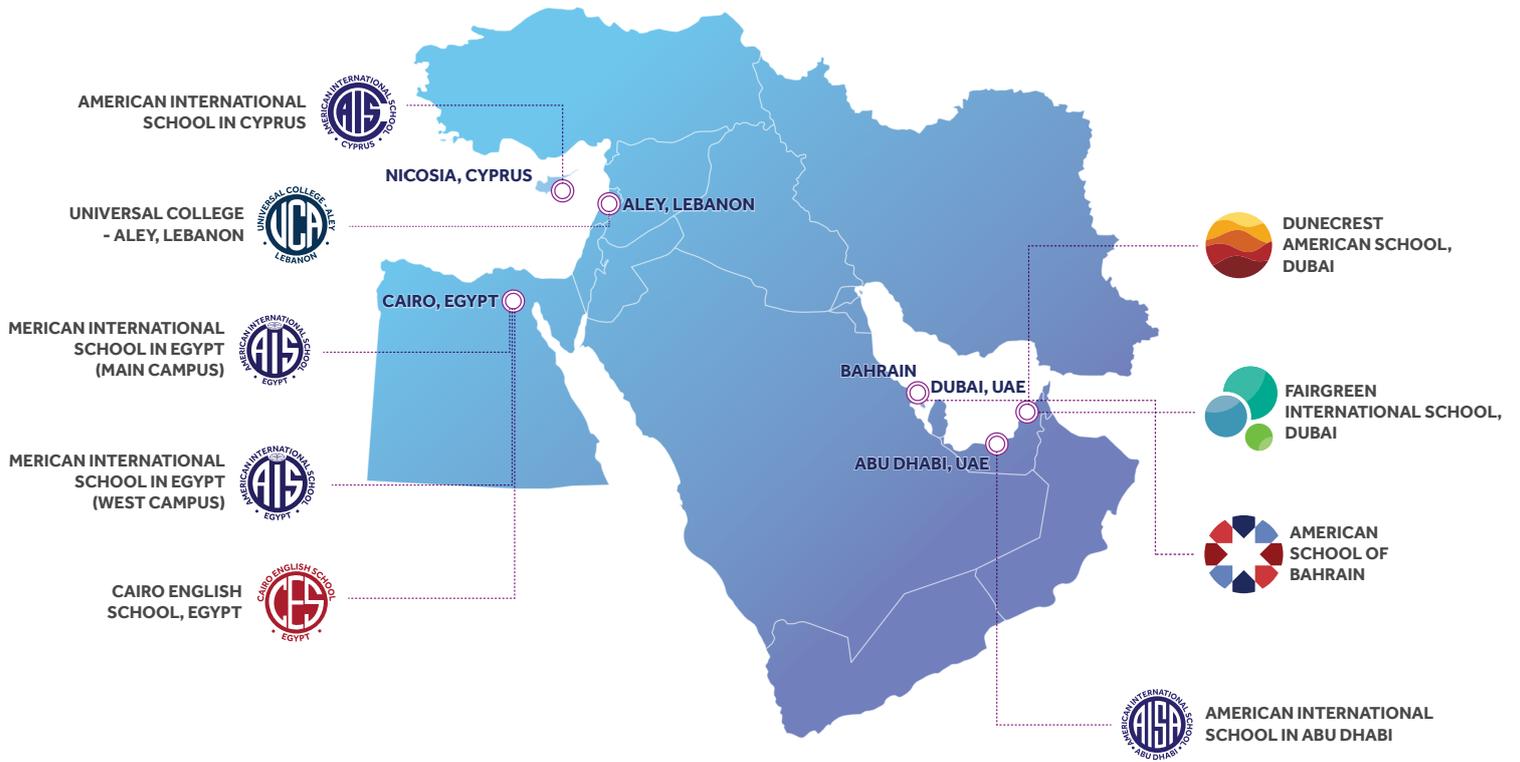
artistic product. Our teachers are designing learning experiences and authentic assessments where students' work makes a real difference in the world. AISE students are designing their own service learning experiences, tutoring younger students, addressing climate change and issues of sustainability, as well as impacting social justice through changing how people think. AISE high schoolers are spending the year working on social entrepreneurialism, creating businesses that will both make money and make the world a better place. By engaging with the world outside of school digitally, the pandemic has made it easier, not harder, for students to be the main actors of their own learning.

COVID has been hard on schools, educators, families, and most of all, students. However, by re-examining the role of content, and exploring the new frontier of protagonism, we can use these disruptions to accelerate innovation. We can teach students relevant and important skills that will serve them and the world around them as they grow up, truly making the world a better place, serving the common good, which is, in the end, what true education is all about. [S](#)



Kapono Ciotti is passionate about the science of teaching and learning and has put this practice to work as Director at American International School in Egypt – Main Campus (AISE – Main). Kapono is an international trainer and professional development coach, teacher, and a culture and place-based curriculum writer, focusing on culturally appropriate pedagogy. With the Pacific American foundation, he has written for the Kai E'e, Malama Kaho'olawe and Aloha 'Aina curriculums and facilitated numerous trainings for Department of Education, Charter, Independent and International Schools. He has over 12 years of classroom teaching experience before moving into senior administration in non-profit, high school and elementary school. Kapono spent 15 years as a facilitator for the National Association of Independent Schools specializing in issues of diversity in education, and a contributor to national movements in project-based, and 21st century learning. Kapono Ciotti earned a PhD in International education in 2018 from Northcentral University, holds a Masters degree in Social Change and Development from the University of Newcastle, Australia and a Bachelors in Language and Cultural Studies from The Evergreen State College, Washington.

MIDDLE EAST & MEDITERRANEAN



EAST ASIA

