STRIDES

The official newsletter of Esol Education



A NEW ERA

After over three decades of growth and progress, American International School in Egypt steps into the future with a new exceptional, state-of-the-art campus being built in Emaar's Uptown Cairo.

ISSUE 9 • Spring 2023

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The official newsletter of Esol Education – ISSUE 9 | Spring 2023

STRIDES is published 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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FORGING AHEAD

As 2022-2023 draws to a close, this issue of Strides concludes another exciting year of learning across the Esol Education schools. For many of our schools this academic year brought welcome relief, with full-fledged calendars packed with school activities, events, trips and more, marking a return to normalcy after two and a half years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Learning-as-usual after a long gap meant that some of our littlest learners performed together on stage for the first time, some embarked on their very first Week Without Walls experiences, students participated in memorable events such as Model UN, business competitions, leadership retreats, while families attended community fundraisers, walk-a-thons and wellbeing talks. Turn to "The Brief" where we celebrate all these amazing moments, big and small, from across our schools.

This year was also one of exciting announcements for Esol Education's American International School in Egypt (AISE) in New Cairo, with a new campus opening in Uptown Cairo, in partnership with Emaar, the Middle East's leading property development company, highlighted in our cover story. After 20 years at our current campus, we look forward to beginning our next chapter in Uptown Cairo with expansive new facilities in 2025.

As we work towards continuous school improvement and advancing our teaching and learning, we have never been more cognizant of our responsibility to guide our students to better navigate the world of tomorrow, where lightning-fast technological advances are juxtaposed with mounting global challenges. In "One-to-One," we are honored to hear from Dr. Joseph Jabbra, Member of the Board of Trustees at The American University of Bahrain and President Emeritus of Lebanese American University. He shares his outlook on how education can retain its relevance in the face of change and how students can make the most of their time at university.

Turn also to "In Class" to read about how our students are learning about and tackling the greatest threat to their future: climate change, as we shine a spotlight on sustainability education at American International School in Egypt and Dunecrest American School. And if you're curious about all the latest buzz on Artificial Intelligence, Dr. Joseph Nettikaden maps out possible use cases in education for the latest technology, while some of our tech-forward teachers share more about how they are already implementing AI in their classrooms, albeit cautiously. We also present ChatGPT-generated cross-curricular lesson plans to demonstrate the potential of this exciting new phase of generative AI.

Dave McMaster, Director at American School of Bahrain features in "Meeting Minds" and gives us insights into school leadership and the importance of "CQ" or cultural intelligence for leaders in international schools. Edward Pearce, Director at Fairgreen International School shares how we can build cohesive school communities using values-based decision-making, with a thought-provoking op-ed in "Last Word." Our "High Flyers" section brings us Egypt's youngest published author, and a student at our very own American International School in Abu Dhabi, Maya Rifaai, who shares more about her writing journey and accomplishments. Finally, join us on a trekking adventure as "Unexplored" takes you to one of Asia's most spectacular natural wonders in Hong Kong.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our graduates across our schools, and their families, for their accomplishments, and honor our very first graduating classes at American School Hong Kong, Fairgreen International School and The American University of Bahrain.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and wish you all a pleasant and relaxing summer break!

Sincerely,
The Esol Education Team

ESOL EDUCATION

NEW APPOINTMENT!

Esol Education is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Gerald Redd as the Director for American International School in Egypt – Main Campus. Mr. Gerald Redd has been part of the Esol Education family of schools for eight years, having served as Director of Universal College Aley (UCA) in Lebanon for seven years and as Deputy Director of the AIS Main Campus since August 2021. During his tenure in Lebanon, Mr. Redd led UCA successfully through challenging times, helping it become one of Lebanon's best-performing schools. In his time as Deputy Director, Mr. Redd has shown a tremendous commitment to AIS mission and values and has earned the trust and confidence of our school community. Mr. Redd is respected among international educators, serving on the Directors' Council of the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS). He is recognized for his dedicated and passionate work in the service of students and his expertise in leading cooperative learning structures. Mr. Redd is joined at AIS by his wife, Ms. Alondra Redd, Assistant Principal for Grades 4-5, and their two children. Dr. Kapono Ciotti, current Director at AIS Egypt – Main, will continue to work with Esol Education in 2023-2024 and will spend considerable time with us in Cairo, providing support to AIS in his new role of Education Consultant.



FUTURONIXV023: INNOVATION, INSPIRATION, IMPACT

Esol Education hosted FuturonixV023, a Robotics Challenge on Wednesday May 3, 2023. A first of its kind, the Esol-wide technology competition brought together Grade 8 and 9 students from Fairgreen International School, Dunecrest American School and American International School in Abu Dhabi for a day of experiencing cutting-edge technology! Students participated in a range of customized activities, using resources such as Lego Spike Prime, Zumi and Sphero. The workshop was designed to encourage hands-on learning, introducing the concepts of Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and DataScience.

Students then tested their new skills with exciting team challenges, and the winning team received gift vouchers. Students were excited after the event as the day gave them the opportunity to try out something new, helping them to discover a new passion, learning new skills, get to trial new technology, and most of all, get to know their peers from different schools. "Students got really excited, they were involved, participating, collaborating together!" said Sinead Cahill, who leads Design & Technology Integration at Fairgreen International School. "More than just a competition, this created an opportunity for students to connect with each other," said Tim Evans, Educational Technology and Innovation Coordinator at American International School in Abu Dhabi. "It was nice to see students connecting and getting confident within their groups and using the tools." Rick Prince, Technology Teacher at Dunecrest American School added, "Students were engaged, the activities challenged them and they enjoyed working together to create solutions, and there was great satisfaction seeing their solutions work!"

Overall the day was a success, exemplifying how project-based learning can deepen engagement, and build crucial 21st Century skills like communication, collaboration, creativity, problem solving, empathy, perseverance, and growth mindset."Learning to work in teams, interacting with new and different people, and driving effective collaborations is a key part of any future workplace." said Joseph Nettikaden, Chief Information Officer at Esol Education. "Equally important is learning to take risks and experimenting with new skills and new technologies."



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BAHRAIN

AUBH ACHIEVES WASC ACCREDITATION

AUBH has recently announced that it has received US accreditation through the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), one of the best-known accrediting agencies in the USA. This makes AUBH among only a handful of other universities accredited by this world-renowned commission in the GCC and MENA region. The accreditation process usually takes five years and is guided by 16 rigorous eligibility criteria. The Commission awarded AUBH accreditation for upholding the highest international academic standards for educational quality and effectiveness. This U.S. regional accreditation, recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), holds the highest level of quality assurance at the institutional level for higher education.





ONE WORLD, DIVERSE NATIONS

On Saturday, March 11, AUBH hosted its second International Day under the patronage of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, representative of His Majesty the King for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, who deputized His Excellency Dr. Mohammed Mubarak Juma, Minister of Education, to attend the event on his behalf. The community-wide event highlighted two of the university's values: diversity and inclusivity. With nearly 2,000 visitors, 18 participating countries, 22 international food and beverage outlets, and a lineup of live performances, the AUBH International Day captured the attention of spectators from all around the Kingdom. The event included an opening ceremony with speeches from Dr. Bradley J. Cook, AUBH President, and H.E. Steven C. Bondy, U.S. Ambassador to Bahrain, who highlighted that education is at the forefront of cultural change, tolerance, and collaboration. AUBH International Day provides an engaging educational platform through the discovery and experience of unique cultures through gastronomy, music, language, and art. The event included several activities and entertainment such as a traditional costume parade, ongoing performances; traditional games; a photo booth; and themed activities for young children.

NEW MSC IN ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT

The American University of Bahrain (AUBH) has announced the launch of its next post-graduate program, the Master of Science in Engineering Management. The two-year program, designed with working adults in mind, will welcome its founding class on September 23, 2023. Designed for those who wish to advance in their careers, or for recent graduates to hone their engineering and management skills, the program will reinforce engineering and management fundamentals through a strong focus on sustainability and data analytics. The program is broad enough to apply to multiple engineering sectors while providing specific skills for management and real-world challenges. The AUBH MSc. in Engineering Management program will be offered outside of regular working hours to accommodate the schedules of busy, mid-career professionals.



AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN ABU DHABI (AISA)

AIM, BELIEVE, ACHIEVE



American International School of Abu Dhabi would like to celebrate John Malvar, Grade 12 student, who has made the school proud as an exemplar leader. Through his years at AISA, John has actively participated in the AISA Student Council for a decade, throughout Elementary, Middle and High School voicing for student advocacy and championing for social spirit, serving as President at both Middle and High School levels. An engaged Model UN participant, dissecting global politics and tackling solutions in collaboration with fellow students, John served two years as the Secretary General of the Model UN Club. An energetic and competitive sportsman, John is a Volleyball and Basketball player and on the school Swim Team, having been the Team Captain of the Varsity Swim squad in his Freshman and Junior year as well as an Assistant Coach to the Elementary swim club. An IB student holding offers from Northwestern University, New York University and Columbia University, John has elected to attend the University of Toronto in the Fall, majoring in Political Science and Journalism with a minor in International Relations on a Pre-Law track. John aspires to work, build and contribute to institutions that champion collaboration for common good, "What I truly love about AISA is the way in which learning goes beyond classroom walls, offering opportunities for students to grow with extracurriculars, and enhance their leadership skills in our school– for which I will be forever grateful. I am confident that everything AISA has taught and instilled in me will prepare me for whatever I may face, as the essence of being a true AISA Lion shall always remain in my heart." AISA wishes John all the very best, and sees a shining future ahead for him!

SCIENCE EDUCATION INSPIRES WONDER

Recently, AISA enjoyed hosting Paul Andersen, a leading American science educator and author. Not only did he provide valuable professional development training for our teachers, but he also shared his passion for the wonder of science with our students.

Elementary teachers learned new strategies for incorporating hands-on, inquiry-based learning into their classrooms and received valuable feedback on their own teaching practices. Middle and High School teachers learned about changes to the IBDP and American science curriculum NGSS that will impact their teaching practices starting next year. Secondary schools focused more on scientific inquiry and thinking skills, along with decreased content knowledge.



Mr. Andersen also worked with Grade 2, 5, 8, and 12 students. His focus was teaching them how to ask scientific questions and develop models of their thinking. Grade 2 students observed why the bumblebee bumbles and Grade 12 Environmental Science students inquired into how the strumming of a guitar could affect the behavior of insects. Both students and teachers were engaged and excited as they explored new ways of thinking about science.

AISA SCIENCE CURRICULUM REVIEW UPDATE

AISA is currently working on a curriculum review of K12 Science. Two major goals of the review are to create more opportunities for students in Science in Elementary homeroom and Design and Innovation, and to develop clear course pathways in the secondary school. Thanks to our focus on inquiry and transdisciplinary thinking in Elementary School, scientific thinking is everywhere as we've added a unit of science in each grade level. Our Middle School teachers are working on providing more regular hands on experiences in science - there is definitely a buzz in the air in our MS Science wing - as students experiment, hypothesize, and create together in a safe environment that welcomes mistakes! And in our High School, we are moving towards a more integrated approach so our students are prepared for the rigors of the IB Diploma Programme®, even if they select our American Diploma track.

DUNECREST AMERICAN SCHOOL

BEE CELEBRATION!

Grade 2 students at Dunecrest American School completed their Science unit on Plant and Animal Survival with a "Bee Celebration" event. A collaboration with our Computer Science teacher allowed them to set up three learning centers that focused on the importance of bees, pollination, and the interdependent relationship between plants and bees. Students coded Bee-Bot robots to complete tasks to mimic this relationship. A pollination simulation was designed with a drone and a piece of a dye-soaked kitchen sponge. Students could fly the drone and land on paper flowers, leaving a mark behind on the flower from the color on the sponge. This was an excellent visual representation of how bees pollinate flowers. Students also learned and practiced their skills by coding the Bee-Bots and using the drone.

MARKET DAY

Grade 2 students were surprised with a field trip to a local market on the first day of their new Social Studies unit. Equipped with a small amount of money, students had to decide what to buy, calculate prices and make budgeting decisions. This provocation helped spark curiosity and engage students with real-world scenarios they may not be familiar with. The field trip served as a catalyst for the students' project-based learning task, where they created presentations to teach High School students about responsible financial decisions post-graduation. This unique and memorable experience helped students make connections between the concepts taught throughout the unit, especially in understanding how budgeting works in real life. Overall, this provocation helped students better grasp the material and equipped them with important skills that they will carry with them moving forward.



CENTER STAGE

Dunecrest American School has recently inaugurated a magnificent auditorium for students to experience the Performing Arts. With 484 seats, a high-resolution 8x4m LED screen, and state-of-the-art lighting and sound equipment, this is the place where the arts come alive! The Dunecrest Auditorium will host after-school theater productions, such as the hit musical "Anything Goes" featuring students in Grades 3-11. For the first time, Dunecrest offers a Secondary Music program with choir, concert and contemporary bands, general music classes, and an after-school rock band activity. The school aims to connect students, families, and the community through music and the arts.

FAIRGREEN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

DR. JANE GOODALL VISITS FAIRGREEN

Fairgreen International School was thrilled to host renowned primatologist and conservationist, Dr. Jane Goodall DBE in January 2023. The visit was a part of "Let's Talk" an educational roundtable event organised by Dr. Goodall's Roots & Shoots UAE organization, where student delegates from 13 schools across the UAE gathered to discuss topics related to environmental education and sustainability. After the roundtable, Dr. Goodall was introduced to the Student Council and Eco Council at Fairgreen, and staff and families gathered to witness her unveiling the Goodall Block, instituted to honour her prolific contributions towards environmental conservation and sustainability. The students then gave Dr. Goodall a tour of the school, showcasing the sustainable projects they were working on. Dr. Goodall then gave a captivating and inspiring talk, sharing her life story, and encouraging individual action. Dr. Goodall's visit was a reminder that we all have a responsibility to care for our planet, and her talk was a call to action for the younger generation to make a positive impact on the environment.



FAIRGREEN'S FIRST GRADUATING CLASS

Fairgreen International School is celebrating a major milestone this year as the first cohort of Grade 12 students graduate. These eight incredible students have already received acceptances from top-rated universities in the UK, UAE, US, Canada, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, where they will be studying subjects ranging from Chemical Engineering and Psychology to Mathematics and Sustainable Management, Interior Design, and Business Administration. It's noteworthy that most of the graduates received acceptance to their universities of first preference! The Fairgreen community is incredibly proud of these outstanding students, who have worked hard to achieve such remarkable success!

A TALE AS OLD AS TIME

Fairgreen International School recently made its mark in the world of performing arts by staging Disney's Beauty and the Beast Jr., to sold out performances! The production featured 135 students, ranging from 4 to 15 years old, across three different casts, performing in three shows. The students spent six months rehearsing the 12 amazing songs featured in the musical, and more than three months were dedicated to preparing the fantastic props. The best part of it all was the joy and happiness students experienced by participating, and the new friendships forged between different age groups. A huge congratulations to everyone involved in making this production truly unforgettable and setting a high standard for future school productions.

AMERICAN SCHOOL HONG KONG (ASHK)

EARCOS TEACHER CONFERENCE

This March, the ASHK team had the privilege to present at the 2023 EARCOS (East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools) Teacher Conference in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia. Ms. Emily Christensen, Elementary Team Leader and G4 Homeroom Teacher, and Mr. Stephen Miles, Head of Library/STEAM Coordinator, presented a workshop entitled "Digital Storytelling for the Inclusive Classroom," for an audience of educators from schools all across Asia.

This year, the EARCOS Teacher Conference focused on "A Culture of Care," where keynotes and workshops were centered on "literacy for all" and "social-emotional learning." Educators and professionals from Asia came together to share current pedagogy, discuss best practices, and initiate meaningful collaborations on strategies and tools. It was a great opportunity for Ms. Christensen and Mr. Miles to collaborate, learn and network with colleagues, and they have returned full of energy and new ideas for the school!



TERRY FOX RUN 2023

In February this year, ASHK hosted its annual Terry Fox Run, an annual non-competitive charity event held around the world to raise money for cancer research in commemoration of Canadian cancer activist Terry Fox and his Marathon of Hope. The weather was perfect, students were happy and enthusiastic, and it was an extremely enjoyable and productive day. The school community came together to participate and lend their support, not just meeting the fundraising goal of HKD 80,000, but smashing right through it! The ASHK community together raised a total of over HKD127,000 equivalent to USD16,000 for cancer research.

WEEK WITHOUT WALLS AT ASHK

In April this year, ASHK's Elementary students were able to engage in an exciting Week Without Walls (WWW) program, by getting out of school and taking part in a wide variety of outdoor activities which included kayaking and hiking. Learning doesn't just happen in the classroom, ASHK students are encouraged to go out of their comfort zone, try new things, and grow from those experiences.



AMERICAN SCHOOL IN EGYPT-MAIN (AISE-M)

UNIVERSITY FAIR

On Wednesday, October 19, AISE-M hosted its annual University Fair. More than 130 international universities met with our students and parents and provided advice and information about studying abroad or locally, tuition fees, and enrollment procedures. The AIS Egypt High School Counseling Office works hard to organize this event every year to offer our students and parents the opportunity to interact with a variety of diverse educational institutions under one roof, and understand more about all the higher education options available to them.

AIS MUN

The 30th AIS Model UN conference, held this March, was the first since the start of the COVID pandemic. Over 200 students participated in this year's conference. Students debated a wide range of issues such as child soldiers, measures to prevent ethnic cleansing and genocide, women's rights in Iran, humanitarian aid to refugees, overpopulation as a threat to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and resolving the dispute in Yemen. Delegates spent the first day of the conference lobbying and merging their ideas to produce resolutions which would be debated. After two days of formal debate only the best resolutions were passed. The work of the students did not finish with the close of the conference, as they are still busy interviewing and training the student leaders for next year. AISMUN conferences give students the opportunity to exhibit their skills and knowledge, to learn from each other, to debate critical world issues and have become true cultural exchanges, much to the satisfaction of the AIS student organizers who intend nothing less.

FITNESS FOR A CAUSE

Earlier this year, both AISE campuses met for a 5K and 10K marathon at the Pyramids. Staff, students and parents came together for a morning of fun and fitness, and raced through history! Primary students at AISE-M also participated in a charity walkathon in February as part of their service learning project, learning more about what it means to help others in need. The students had a great time cheering each other on and running on the track in the beautiful weather!



AMERICAN SCHOOL IN EGYPT-WEST (AISE-W)



EARTHQUAKE RELIEF DRIVE

The AISE-W community came together in generous support of the recent Earthquake Donation Drive held in collaboration with the Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC), raising EGP 112,587. This included direct contributions to the ERC by parents and staff members. National Honor Society (NHS) and High School Student Council students aided by running fundraising initiatives, which alone contributed EGP 35,335. ERC volunteers were available at the school campus for one week to talk to students, raise awareness about the relief efforts and accept direct donations. While no amount of money can erase the pain of this tragedy, every single donation will lighten the impact left on the victims and their families. AISE-W aims to foster a strong sense of social consciousness amongst students, empowering them to learn how individuals can also make a difference.

Supported by our leadership and teachers, students regularly organize and participate in several donation drives and other service learning and community service initiatives. Student-led projects support cancer research, various animal shelters in Cairo, underprivileged schools, or hospitals such as the 57357 hospital.

GREEN-A-THON!

AISE-W hosted an exciting "Green-a-thon" event in November 2022, organized by the school's Parent Teacher Organization, to raise awareness for sustainability issues and green technology. Our Elementary students wore a green t-shirt and participated with their class by walking around the track and donating EGP 20 for each round completed. AIS West Elementary students successfully raised 20,700 EGP. AIS West Middle and High School students will use these proceeds to design, purchase, and install a planting system for the "Secondary School for Applied Technology." The five Elementary students who walked the most laps will deliver the system to the school for installation!

THE GAME'S AFOOT!

With performances spanning three consecutive nights, thirty high school actors from AISE-W enacted Ken Ludwig's murder mystery, "The Game's Afoot" or "Holmes for the Holidays." This production consisted of a unit set, vintage props, and costumes as the play was set in 1936. In addition to the actors, more students assisted with the backstage crew. The play was directed by Ms. Larissa Cahill, and was well received by the audience. During all three performances, audiences were dazzled and thrilled by the sights and sounds of the performers. In addition to the mystery, there was a lot of humor and dark comedy in the show. The cast was extremely talented and professional after nearly three months of training and rehearsals, with some future acting talent definitely emerging! Hollywood, watch out!

CAIRO ENGLISH SCHOOL (CES)

TEAM AFKARY WINS AT INJAZ AL-ARAB

Students at CES are flush with opportunities to succeed not only academically but also outside the classroom. There are many reasons to celebrate, but on occasion students can become global successes. The student entrepreneurial program INJAZ was introduced just over 2 years ago at CES. It involves groups of students coming up with product or service idea, and setting up a business model, which they can then launch. In the first year CES students took part and won regional awards against schools in Cairo. One of last year's teams took part in the national finals. This year the team "Afkary" created by students Laila Saoudy, Lana El Hariry, Mariam Abdel Raouf, Nour El Kot, Nour Attia and Rawan El Bayouk, won the regional competition and were invited to the INJAZ World Cup in Dubai. This, all expenses paid, event saw the team flown out and accommodated in 5-star luxury to present their business model to judges from some of the biggest companies around the world. This team of young CES entrepreneurs won both the Mastercard Award and the PMI Project Management Award, making their CES family extremely proud!



UNIVERSITY AND CAREER DAY

This year, CES held its second whole-school University & Career Day. Students in Years 10, 11 and 12 attended a university fair where global universities were present. Invited also were various industry pioneers to help our seniors explore their utmost potential.
The keynote speaker for the event was Mr. Ahmed Kouchouk, Vice Minister of Finance for Fiscal Policies & Institutional. CES alumni Mr. Bassem Bassily & Mr. Nader Bassily: owners of BFB also attended and inspired students. "Out of all the schools I visited in Egypt, I was impressed with the organization and the motivated students here at CES," remarked a representative from the University of Warwick.

WOW AT CES PRIMARY

Week Without Walls (WOW) is a time where students get to explore the world around. For younger learners, Week Without Walls facilitates and encourages an awareness of the wider world, and the local environment. It is an invaluable chance to learn beyond the classroom and experience school life outside the regular weekly timetable. It also gives young learners the chance



to be involved with a range of teachers and staff from across the school. Children gain skills and experience that a classroom can never fulfil. In Year 1 students used design skills to plan and construct African huts from clay and create their own versions of African musical instruments. They ventured outside school to participate in a theatre production and were delighted to frolic in snow and ice without having to leave Cairo! In Year 2 students wowed the entire school with a fashion parade of outfits made entirely at school with recycled materials. They also learnt the art of screen printing by visiting a local art center. CES Primary has fantastic moments and memories from Week Without Walls and is looking forward to building on these experiences year upon year!

AMERICAN SCHOOL BAHRAIN (ASB)

STEAM LEARNING

ASB students are innovators, thinkers, and global citizens who are ready to make a positive impact on their communities. Through project-based learning in computer science, they develop skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. In one project, students created short films highlighting the importance of online safety and responsible digital behavior. They also upcycled used cardboard to create chairs, showcasing their creativity and resourcefulness. Students also collaborated to create digital games, applying their critical thinking skills in coding and creativity in designing game interfaces. The IB students are currently engaged in advanced software development using Java OOP programming, allowing them to apply their technical skills in a real-world context, while honing their ability to think critically and creatively. ASB is proud to have learners who are not only excellent students but also compassionate global citizens, committed to making a positive impact on the world.

EXPERIENTIAL WEEK AT ASB

This year ASB kicked off our first ever experiential learning week for the school, with enriching experiences that took students out of classrooms and into the real world. In March, students in Grades 6-11 were involved in trips to Dubai, Oman, Iceland and The Netherlands, as well as local trips to different parts of the Kingdom of Bahrain. Students were challenged, pushed out of their comfort zones, motivated to be risk-takers and experience activities they wouldn't have normally done. On the Grade 11 trip to Amsterdam, students linked their experiences with Service Learning opportunities, with a CAS trip that included a canal cleanup and food distribution to people in need.

ASB STUDENT PROFILE

As part of the accreditation process with MSA, ASB defined its Student Profile. The process involved all stakeholders in the ASB community with representatives from the student, staff, parent, administration and the wider community discussing and reflecting on the attributes they aspire all students to have, based on the school's mission, vision and pillars. The attributes that emerged were: Happiness, Lifelong Learners, Reflective & Introspective, Technological Literacy, Appreciation of the Arts, Local & Global Citizenship, Critical and Creative Thinking, Self-Confidence, Resilient in the Face of Adversity, Empathetic, and Kind and Caring. The profile summarizes the attributes an ASB student will have not only at graduation, but at any grade level in school, and take forward in their future lives and careers.



AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN CYPRUS (AISC)

35TH ANNIVERSARY ATTRACTS GLOBAL ALUMNI

In 2022-2023, the American International School in Cyprus celebrated its 35th Anniversary. Throughout the year, alumni from around the world, both students and staff, came back to mark the occasion. In addition to visiting the campus and reconnecting with current staff, alumni also spoke to high school students about their work and study experiences after high school. They participated in three sports tournaments basketball, tennis, and soccer, for all members of the AISC community. Our 35th Anniversary Fun Day in May was attended by over 400 people. Finally, two alumni joined our staff to pass it forward: Dimitris Petrides as a Learning Support Teacher, and Joanna Moughrabie as a Student Information Specialist.



CELEBRATING EU CODEWEEK

In October 2022, AISC celebrated the European Union Code Week by organizing a special family coding night for Elementary School students. Four different activities allowed participants to experience coding in different ways. There was an "unplugged" activity without any devices led by Mr. Simmonds, one activity for programming with ScratchJr led by Ms. Christina Themistocleous, one activity for coding with Minecraft led by Mr. Pantelis Charlambous, and an activity for coding with Code.org using the PCs in our computer lab, led by Ms. Anastasia Kalli. In addition, a guest parent presenter, Mr. Sergey Popov, presented a program which allows someone to use artificial intelligence to create new art, including in the styles of renowned painters, within seconds.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS PASSPORTS

AISC Children's Rights Ambassadors Kasra, Omer, and Dasha, graduates of the class of 2022, officially launched their "Passport to My Rights" Campaign on September 2022. This was part of the long-term partnership with Hope for Children. Omer represented the team at a press conference alongside the Minister of Education, Commissioner of Children's Rights, Mayer of Strovolos, and Director General of the Humanitarian Division of Hope for Children. Later in the year, the passports were promoted by two other ambassadors, Loukas and Kyriacos, with a video promoted on Youtube. Children's rights passports were distributed to 65,000 students in public and private schools around Cyprus.

UNIVERSAL COLLEGE - ALEY (UCA)

EMPOWERED AT UCA

The UCA team is dedicated to promoting excellence in education, and one way to achieve this is through ongoing professional development. The team conducts frequent learning walks, holds weekly Professional Development team meetings, and has a system of Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings embedded in their weekly schedule. PLC meetings allow same grade-level teachers to collaborate and address grade level concerns, creating a culture of teamwork and support. Through recurring cycles of action research and inquiry, UCA educators continually improve their practice, resulting in enhanced student performance. The school's PLC process is informed by the latest educational research further emphasizing its commitment to excellence. In addition to PLC meetings, weekly PD team meetings provide a vital platform for collaboration, equipping teachers with the knowledge and resources necessary to provide the best education for students.

SOARING HAWKS: STUDENT EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP AT UCA

Student leadership and empowerment are critical components of successful education. They enable students to take ownership of their learning and develop important life skills. UCA encourages students to take control of their learning through goal-setting, progress tracking, and reflection. At UCA, students feel empowered to propose and execute their initiatives, such as seniors Cynthia Faysal and Rafi Daou, who launched a community-wide food drive and school-wide awareness sessions. "UCA has given us the chance to serve and lead as pillars in the community," said Rafi. "Our ideas and initiatives were recognized, celebrated, and supported", added Cynthia. UCA's approach has not only improved academic performance but has also helped students develop critical life skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, demonstrated by the remarkable awards received by UCA's MAL and MUN participants. UCA prepares students to become responsible, engaged, and active members of society.

READY FOR LIFE

At UCA, social emotional learning (SEL) is integral to the school's educational approach, aimed at equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to manage their emotions, form healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions, thereby enabling them to succeed both academically and socially. This method, spanning all grade levels, employs a positive discipline approach that emphasizes positive reinforcement and teaches clear behaviour expectations in different contexts. Students are recognized for exhibiting kindness, respect, and responsibility. Students are also taught to identify and manage their emotions effectively through reflective practices, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and decision-making. UCA's school-wide events and activities, such as spirit days, special days, community service projects, and homeroom time, foster a sense of belonging and connection among our students. The school's commitment to SEL ensures that students feel safe, supported, and emotionally regulated, enabling them to concentrate on their learning and thrive in all aspects of their lives.



A NEW ERA

When Esol Education first opened the American International School in Egypt (AIS) in 1990, it met with instant recognition and success. Within a few years the school was attracting the children and grandchildren of the leaders of Egyptian government, culture, and the private sector.

Today, after more than three decades of growth and progress, AIS has cemented its reputation as one of Egypt's leading international schools, serving over 3,500 students on two campuses in New Cairo and Sheikh Zayed City. The school is now entering its next exciting phase with the announcement of a modern, state-of-the-art campus being built in partnership with Emaar, the Middle East's leading property development company.



In August 2025, the American International School in Egypt's Main Campus will relocate from New Cairo to a beautifully designed, purpose-built facility located in Emaar Misr's breathtaking Uptown Cairo development. Built on a spacious 51,500 square-meter elevated site, the new AISE Uptown Cairo campus overlooks a natural valley and the upcoming Emaar Square development to the north. Its world class facilities have been designed to support modern teaching practices with technologically advanced classrooms and labs, encourage collaboration and real-world learning through spacious, interconnected learning zones, and enhance student wellbeing with direct connections to external green spaces.

The campus will also offer an outstanding athletic complex comprising an international size football pitch, running tracks, gymnasium facilities, two swimming pools and numerous outdoor multi-use court areas, a fully equipped performing arts venue and studios, and dedicated counseling centers.

Play areas, open roof terraces, dedicated libraries and a café all enhance the school's exceptional design, which incorporates an abundance of space, natural light, and stunning campus vistas to promote wellbeing and happiness for students and teachers alike.

Esol Education's strategic decision to choose Uptown Cairo as the location of its new school campus was based mainly on the unique location of the development in the heart of Greater Cairo, providing its diverse student population from the eastern and western parts of the capital, with convenient access to the new campus through Emaar Drive, the new road connecting West Cairo to the development through the 6th of October Bridge and East Cairo through the El Mosheer Tantawy Axis.

"We couldn't be happier about the new campus developments," remarked Tammam Abushakra, Advisor to Chairman at Esol Education. "At Esol Education, we always place our students' development and wellbeing at the heart of every decision. The new AIS Egypt campus will be a culmination of our 47 years of experience in international education. Our architects and campus design team has been working hard to ensure that our new campus surpasses the current one with more efficient design and upgraded learning, sports and performing arts facilities," he added.

With fantastic new educational facilities for our New Cairo students, located in a fast-growing premium neighborhood by Emaar, Esol Education is looking forward to a bright future, continuing to serve families in Cairo with our holistic, world-class American and International Baccalaureate educational programs.

AISE Uptown Cairo Campus Overview

10 minutes away from New Cairo, the new AIS Egypt Uptown Cairo campus is nestled within the stunning Uptown Cairo gated community, situated 200 meters above sea level, featuring an 18-hole international golf course, recreational venues and facilities, community centers, and close to the upcoming Emaar Square development featuring world-class selection of dining and retail venues. Located on a hilltop with spectacular views, Uptown Cairo overlooks and is connected to all of greater Cairo. Convenience is at the heart of this iconic project, with easy access to almost every major district in the capital, just minutes away from 6th of October Bridge, New Cairo, and East or West Cairo.

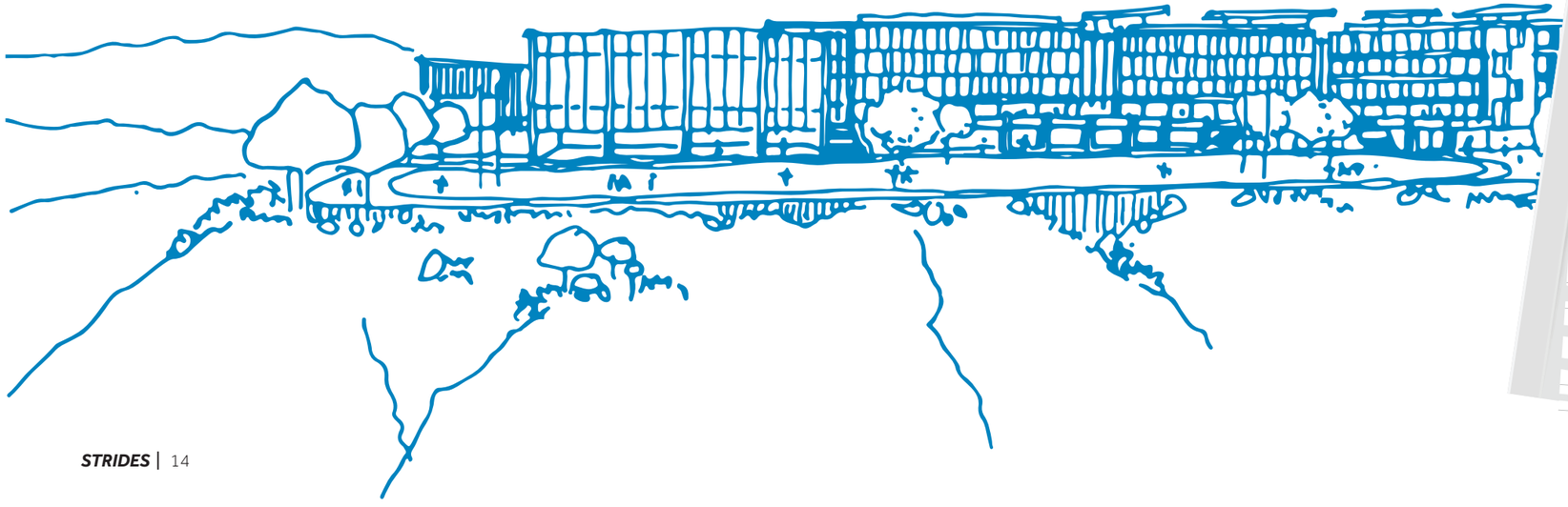
Plot: 51,500 sq. m.
Capacity: 2100 students
Opening Date: September 2025

Campus Features

- 118 Spacious Classrooms
- 9 Music Rooms
- 12 Science Labs
- 7 Art Rooms
- 2 Dance Studios
- Primary & Elementary School Collaborative Project Spaces
- Middle & High School Student Common Areas
- Shared Project Rooms/Group Spaces
- Athletics Complex: Regulation-sized Football Field, Track, Gymnasium, 2 Swimming Pools
- Auditorium
- Cafeteria and Open Terrace Spaces
- Dedicated Elementary & Senior School Libraries
- Learning Support Centers
- Counselling Offices
- Special Needs Offices
- Fully Equipped Clinic
- Office Suites
- Faculty Lounges
- Administration Offices with 2 Conference Rooms

"At Esol Education, we always place our students' development and wellbeing at the heart of every decision...the new AIS Egypt campus will be a culmination of our 47 years of experience in international education."





A HIGHER IDEAL

As the world experiences change at an exponential rate, whether advancements in technology, political instability, or climate change and beyond, education's guiding hand has never been more significant than today. But are we doing enough?

STRIDES talks to Dr. Joseph Jabbra, Member of the Board of Trustees at The American University of Bahrain, and President Emeritus of Lebanese American University for his insights on how education can stay relevant, foster the values required for progress, and meet the needs of future graduates.

What values does an American education confer on students?

American education has a set of three intrinsic values that are at the core of the academic and personal development of young men and women:

Academic excellence. It is a demonstrated ability to excel in scholastic activities, to read and write well, and to understand and work with numbers. Academic excellence has been identified in American education with achieving superior academic performance.

Habits of the mind. These consist of the ability to think critically, write cohesively, communicate clearly, and reflect logically.

Principles. Access to education, affordability, equity, non-discrimination, and social integration.

These values are instilled gradually in K-12 students and begin to intensify at the college level with the many choices offered to students in terms of majors and electives, and with a liberal arts core to be completed by all students. All these values are fundamental to the development and strengthening of democracy, responsible freedom of expression and assembly, and the rule of law.

Can a traditional American Liberal Arts education hold its relevance in the future?

Yes, it can, and especially now in the wake of breathtaking technological developments, and in particular, the rise of robotic culture and artificial intelligence (AI) that invade every aspect of our lives. AI progeny (e.g., Chatbot, ChatGPT, Bing Chat, AlphaGo) are beginning to think and change things independently of human intervention. Humanity cannot afford to graduate automatons into a world buffeted by exponential change. Rather, we need to graduate young men and women who are well versed not only in the technological brave new world, but who also are endowed with the gift of critical thinking, who can articulate their thoughts well, question and understand the world, and make decisions to help society meet its many challenges. For of all the living creatures on this earth, and despite challenges of AI, only human beings have the capacity to understand the machine and go beyond it. The liberal arts enrich our spirit, and knowing where we came from can prevent us from repeating the mistakes of the past. Critical thinking skills can be transferred to new settings in a changing world where market forces and technological innovations will force an individual to change jobs many times and constantly upgrade their education and professional training.



Why is accreditation important for universities and schools, especially in an international setting?

Any institution that intends to offer an American education will be judged by American standards. Being accredited has become a sign of academic excellence and an important criterion students consider before choosing an institution for the pursuit of their studies. Moreover, achieving accreditation is not an endpoint; rather, it is a journey of continuous improvement. Accreditation assesses the institution's means, financial and organizational, of achieving its goals. It also has an impact upon enrollment because students and their parents view it as an indicator of quality.

> *"We need to graduate young men and women who are well versed not only in the technological brave new world, but who also are endowed with the gift of critical thinking, who can articulate their thoughts well, question and understand the world, and make decisions to help society meet its many challenges."*

Are American universities in the Middle East currently delivering an education that is on par with their US counterparts? Which reforms would you recommend as top of the priority list?

Yes. Institutions such as American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanese American University (LAU), American University in Cairo (AUC), American University of Sharjah (AUS), and American University of Bahrain (AUBH), offer academic programs as good as their sister institutions in the United States. I strongly recommend that institutions of higher education that intend to offer an American education begin to make major reforms in the following areas:

The traditional model of American higher education is dated and needs to be replaced. American opinion leaders are not happy with American institutions of higher education because they allege that the universities do not deliver what they promise to do. Underfunding, decline in enrollment, tuition fatigue, and doubts about the worth of a university degree are seriously challenging the traditional status quo.

The challenges that American higher education faces today make recruiting visionary leaders very difficult. Their job has lost its glamor and become much more challenging. The pressures have taken a significant toll on them and their families. As a result, the average length of tenure of a president or chancellor has shrunk to five years. Faculty are leaving the academy because they are disillusioned with their jobs, and seeking employment elsewhere.

About 25% of the student body in the United States is apathetic, questioning the use of higher education. American institutions of higher education must face up to the fourth industrial revolution, with its powerful technological instruments which range from robots to invasive artificial intelligence. American higher education needs to come to terms with artificial intelligence and begin to make proposals for its regulation and the ethical dimensions of its implementation.

Current teaching methods need to change. The two cultures of academia need to come together. We need more cooperation among academic units within institutions. The universities themselves must form partnerships with each other to transcend insularity. Lifelong learning and training must become mainstream, not left on the fringes of the academy.

How should higher education evolve to better respond to the needs of society?

Our current society is divided between well-educated and ill-educated, between higher social classes and lower ones, between urban and rural populations. It faces a deep political gulf. This runs contrary to the ideals of American higher education in terms of access, affordability, and non-discrimination. It has deleterious consequences for the future of democracy.

Higher education should continue its focus on liberal education. The core curriculum, general education, has the potential of bringing together the two cultures of the sciences, mathematics, and business on the one hand, and the humanities, arts, and social sciences on the other. Our graduates still need to understand their larger world, to understand their past so that they might not repeat its mistakes. At the same time, universities should make sure that students' major fields of study are up to date, meeting modern standards. Finally, our faculty, students, and administrators should care about the society they live in, aspiring to close the social, economic, and political gaps now afflicting our society.

How can students gain the most out of their university experience?

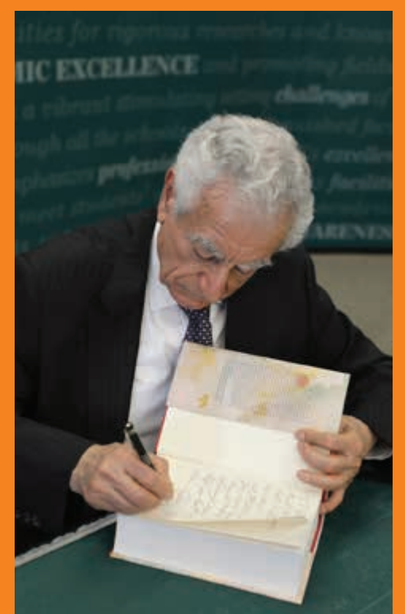
They need to take their education seriously, understanding that they are responsible for their own education. They need to attend class and pay attention, carry out their assignments, get involved in student life, and participate in campus co-curricular activities. To do all of this successfully, students need to learn how to manage their time effectively. Time management is key to their academic success and personal growth. Finally, academic advising is fundamental to students' university careers.

ABOUT DR. JABBRA

Currently the Member of the Board of Trustees at Esol Education's network university, The American University of Bahrain, Dr. Joseph G. Jabbra presided over Lebanese American University (LAU) from August 1, 2004 to September 30, 2020. Dr. Jabbra's leadership launched LAU on the path of institutional and academic renaissance, supported by strong internal human and financial resources. Prior to his role at LAU, Dr. Jabbra served as Academic Vice President at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) in Los Angeles, California, from 1990 to 2004. He had earlier served as Vice President, Academic and Research, at St. Mary's University (SMU) in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, from 1980 to 1990. In Canada, he played a major role in the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC), which accredits university and college programs in the three Canadian Maritime Provinces. In the United States, he was very active in the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), a leading U.S. accrediting commission. He always participated vigorously in the revision of accreditation standards and served on accreditation visits for many institutions. He also was active in the accreditation of American law schools for the American Bar Association (ABA).

Dr. Jabbra earned his law degree at the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

He is the author, co-author, and co-editor of 12 books. The latest, Public Administration in Transition, was recently published in London, England. He has also published over 33 articles and chapters in books and scholarly journals, over 26 book reviews in both English and French, and scores of scholarly papers and keynote addresses given at learned societies' meetings and professional gatherings.



THE LITTLE DREAM THAT SPARKED SUCCESS

Where many budding authors dream of publishing their own book, Maya Rifaai, Grade 9 student at American International School in Abu Dhabi, is not only a published author at age 13, but also a community organizer and app creator. This issue's high flyer talks to *Strides* about her journey and aspirations, in her own words.

By: Maya Rifaai, Grade 9 student, American International School in Abu Dhabi

My name is Maya Rifaai, I am a Grade 9 student at American International School in Abu Dhabi. Originally from Egypt, I am a published author and an innovative thinker.

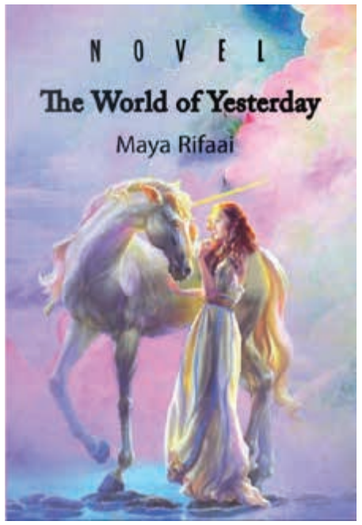
When I was 10 years old, I discovered my passion for reading and writing, especially during the Covid-19 quarantine. I read many books to pass my time, especially those by Jacqueline Wilson, one of my first favorite authors. Her books and writing style influenced me to start writing my own book. Then my parents encouraged me to try writing for fun and see how it turned out. When I was done, I showed them my work, and they loved it! So we sent the book for feedback to editors in the US and Egypt, and everyone encouraged me to publish it.

Having started writing at age 11, I published my first book, "The World of Yesterday," at 13 years of age in 2022. The book was part of the Cairo International Book Fair the same year. I was thrilled to be honored with the title of "Youngest Egyptian Author." I also held a book-signing at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair in May 2022. My journey was featured in many newspapers and articles, and I was interviewed by many of Egypt's top radio stations, such as the Voice of the Arabs and Mega FM.

This has inspired me to further explore my passion for Creative Writing. I have performed my own written poetry at New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) many times as the youngest poet. I met Mr. Bill Bragin, the Executive Artistic Director of The Arts Center at NYUAD. I also visited the Department of Mass Communication at the American University of Sharjah (AUS), where I had the opportunity to stay for the day, and take classes with college students, a first for the university, too! I met the Head of Department, Dr. Sohail Dahdal. At AUS, one of my classes was Digital Storytelling and Magazine, where I collaborated with fellow college students to complete assignments.

I also met with Journalism students who showed me around the university, department, activities, and clubs. I also took a Columbia University course on Poetry, Screenwriting, and Short and Long Stories. I started my own newspaper club at school in 2022, where I began AISA's first newspaper. I interview professors from universities about their work and life, and organize meetings and trips for my club. I have also started my own blog, "Maya Writes", where I spotlight influential women. I recently created an app called "Teenchers," where high-schoolers tutor middle-schoolers in Literacy, Science, and Math. I hope to inspire younger generations to explore their passions, and provide them the same encouragement that started me on my journey!

Submitted by Maya Rifaai, edited for clarity and conciseness.



> *I held a book-signing at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair in May 2022. My journey was featured in many newspapers and articles, and I was interviewed by many of Egypt's top radio stations, such as the Voice of the Arabs and Mega FM.*



ADVOCATING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the ongoing climate crisis is the "greatest threat facing the world's children and young people." Students at American International School in Egypt headed to COP27 for a deep dive into climate issues, alongside 35,000 participants, from world leaders to NGO representatives, to fellow students from around the world.

In November 2022, 190 countries came together at the 27th annual United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27), held in Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt. The conference was attended by representatives from 190 countries, with more than 92 heads of state attending. The COP conferences' objective is for countries to work together for action towards achieving the world's collective climate goals, as agreed under the Paris Agreement. Adopted by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, the agreement is a legally binding international treaty with the overarching goal of limiting global warming and mitigating its critical impact on humanity.

Together, both campuses of American International School in Egypt (AISE) partnered with the Center for Global Education (CGE) to participate in the week-long #Decarbonize Student Leadership Summit, that ran in parallel to COP27, including attending COP events. Youth from different schools around the world came together to learn about, advocate for, and act on climate issues. During the course of the summit, students learnt through collaborative, hands-on activities such as blog posts, discussion boards, podcast recording, video production, art creation, and live, interactive videoconferences, with activities culminating in whole-school action projects. They developed leadership and global citizenship skills to best serve their homes, schools, and communities.

Representing their countries and schools at the actual COP27 summit, also provided opportunities for them to turn their training into real advocacy.

AISE students prepared for this event by researching climate change issues in their home countries and coming together to discuss solutions. One student from each continent was selected to be a representative in the "Blue Zone" and they presented their concerns and ideas to the delegates. All other students spent time networking with think tanks in the "Green Zone." The COP27 conference is divided into two zones – The Blue Zone, with country and issues-related pavilions, where negotiations are hosted, and The Green Zone, which includes events, exhibitions, workshops and talks to promote dialogue, awareness, education, and commitment on climate action.

Students had the opportunity to attend conference sessions, meet with ministers, ex-presidents, CEOs, UNFCCC and UNESCO members, entrepreneurs, indigenous people from Brazil as well as climate change activists from around the world. Twice they presented a live stream from the World Art Forum (WAF) booth, connecting with students from around the world. They also participated in a fossil fuel debate with a panel representing sides of the argument. A huge highlight for the students was when #Decarbonize was

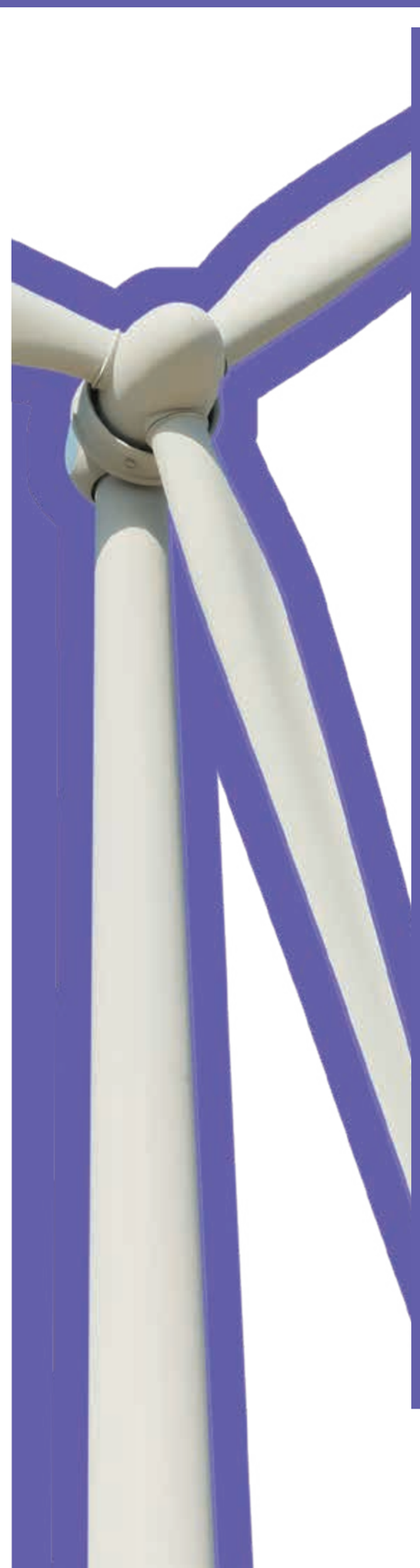


asked to present a Q&A panel at "Extreme Hangout," an event co-located with the New York Times, which delivers inspiring, empowering conversations on climate action, panel discussions from opinion leaders in their field, live streamed to an audience of millions across the world. Students felt extremely privileged to have been a part of COP27 and to have had the opportunity to share the voice of the future with all these delegates.

"Climate advocates – led by the moral voice of young people -- have kept the agenda moving through the darkest of days. They must be protected. To all of them, I say we share your frustration. But we need you now more than ever...together, let's not relent in the fight for climate justice and climate ambition."

~ António Guterres, UN Secretary General, Closing Remarks, COP27

"Students had the opportunity to attend conference sessions, meet with ministers, ex-presidents, CEOs, UNFCCC and UNESCO members, entrepreneurs, indigenous people from Brazil as well as climate change activists from around the world."



The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis*

Climate change poses major threats to children's health, nutrition, education, and future. Children are less able to survive extreme weather events, and are more susceptible to toxic chemicals, temperature changes1 and diseases. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is among the world's most vulnerable regions when it comes to climate change. The region is warming faster than the global average, with summer temperatures predicted to rise by up to 4°C by 2071-2100 compared to pre-industrial temperatures. In parts of the Middle East, combined heat and humidity is predicted to reach or exceed the thresholds of human tolerance and adaptability within this century. In other parts of MENA, combined heat and drought will accelerate desertification and lead to increases in dust storms, with dire impacts to children's health.

According to per the data published in the 2022 UN report on "Impact of Climate Change on Children in the MENA Region," key climate risks, that will severely impact children's quality of life, health, education and more, include:

1. Increase in Temperatures

Heat Waves and Dust Storms
Unprecedented heat waves in MENA will affect more than 100 million people by 2060. By 2100, about half of the MENA population, and a predicted 205 million children (0-17 years old) and 108 million adolescents (15-24 years old) could be exposed to annually recurring heatwaves. The number of "intolerable heat days" in major urban areas such as Amman, Aden, and Baghdad, as well as cities in southern Iran and Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Algeria, is projected to increase.

2. Increased Water Scarcity

Nearly 9 out of 10 children in MENA already live in areas of high or extremely high water stress and the region as a whole has a freshwater withdrawal of over 100% of available resources. Water scarcity is increasing in MENA countries due to unsustainable water use in agriculture, a growing population, increased urbanisation, and weak water governance, amongst other factors. Climate change acts as a multiplier with increasing uncertainty in rainfall, higher temperatures (increased evapotranspiration), decreasing water quality and higher risks of drought.

3. Decreased Food Security

Food scarcity, limitations in food access, dietary diversity and nutritional content are critical risks for vulnerable children in MENA, a region already facing both malnutrition (stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiencies) and over-nutrition (overweight and obesity). In MENA crop yields are expected to decline by 30% with 1.5–2 °C warming and up to 60% with 3–4° C warming.

4. Increase in Physical and Environmental Threats

Regionally, rising seas are likely to affect 43 port cities—24 in the Middle East and 19 in North Africa. Low-lying coastal areas in Tunisia, Qatar, Libya, UAE, Kuwait, and particularly Egypt are at highest risk. With only a 1 meter of sea level rise, several coastal areas in the Nile Delta, the northern coast, and Sinai in Egypt will flood. This is predicted to result in a loss of at least 30% of food production by 2030 in the Nile Delta.

5. Increase in Population Movement and Displacement

Accelerating extreme weather events will exacerbate social, environmental, and economic inequalities for children across MENA, resulting in accelerated climate-related displacement and migration. It is estimated that there were 12.4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in MENA in 2019, of which an estimated 40% were under 18 years old. Most of these displacements were primarily due to conflict. By 2050, it is predicted that there may be an additional 19 million people on the move in North Africa alone due to climate change14.
• In the past decade, natural disasters triggered at least 1.5 million new internal displacements in MENA.

*Source: https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/19631/file/ClimateChangeImpactOnChildren-MENA-Report-5Nov22.pdf%20.pdf

EDUCATION FOR IMPACT

Climate change, loss of biodiversity, unsustainable use of resources, and inequality are among the biggest global challenges young people face today. An education that empowers students to find solutions to these interconnected issues requires a holistic, cross-curricular approach, equipping them with knowledge, tools, skills and values needed to make informed decisions and take impact-oriented action, whether individual or collective. At Dunecrest American School, teachers across subjects have been collaborating, and working closely with students, to encourage hands-on learning with real-world projects, that not only highlight global issues, but also drive students to find solutions for change.

UNESCO defines Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as a lifelong learning process and an integral part of quality education that enhances cognitive, social and emotional and behavioral dimensions of learning. It is holistic and transformational and encompasses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment itself. Aligned with Dunecrest's mission, as well as ESD, Dunecrest students, from Elementary to High School, have worked on a wide range of action and impact-oriented projects such as: plant towers; climate change awareness programs; school gardens; food security research; school community sustainability action plans; and farm-to-table cooking. Some of these were showcased recently at Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots UAE Awards Ceremony. The mission of the Roots & Shoots program is to empower young people to become compassionate and environmentally conscious leaders who can create a better future.



"In a world where the effects of climate change are becoming increasingly visible, it's more important than ever for our globally-minded students to be informed about the impact of their actions on the planet.







Sustainable Cities and Communities
Grade 10 students in Integrated Humanities used the design thinking model to develop sustainable school action plans. In teams, students conducted academic research and local interviews, identified ways to advance the school community by making it more sustainable, developed a comprehensive plan, and showcased their learning by creating websites. Their solutions including concepts such as school gardens, composting food waste from the school's culinary program, recycling and energy conservation and school-wide communication and education programs. The project allowed students to have a voice and be given opportunities to build upon their Approaches to Learning (ATL) and leadership skills.

Climate Change Seminar
In a world where the effects of climate change are becoming increasingly visible, it's more important than ever for our globally-minded students to be informed about the impact of their actions on the planet. Our Grade 10 Dunecrest students in Integrated Humanities were given the opportunity to learn about climate change through a series of meaningful tasks. The class embarked on a unique learning journey, where they were randomly assigned to teams to explore the issue of climate change in a collaborative environment. Their teachers introduced them to the book "Hothouse Earth" by Bill McGuire, which provided an in-depth analysis of the current state of the planet. To deepen their understanding, each student was tasked with reading a chapter of the book, taking detailed notes and summarizing the most critical information. The students then assembled into small groups to discuss the material they had read, fostering an intellectual community within the classroom. With their newfound knowledge, the students embarked on a mission to educate their classmates through a student-led Climate Change Seminar. Each group developed a plan to present their chapter in a clear and concise manner, highlighting the most crucial aspects of the text.

As a culmination of their efforts, the students were asked to handwrite a response modeled after an International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IBDP) assessment. This task allowed them to explore the quote by Albert Einstein, "those who have the privilege to know have a duty to act," which reinforced the idea that with knowledge comes responsibility. Most importantly, the class learned that climate change is a complex global challenge that requires collective action if we are to save the planet. By fostering a community of critical thinkers and informed individuals, the Integrated Humanities class has taken a vital step towards creating a sustainable future. This experience has taught us that we all have a role to play in preserving the planet for future generations.

Happy Vegetables
The Happy Vegetables Project is an innovative IB CAS project that aims to promote sustainable practices and the circular economy. By taking waste from the school cafeteria and turning it into compost, the project not only reduces waste but also creates a valuable resource that is used to grow plants in the school garden. The plants are grown by younger students, providing them with an opportunity to learn about the importance of sustainability and the benefits of composting.

Sustainable Solutions
Dunecrest IB students have taken a proactive step towards promoting sustainability by launching a second-hand uniform store, Sustainable Solutions, as their CAS project. The store aims to reduce uniform waste and provide affordable uniforms for parents. The initiative is based on a donation system where Dunecrest community can donate their used uniforms, which will be cleaned, repaired and resold by Sustainable Solutions. The profits made will cover the costs of cleaning and repairing. This project is an excellent opportunity to raise environmental awareness among students and promote sustainability practices. Establishing a recycling culture sets an example for other organizations and encourages the community to take action towards sustainability. Donation boxes placed near the Dunecrest uniform store, and future trade-in days allow for an exchange of donated uniforms for second-hand stock.

COP28
Dunecrest students are preparing to join school students from across the world for #Decarbonize, a youth leadership series held in parallel with the upcoming COP28 conference scheduled for November 2023 in Dubai. The workshops and activities aim to amplify the lived experiences and voices of young people impacted by climate change providing them with a platform to ensure that solutions and approaches are shaped by their knowledge and experiences. After the success of AISE students at COP27, Dunecrest students can look forward to an action-packed week which will help them learn about, advocate for, and act on climate issues and build leadership and global citizenship skills to best serve their homes, schools, and communities.

"We are increasingly asking if what people learn is truly relevant to their lives, if what they learn helps to ensure the survival of our planet. Education for Sustainable Development can provide the knowledge, awareness and action that empower people to transform themselves and transform societies."

~ Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

*Contributions by Mr. Daniel Cruz, Curriculum Leader - Social Studies, Alannah William, Grade 10 and Safia Ben Halim and Mayz El Abiedi, Grade 11

AI + TQ = EI?

Much has been written about the exponential evolution of Artificial Intelligence making humans obsolete in every field. The latest advances in generative AI, in particular, have captured the world's attention, with a humanistic conversational-style approach to problem-solving touted as making teaching redundant, and the ability to produce art, music and writing, a threat to the last human frontier: creativity. Instead of working against the grain, however, what if educators could harness the power of AI, combined with their "teaching quotient" to supercharge education with "emotional intelligence", asks Dr. Joseph Nettikaden, Chief Information Officer at Esol Education.

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

Imagine a future where students start their morning for school with an automated alert estimating the arrival time of their school transportation, allowing them time to be prepared for pick up. While they wait, or during their commute to school, the biosensors on their personal devices detect their emotional state of mind, or students report how they feel on an interactive screen enroute, sending a signal to their teachers in advance about the overall mental wellbeing of the class. This helps teachers set the tone for their morning interaction with their students, allowing them to elevate student engagement for the day, selecting appropriate warmup activities before each lesson.

AI-powered technology, using facial recognition, automates student and teacher attendance seamlessly on campus, alleviating the need to manually track attendance. Once inside the classroom, it's able to quickly group students based on learning styles, abilities and attainment levels, matching them with planned activities for the week ahead. When students login to their AI powered learning management systems, lessons and other activities are suggested with flexible pathways to achieve and demonstrate mastery of the lesson objectives. Teachers have enough insights based on previous activities and assessments and the system prompts recommendations for personalized approaches for the individual students, thus enriching the teacher-student interaction. If the facial recognition can sense emotional states, it also provides teachers with a way to provide social-emotional support, as needed, to get students into the right mindset before starting their learning activities. Whether by polling students or by continuous observation, AI can collate data and provide recommendations to teachers for better classroom management strategies for the day.

Automatic assessments for students and differentiated learning plans are suggested or created for teachers based on the student progress and mastery of skills. Standardized external assessments are also automated by an AI-enabled system, relieving the tremendous effort of the planning and administering the tests. When students need help with further explanation or with assignments, access to an AI tutor is at hand, part of the online learning system. The AI tutor provides a tailored learning and support experience to the individual student based on his or her learning progress and assessment, rather than a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

These are just a few simple scenarios in which AI can enhance the teaching and learning and experience within and beyond the classroom. The applications are varied and can be tailored to suit diverse purposes.

Whether a simple application such as collating cognitive testing data using machine learning, or more complex behavior observation facilitated by facial recognition, AI can be used to flag learning delays or difficulties much earlier in the early years, helping with early identification and intervention. On the other hand, for upper secondary students, college counseling and matching appropriate study programs can be identified earlier, allowing for a detailed college application plan to be generated, aligning student aspirations with the appropriate college and career programs, helping direct student efforts for stronger outcomes.

Another area that could benefit schools is the selection of learning resources based on the effectiveness on student outcomes. Currently there are on average about between 30 and 40 online learning subscriptions which need objective review and efficacy analysis and this can be achieved more easily with an AI-powered system.

Managing the latest pedagogical approaches, measurement tools and learning technologies, as well as organizing assessments, reporting and parent communication are all part of the modern teachers' daily challenge. With the right capabilities, robust policies and guidelines and by leveraging a seamless AI-powered learning environment, leaders can support teachers by automating as many manual tasks as possible. This will free up teachers' valuable time, allowing them to focus on the most important aspect of education: building connections, inspiring curiosity, creating engaging experiences, enhancing relationships, deepening trust and supporting social-emotional needs.

AI in Action

Educators across the world, including at Esol Education schools, are experimenting with ways of taking advantage of the latest advances in Artificial Intelligence to refine their teaching practice and improve productivity. Strides caught up with a few of our very own to hear about their experiences.

Alexander Djurberg, Grade 7 Math and High School Business Studies teacher at American School of Bahrain finds AI most useful in trying to brainstorm teaching strategies, saving research time for teachers. "Simply typing in 'provide differentiated teaching strategies for X topic' can instantly generate ideas that could otherwise take 15-20 minutes," said Alexander. He also suggests using AI to help build top-line case studies, ideas that link to 21st century learning or generate multiple choice questions.

Ted Pickett, Head of the English Department for Grades 6-8, IT Elective and Instructional Coach at American International School in Abu Dhabi uses AI to generate ideas for project-based learning as well as curriculum design - generating ideas and organization for units and lessons, updating or improving existing units and lessons based on new standards or resources. "I have also used it in my work to revise English learning target scales. It made a year-long process happen in a few months," shared Ted.

Dr. Kapono Ciotti, Director at American International School in Egypt – Main Campus shares that he has been using ChatGPT for research, drafting outlines of content pieces and support in social media content. He believes that AI can and should save time on low-level tasks to allow the human mind/brain to engage in higher-level tasks. "Instead of doing obsolete things better, AI can help us do better things," said Dr. Ciotti. "AI can and should help us in the writing process. We should engage kids in figuring out how, when and where to use AI. To not do so disadvantages them. To ignore, block, or ban AI is like learning today without the Internet. Or learning a century ago with no books."

The classic programming axiom of GIGO ("garbage in, garbage out") stands just as true today of AI as it has ever done for every computer program written. The quality of output depends strongly on the quality of input. Both teachers agree that the right prompts are key to taking advantage of generative AI. Alexander suggests starting a prompt with a statement such as "Imagine you are a teacher for X grade, Y subject..." and fleshing it out further. "Be specific!" advises Ted. "If you're asking the AI to make you a unit plan, give it the standards, number of class periods, length of class periods, desired outcomes, etc. The more specific you are in the prompt, the more useful the output will be." Ted also recommends the latest best practice of "ARTS" to write efficient prompts, including information about "Audience, Role, Target, Specifics." The more narrowly defined these are, the better the responses one can expect.

Accuracy of responses, however, is a major concern. "In some cases, involving quantitative problems, the program will generate solutions with the correct method but compute the wrong solution," noted Alexander. "Case studies often lack depth, and the platforms cannot be used to build exams and schemes of work may include erroneous." Ted cautions teachers to always double-check the validity of the outputs before using them. "Right now, ChatGPT is bad at providing online resources. Since it was trained on data ending in 2021, it will give you bad links at times."

Students are also using AI as a resource. In Alexander's class, "Students whose first language isn't English can get help explaining concepts in real time as I am explaining or discussing a particular model or theory, helping clarify and break down topics in layperson's terms. My students are also aware of the drawbacks, with incorrect answers being generated for formative assessments." Asking for critical and positive feedback on writing pieces, using it as a tutor to generate questions ahead of an exam, proofreading text and generating ideas are a few other ways in which students can use AI, shared Ted. However, he does have concerns about encouraging students to use ChatGPT for privacy and child protection reasons.

Connect and Learn

There's a fast growing community of educators around the world who are learning and sharing their experiences with AI.

- "ChatGPT for Teachers" is a 170,000-strong Facebook Group.
- Ted runs his own Youtube channel, sharing tips and tricks on using AI in the classroom https://youtube.com/@Mr.Pickett.
- Dr. Ciotti recommends watching the Ted Talk by Sal Khan, founder of Khan Academy, https://www.ted.com/talks/sal_khan_how_ai_could_save_not_destroy_education/c. The talk explains how AI can help better implement low-level learning better.

Teacher Tested AI Platforms

- Chat GPT – A free platform with a conversation style interface that can help find explanations and examples.
- Quillbot - Helps correct grammar or paraphrase information.
- Chatsonic - Connects to google and extract data up to date.
- Midjourney – An AI image creation tool.
- TextCortex – A writing tool that helps generate content

ASK DR. JOSEPH

You Decide

We gave ChatGPT a simple prompt to generate a cross-curricular plan that integrates experiential activities and inquiry-based learning, fostering a holistic understanding of sustainability. We asked that the plan align with AERO Common Core Plus attainment standards while providing opportunities for hands-on exploration, collaboration, and creative expression. We also specified including a fun competition in final week to reinforces the concepts learned. What do you think of the plan?

SUSTAINABILITY MONTH CROSS-CURRICULAR PLAN*

	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	MATHEMATICS	SCIENCE	SOCIAL STUDIES	MUSIC	PE
Week 1	Sustainable Literature	Energy Calculations	Renewable Energy Exploration	Sustainable Development Goals	Sounds of Nature	Sustainable Sports and Games
	Read and analyze literature focused on sustainability and environmental themes.	Calculate energy consumption and carbon footprint of everyday activities.	Investigate different renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, or hydroelectric power.	Explore the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).	Explore the connection between music and nature.	Engage in physical activities that promote sustainability, such as eco-friendly sports or outdoor team-building games.
	Discuss the messages and values portrayed in the texts.	Use mathematical formulas to estimate potential energy savings through sustainable choices.	Conduct hands-on experiments or simulations to understand the science behind renewable energy generation.	Research and discuss the significance of SDGs in promoting sustainability worldwide.	Compose and perform music inspired by environmental sounds or themes	Discuss the environmental impact of different sports and explore sustainable alternatives.
	Write a reflective journal entry or create a visual representation expressing personal connections to the literature.	Graph and analyze data to identify patterns and trends in energy usage.	Discuss the advantages, limitations, and potential applications of each energy source.	Create multimedia presentations or infographics highlighting specific SDGs and their relevance to Dubai or the UAE.	Collaborate with classmates to create a musical composition that highlights the beauty and importance of nature.	Participate in a friendly sustainability-themed sports tournament or competition.
Week 2	Green Campaign	Sustainable Design	Environmental Footprint Analysis	Sustainable Cities	Sustainable Songwriting	Fitness and Energy Conservation
	Collaborate in small groups to create a green campaign.	Explore geometric concepts and principles related to sustainable architecture and design.	Calculate personal and community ecological footprints.	Investigate sustainable city planning and design principles.	Write original songs with lyrics that promote sustainability and environmental awareness.	Learn about the connection between physical fitness and energy conservation.
	Develop posters, brochures, or digital presentations to raise awareness about sustainable practices.	Use scale drawings and measurements to create sustainable building designs.	Explore methods to reduce waste, conserve resources, and minimize environmental impact.	Analyze case studies of sustainable cities around the world.	Experiment with different musical styles and techniques to convey messages effectively.	Participate in energy-efficient exercise routines that minimize environmental impact.
	Present campaigns to classmates and discuss strategies for effective communication.	Present and discuss the benefits of sustainable design with classmates.	Develop action plans to implement sustainable practices within the school or community.	Collaborate in groups to design sustainable city models incorporating renewable energy, green spaces, and efficient transportation.	Perform songs individually or in groups, and discuss the impact of music on raising awareness.	Reflect on personal fitness goals and the role of physical activity in sustainable living.
Week 3	Sustainable Storytelling	Financial Planning for Sustainability	Ecosystem Restoration	Global Perspectives on Sustainability	Music and Climate Change	Outdoor Adventures
	Write and share original stories or narratives that emphasize the importance of sustainability.	Analyze the cost and financial impact of sustainable choices, such as solar panel installation or energy-efficient appliances.	Learn about ecosystem degradation and the importance of restoration efforts.	Study sustainability practices and perspectives from different cultures and regions.	Investigate the role of music in climate change activism.	Take part in outdoor adventures that encourage appreciation for nature and the environment.
	Incorporate elements of plot, character development, and thematic elements related to sustainability.	Calculate savings, payback periods, and return on investment for different sustainability measures.	Conduct a field trip or virtual exploration of local ecosystems in need of restoration.	Conduct research and present findings on sustainable traditions, practices, or innovations from diverse communities.	Analyze songs and music videos that address environmental issues and inspire action.	Engage in activities such as hiking, orienteering, or nature walks to connect with the natural world.
		Create financial plans that balance sustainability goals with long-term financial viability.	Design and present proposals for ecosystem restoration projects.	Engage in discussions about the importance of cultural diversity in sustainability efforts.	Collaboratively create a multimedia presentation showcasing the power of music in promoting sustainability.	Reflect on the importance of outdoor experiences for personal well-being and environmental stewardship.

**This entire plan was generated by ChatGPT*

**This entire plan was generated by ChatGPT*

"Leveraging a seamless AI-powered learning environment can free up valuable time for focusing on the most important aspect of education: building connections, inspiring curiosity, creating engaging experiences, enhancing relationships, deepening trust and supporting social-emotional needs."



Dr. Nettikaden is responsible for setting the technology vision and strategy for Esol Education, and 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.

CHANGING LIVES

STRIDES catches up with Dave McMaster, Founding Director of Esol Education's American School of Bahrain (ASB) to discuss his experiences as a global educator, his motivations and aspirations for his school.

Dave McMaster joined Esol Education as ASB's Founding Director in the pre-opening years in 2018. Prior to that he led the Canadian International School of Hong Kong (CDNIS) as Principal and Head of School. He also led multiple school capital and building projects, such as with the Fairchild Group of Canada as their Head of Education to design, co-found and establish two schools in Hong Kong. Throughout his career, Dave has been a Teacher, Vice Principal, Principal and Head of School at various public and private schools, ranging in size from 120 to 2,000 students in Canada and Hong Kong. He has also served as Governor and Treasurer of the Association of China and Mongolia International Schools (ACAMIS).



Dave, how do you feel the educational experience differs for students in the West, East and now Middle East? What are some best practices that can be implemented from each of these learning systems?

The big difference, in my opinion, between the educational experience for students in the East (Asia), and West/Middle East is the academic expectation of students. Speaking generally, I found that the academic expectations from parents, teachers, community and the students themselves in Hong Kong were much higher at an earlier age than I experienced in Canada and now Bahrain, which put undue pressure on students at times. Children need a chance to be children when they are in kindergarten and lower elementary. They need to learn through inquiry and play. Thankfully the school I worked at in Hong Kong realized this and worked with the parents and the community to help them understand that students will be better equipped socially, emotionally and academically if they develop a love of learning at an early age through a play-based approach. The myth that you will become a better student by being immersed in academic rigor at a young age is damaging and will not prepare students for an academic life of excellence and joy.

At ASB we work very hard to develop a learning atmosphere where students love to come to school every day. They are excited to step through the doors each morning knowing they will learn something new, face challenges with an open mind and know that every adult in the building cares for them and has their best interest in mind every time they make an educational decision. If a school embraces this and sets this as their priority, the students will be very successful academically and they will not have to sacrifice happiness in an effort to reach new scholarly heights. This should be the practice whether you are an educator in the West, the East or the Middle East.

Lastly, as a school leader who has worked in diverse cultures, it has become more apparent each year that it is incumbent on me to understand the culture I am working in and the cultures of the students who attend my school. International school leaders not only need to have high IQ and EQ but they need to have high CQ, cultural intelligence, so that they can meet the learning, social and emotional needs of the students in their school regardless of where they are from. This is applicable in the West, the East and the Middle East.

> *"Be proud to be an educator and know that you have the potential to change lives."*

What are three things that leaders should do to build a positive school culture?

Firstly, the senior team needs to be visible, approachable and remember that every decision they make relates back to the mission and vision of the school. They set the tone for the school and the ethos and atmosphere that is developed starts with them. School leaders must be "human" in the eyes of the students and the staff and model compassion and empathy in everything they do. They need to communicate that risk-taking is encouraged, as is failure, and when something doesn't work or you fall, you get back up and try it again. Secondly, school leaders need to communicate their vision to all stakeholders, what they believe to be important at the school and how the community will work collectively to achieve this. If the stakeholders don't know the vision, the school will lack a sense of purpose and direction.

Lastly, school leaders need to model the love and passion they have for educating every student in the building. Communicate this, tell people about it and live it every day. Be proud to be an educator and know that you have the potential to change lives. This will all contribute to a positive school culture.

What aspirations do you have for ASB for the coming years?

I look forward to ASB being viewed as a top-tier school not only in Bahrain, but the Middle East and beyond. This takes time and a lot of effort by the entire community. We must never settle for the status quo, and we need to find a balance of high academic rigor and expectations with an ethos of happiness and a sense of belonging - where everyone in the building is proud to be part of the ASB family. First, we need to ensure the mercury in the "smile index" is always high and that we see building positive relationships as a priority. Academic success will not happen if you do not have a school full of happy, engaged students and teachers. Build a positive atmosphere, hire world-class teachers and the rest comes naturally.

What are the top qualities you look for when recruiting teachers?

I hire teachers who fit into the personality puzzle of the school. I can find their qualifications and experiences on their CV. I can see how they have performed through reference checks. But what I really want to find out is if a teacher has fire in their belly and can hardly wait to get to school every day. I look for teachers who are not afraid of hard work and who are open to risk-taking and change. I have no interest in a teacher who has a suitcase full of lesson plans that have worked the past ten years. Teachers need to constantly re-invent themselves and their craft. I look for teachers who do not teach like I was taught. Otherwise, we will have no chance of educating and shaping the leaders of tomorrow, leaders who will make the world a kinder, more peaceful place.

What has been your most unforgettable experience as an educator?

I have been very fortunate to have a number of unforgettable experiences during my career. Most of these extraordinary experiences are not stand-alone, they are usually a series of special moments over an extended period of time. Being the founding director of ASB and involved from the very start is the most recent unforgettable event and for me the most significant of my career. It is rare than an educator is given the opportunity to start a school from scratch and to hire his own founding team from day one. It has truly been an incredible experience and one that I will be proud of for a very long time.



What motivates you most when you come to school every day?

That's easy! The smiles on the faces of students and colleagues when they walk in the door in the morning and when they leave in the afternoon. Everything else in between is icing on the cake.



RAPID FIRE

Top books you would recommend for educators?

"***Drive***" by Daniel Pink
"***Good to Great***" and "***The Social Sectors***" by Jim Collins
"***The Happiness Advantage: How a Positive Brain Fuels Success in Work and Life***" by Shawn Accor

The best advice you've ever received?

Be yourself, follow your passions and be your own voice. As I progress in my career, I have worked hard to do what I think is right, not what others think is right or what others want me to do.

Tech you would like to master?

Chat GPT. It is going to revolutionize what we do as teachers. Still a long way to go but I need to understand the impact it will have on teaching and learning. And Excel!

Your favorite movie of all time?

A Few Good Men. I think I have watched it at least 25 times.

Most inspirational travel destination?

Rome

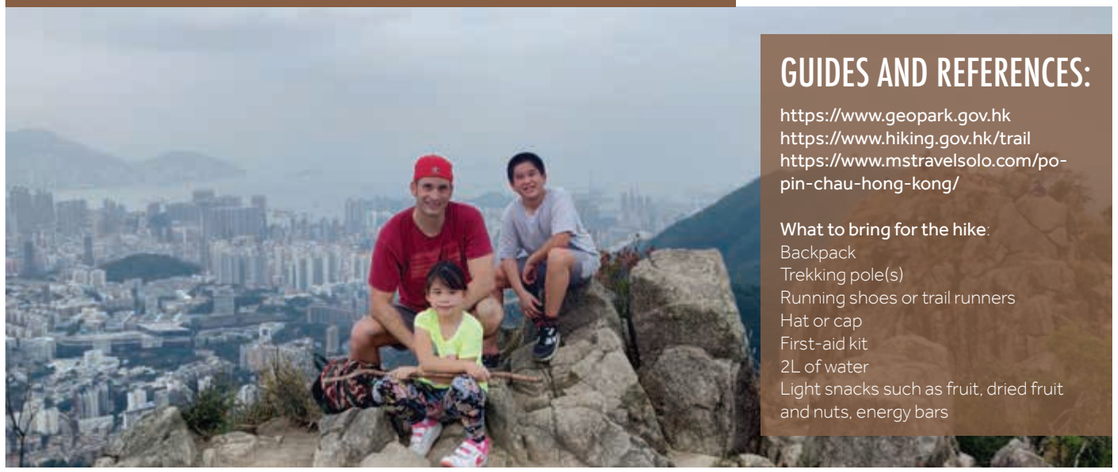
TRANQUIL TRAILS

With about 8 million people living on approximately 1,100 square kilometers, Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated cities on Earth. Sporting one of the most spectacular skylines in the world, this vertical metropolis comprises over 4000 skyscrapers. A vibrant blend of the East and the West, the city truly has something for everyone, from temples and museums to theme parks and world-class restaurants. Beyond the buzz of city life, however, lies a treasure trove of extraordinary mountain views, natural unspoilt beaches and charming fishing villages, with plenty of adventures for the intrepid visitor.

Among these treasures is Sai Kung with it's rare geological wonder, unique rhyolitic volcanic rock formations, forming "an archipelago of volcanic columnar rocks reaching into the sky and diving into the clear waters below," shares Anthony Brewer, Social Studies and Geography Teacher at Esol Education's American School Hong Kong. The easily accessible location on the East Dam of the High Island Reservoir, within the Sai Kung East Country Park, offers up an extraordinary opportunity to see these well-preserved, otherworldly hexagonal rock formations up close. Stunningly beautiful in their scale and mathematical symmetry, these natural geo-wonders are a result of fractures that appeared within cooling volcanic material, after the eruption of a supervolcano about 140 million years ago. They are part of the many sites in Hong Kong that make up its Geopark, one of the few officially designated UNESCO geoparks in the world.

Photo credit: Anthony Brewer, Social Studies and Geography Teacher at American School Hong Kong

"Hong Kong's volcanic history and tropical climate has bestowed the city with shallow bays, sandy beaches and undulating hills of greenery."



GUIDES AND REFERENCES:

https://www.geopark.gov.hk
https://www.hiking.gov.hk/trail
https://www.mstravelsolo.com/po-pin-chau-hong-kong/

What to bring for the hike:
Backpack
Trekking pole(s)
Running shoes or trail runners
Hat or cap
First-aid kit
2L of water
Light snacks such as fruit, dried fruit and nuts, energy bars

While there are several ways to access the rock column formations, *Strides* recommends a day in the beautiful Hong Kong countryside, and taking a trek to the East Dam, on the MacLehose Trail, of the world's "20 Dream Trails," according to the National Geographic Society. The well-designed 100 km trail spans Hong Kong's New Territories, running through national parks, mountain peaks, reservoirs, and white sand beaches. The geopark can be reached via Section 1 of the trail, which comprises ten sections in total, all accessible by public transportation or taxis, each of varying difficulties, all offering majestic vantage points over both natural and urban vistas.

The trail is named for Sir Murray MacLehose, the longest serving Governor of Hong Kong, who is remembered for sweeping reforms and his immense contributions to the modernization of the city, including the development of the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) and other infrastructure projects. An avid hiker and naturalist, he moved the government to establish the Country Parks Board of Hong Kong in the 1970s, to protect the countryside and provide a safe avenue for recreation for residents and visitors, including building nature trails. The MacLehose Trail is just one of several that traverse the city and its numerous islands.

Having lived in Hong Kong for over 19 years, Anthony enjoys hiking the many trails around the city. "Hong Kong has an incredible dichotomy. You can be in the city center and within a 15-minute walk, you can be on a country park trail. Its volcanic history and tropical climate has bestowed the city with shallow bays, sandy beaches and undulating hills of greenery." All of which can be found along the MacLehose Trail. "It always comes as a shock to be walking along this trail and remember that you're in the city as you can walk for hours without ever seeing a building. Except for the remains of 100+ year old Hakka villages, which is something else that makes this trail so special."
With stone markers guiding the way every 500 m, the MacLehose Trail is well established, including paved walkways in some sections. Internet coverage is widely available, with the ability to make emergency calls in the more remote sections. Maps and guides are available via the Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) website. Free campgrounds with bathrooms and potable water are also available along the route, should you wish to embark on a multi-day trek. "The city has invested in the country parks and the trails within, so the trail is well maintained and easily accessible," says Anthony. "They've done a great job: the trails are clear, well maintained, marked with distance markers and there is mobile coverage throughout, to ensure the safety of the hikers. Believe it or not, some of the trails can be dangerous at night!"

The first section of the MacLehose Trail ambles through Sai Kung East Country Park, starting at Pak Tam Chung, which is just 40 minutes from Hong Kong Central. If you're enthusiastic about hiking the full trail, then start here. A 3.5 km sloping walk on mostly paved roads, brings you to the West Dam of the High Island Reservoir. A few more kilometers in, you arrive at the highest point at 133 m, after which you start to approach the East Dam, and the site of the rock columns, which were revealed during the excavation work undertaken during the construction of the dam. Walking in a loop around the dam reveals information panels that tell hikers about the various landforms created by natural phenomena.

Anthony recommends skipping this first section of the trail entirely, however, and taking a taxi directly to the reservoir and starting your adventure there. To see the most spectacular formations, he suggests first taking a taxi to the trailhead for Pak Lap Beach. A short 10-minute walk to the beach allows you to access the unmarked Po Pin Chau trail. The trail then leads back to the reservoir where you can reconnect with the MacLehose Trail.

"There aren't many of these geologic formations in the world," said Anthony. "The ones here have also been curved, making them unique. Most importantly, they make up a beautiful island archipelago surrounded by clear blue waters extending out into the open waters of the South China Sea. The islands are well known in the local community as a great place for paddleboarding, kayaking and coasteering."

Walking a little further, the trail leads to the picturesque Biu Tsim Kok viewpoint, which offers aerial views of the rock formations, as well as a view of the seemingly secret beaches of Long Ke Wan and Tsang Pang Kok Tsui in the far distance. Local guides recommend continuing the trek on to Section 2 and walking past the beautiful Long Ke Wan beach to Sai Wan, where transportation can be found back to the city at the San Wan Pavilion. The beach also has a very fast ferry service that runs every few hours and provides striking views from the water.

Section 1 and 2 of The MacLehose Trail are one of Anthony's favorites. "Section 1 and 2 has beautiful beaches, Hakka villages and cascading waterfalls. You can have your choice of a dip in the blue waters of Sai Wan or Dai Long Wan, or the cool refreshing waters of Sheung Luk Waterfall. I often take my kids there, they love jumping off the 20ft tall cliffs. You can enjoy a cold drink and hot lunch on the side of Sai Wan beach at the beachfront restaurant. And, if you're feeling lazy, there's a boat service running from the beach to the town center of Sai Kung where you can catch a taxi or bus." Overall, the power and beauty, the peace and tranquility, the connection to the environment, and getting away from urban city, all resonate with Anthony. "Being from BC in Canada, the natural environment here is stunning and makes me feel quite at home. Especially when I'm out on the trails."

COHESIVE COMMUNITIES

When building a positive, unified school culture, look no further than your mission, vision and pillars, and lead with values-based decision-making, shares Ed Pearce, Director at Fairgreen International School.

By: Edward Pearce, Director, Fairgreen International School

Throughout the universe, there are systems that are seemingly random, even chaotic, which, upon close examination, demonstrate a clear order comprising complex repetitive patterns, whether regular or irregular. From spiral galaxies and nautilus shells to sunflowers and even the human lungs, the patterns of chaos are all around us.

Take, for example, a fern. The overall image and pattern of the fern is replicated by the smaller parts. If you break off a small section of the fern, the pattern is the same as the whole frond. Ferns are one of the perfect examples of fractal geometry in nature. Fractal geometry is a branch of mathematics that deals with the study of self-similar objects or shapes that exhibit complex patterns or irregularities at different scales of magnification. In other words, a fractal is a geometric shape or object that looks similar or identical, no matter how much you zoom in or out.

Cohesive school communities reflect this phenomenon, whether you observe the community as a whole, or "zoom in" and talk to individual stakeholders - students, parents, teachers, or staff. This intangible "community feel," that forms the intrinsic culture of a school, stems from a unanimous set of values, or pillars. These values unite a school community, serve as a "road map" for defining its beliefs, and inform decision-making processes, both at organizational and individual levels. Only if we know what we value, we can make the right decisions. Each representative of our school community must model the values of the whole organization in a consistent and professional manner. Values-based decision-making is an integral part of the success of any organization, and promotes a positive, thriving school culture that is aligned with around a shared belief system.

Values are, therefore, an essential aspect of decision-making because they provide a framework for evaluating options and determining which course of action aligns



"Values-based decision-making is an integral part of the success of any organization, and promotes a positive, thriving school culture that is aligned around a shared belief system."

best with our beliefs and principles. Within a school context these values are often represented by our school mission and vision, or through a variety of other common values-based statements.

To give a concrete example of this, Fairgreen International School is situated within the Sustainable City in Dubai. We have a growing and well deserved reputation as a sustainable school within the highly competitive Dubai school market. Prospective parents and visitors will often comment on the reputation we have within the city for our focus on weaving a sustainable focus into our actions, whether our curriculum, events or celebrations. However, we are keen to point out that sustainability is only one of seven key pillars for our school, and that each is interconnected and prioritized at different times throughout the school year. For example, at the start of the academic year we may focus more on character development and wellbeing to ensure our community feels valued, confident and comfortable about the year ahead. Innovation and academic growth and achievement can often be interwoven with many of the other key pillars in addressing the needs of our community. Sustainability will always be a focus of the school, but it won't ever be the only focus. Each of the pillars guides our decision-making process and priorities, but never in isolation or at the sake of another.

Where defining and articulating our values as a school community is important, ensuring that all members of a community agree upon and share the same values is a complex and challenging task. Overall, building a shared sense of values in a community requires ongoing effort, commitment, and active participation from all members. It requires creating an environment that promotes openness, dialogue, and a willingness to understand and respect each other's perspectives.

One approach is to promote open and honest communication within the community. By encouraging dialogue and discussion, community members can



explore their beliefs and values and develop a shared understanding of what is essential to them. This can help identify common values and areas of agreement, as well as clarify and resolve differences in opinion.

Another approach is to provide opportunities for community members to engage in shared experiences, such as volunteering or participating in community events. These experiences can help to foster a sense of community and shared purpose, which can, in turn, contribute to a shared understanding of values. Education and training programs that focus on values and ethical principles can also help foster school values. These programs can provide a platform for community members to learn about different values and their importance, and how to apply them in daily life.

Overall, our values serve as guiding principles that influence how we perceive the world and what we prioritize in life. When making decisions, our values help us to weigh the consequences of our choices and ensure that we act in a way that aligns with our beliefs. Without a clear understanding of our values, decision-making can become arbitrary and inconsistent. By grounding our decisions in our values, we can ensure that our choices are thoughtful, purposeful, and aligned with our vision for our lives. Ultimately, values help us to make decisions that are not only effective but also meaningful and fulfilling.



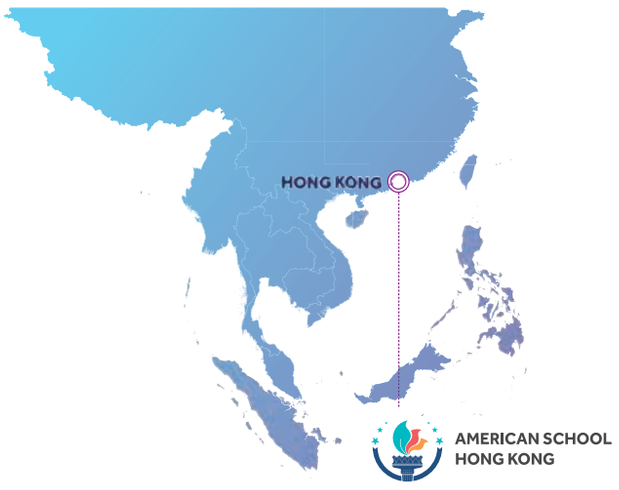
A passionate educator, Edward Pearce believes that leading learning is at the heart of school leadership. He works actively to build teams committed to delivering outstanding learning experiences for students. With a proven track record of developing high performing, results focused education teams, Mr. Pearce is dedicated to leading the Fairgreen community with a future-forward outlook, positive energy, transparency and inclusivity. With over 20 years of international school leadership and teaching experience, Mr. Pearce has served previously as a leader at prestigious schools in the United States, China, Malaysia, Dubai and the United Kingdom. Mr. Pearce's passion for environmental sustainability, as well as personal sustainability and wellbeing, complements his promotion of international-mindedness and character building in the communities he has led across the world. Mr. Pearce is originally from Australia and is currently completing a Master of Business Administration (MBA) with the University of Cumbria (UK), in conjunction with Robert Kennedy College, Switzerland. He holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Education and a Bachelor of Applied Science in Environmental Management from University of Western Sydney. He is also a fully accredited school inspector under the British Schools Overseas inspection framework.

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