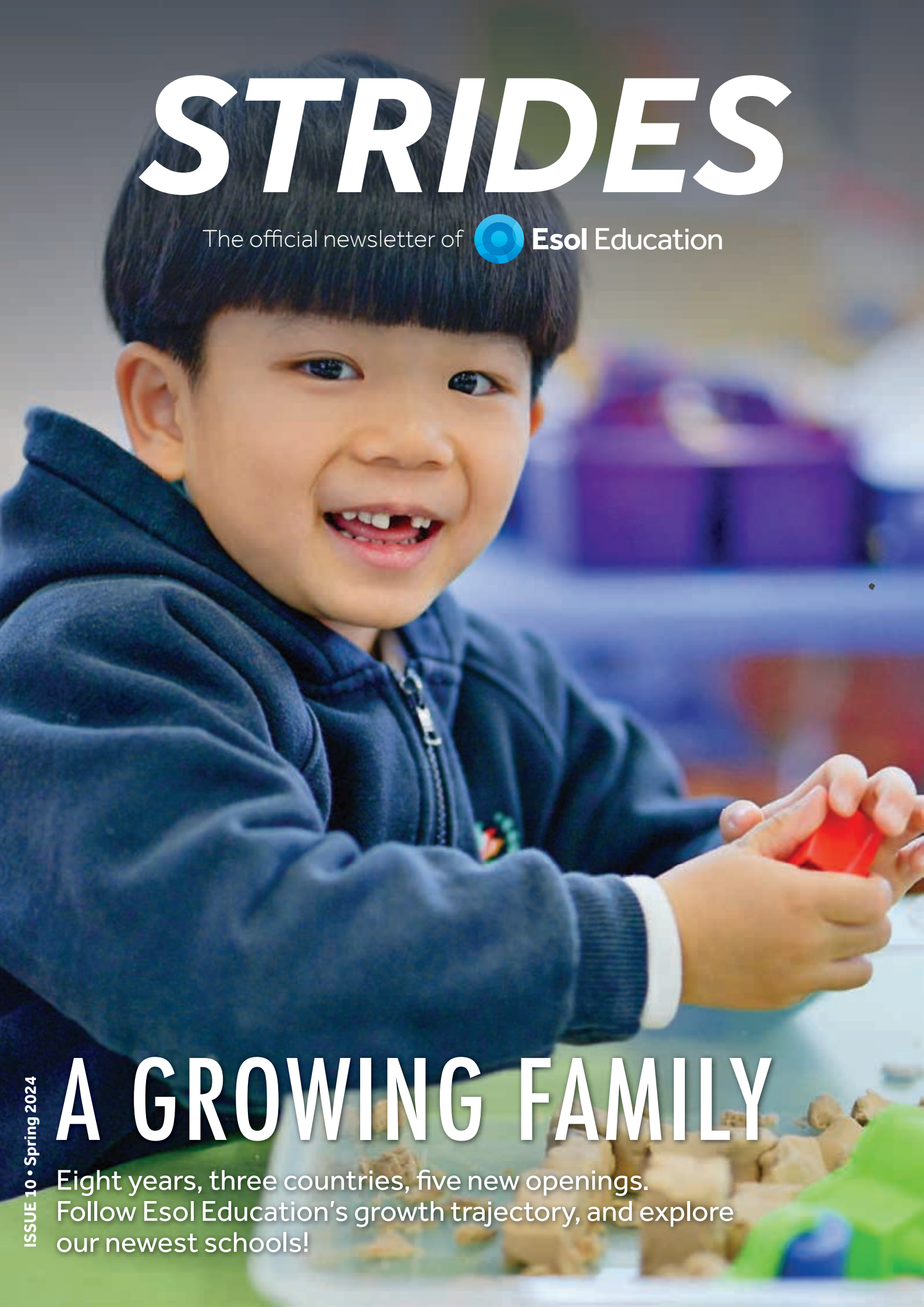
STRIDES

The official newsletter of Esol Education



A GROWING FAMILY

Eight years, three countries, five new openings. Follow Esol Education's growth trajectory, and explore our newest schools!

ISSUE 10 • Spring 2024

CONTENTS

SPOTLIGHT



12 • A Growing Family
Esol Education's growth journey has spanned five new openings over the past eight years. Read all about our new school communities and unique programs offered.

20 • Mission Responsible
Timely decisions and steady leadership will help shape the future of AI in education, says Dr. Joseph Nettikaden, Esol CIO, outlining a framework for creating guidelines for school communities and stakeholders.

FEATURES

05• The Brief
Explore the latest exciting activities and announcements from our schools around the world.

16• In Class
From journalism to COP28 and a partnership with CERN, Esol students access diverse real-world learning opportunities in class and beyond.

23• Meeting Minds
Dr. Bradley J. Cook, AUBH President, discusses education transformation, his Middle East background, and 30 years of leadership insights.

26• Unexplored
Bahrain's forts showcase its rich martime history as a trade hub linking Europe, Arabia, and South and East Asia.

29• Last Word
Dr. Ahmed Mitwalli, Esol's Chief Strategy Officer, emphasizes the potential for collective strength while balancing standardization and autonomy in education networks.

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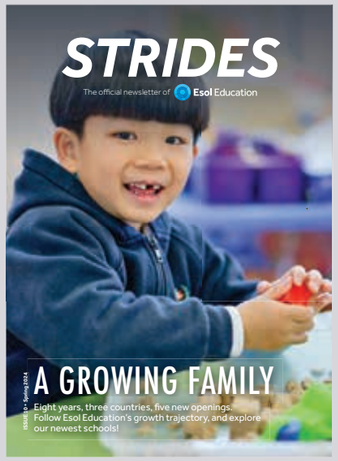
STRIDES is published by Esol Education for a wide internal and external readership, including our students, parents and teachers. This publication covers news and developments across the organization and its schools in the Middle East and Mediterranean. Since 1976, Esol Education has specialized in providing 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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SPREADING OUR WINGS

It has been a busy year for Esol Education and our schools alike, with a rising student body, action-packed calendars, and exciting development plans. This issue of Strides represents a year of outstanding student initiatives and achievements, as our established schools continue to innovate with their programs and our newer schools mature into reliable anchors within their respective communities.

Turn to The Brief section to read about the diverse array of student activities and accomplishments from our schools, as well as the latest news from Esol Education covering our brand-new Cairo campuses, our all-school leadership summit, new appointments and our collaborative event with PowerSchool, North America's leading provider of leading provider of cloud-based K-12 educational software.

Our cover story takes you on a journey across Hong Kong, UAE and The Kingdom of Bahrain, as we trace the paths of Esol Education's school launches over the past few years, and take a deep dive into their unique offerings and programs. As we continue to grow and expand, Esol's technology-led approach to education will soon pivot to AI, which has been dominating newsfeeds recently. Curious about how it affects education? In Ask Dr. Joseph, our Chief Information Officer, Dr. Joseph Nettikaden, unpacks the risks, benefits, and impact of AI, and offers timely solutions for education leaders to pave the way for responsible use and guide their school communities to truly benefit from this revolutionary, ever-evolving technology.

Read to discover our In Class section, outstanding student initiatives from Esol schools. From student journalism and community engagement with the AIS Egypt chapter of the UN-supported Girl Up organization, to students participating in the global COP28 Climate Change Conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and a partnership between AUBH and CERN, our students have access to a world of opportunities! Later in this issue, meet Dr. Bradley J. Cook, President of American University of Bahrain, as he talks about the key drivers transforming education today, and reflects on his own personal experiences and unique background, having spent his formative years in the Middle East.

Our intrepid explorers of the Unexplored section land also in the Kingdom of Bahrain, host to Esol's American School of Bahrain, to find an island steeped in history. Read more about the ancient forts of this important bridge between Europe and Asia, a function it holds till the present day, albeit now a trading and financial hub offering an exceptional infrastructure, and a modern, progressive lifestyle. Dr. Ahmed Mitwalli, Chief Strategy Officer at Esol Education wraps up this issue with his views on striking the right balance between benefitting from the growth opportunities, and efficiencies, offered by school networks, while maintaining the spirit of the individual communities represented by each member school.

We hope you enjoy reading our 2023-2024 edition of Strides! We take this opportunity to thank all our teachers and leaders for their dedication, determination and hard work in supporting all our students, and congratulate our families on another successful year!

Wishing you all a wonderful summer,
Sincerely,
Esol Education Team

ESOL EDUCATION



ESOL HOSTS POWERSCHOOL SUMMIT IN DUBAI

PowerSchool, organized the inaugural "Innovation in Education: UAE Schools Summit" at Esol Education's Dunecrest American School in Dubai. The event brought together educators and school leaders from across the United Arab Emirates to discuss the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education. The summit aims to serve as an annual platform for discussions on AI and innovation in the education sector. Topics included security, data access, responsible use of AI, and the implications of AI for personalised education and workforce preparation.
The program featured discussions on various aspects of AI in education, including the potential benefits of personalized learning experiences and the importance of data centralisation for educators. Dr. Joseph Nettikaden, Chief Information Officer at Esol Education, commented, "AI-powered analytics are poised to revolutionize the process of measuring and influencing student achievement, allowing us to determine what makes the greatest impact, and empowering students to work towards their desired future outcomes."

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Esol Education is pleased to welcome Dr. Craig Ross as the new School Director at American International School in Egypt – West Campus (AIS West) beginning with the 2024-2025 school year. Dr. Ross earned his undergraduate and master's degrees from Indiana University and his Ph.D. in Education Administration from Auburn University. He has served as an Elementary, Middle, and High School Principal and as a Superintendent of Schools in the United States. He is currently in his third year of service as the High School Principal at AIS West. Through all of these experiences, Dr. Ross has a demonstrated history of developing teams that successfully launch innovative programs, execute strategic plans, and maintain fiscal responsibility. Dr. Ross' wealth of experience, positivity, and passion for students and education make him an excellent fit for the position of Director.



As Mr. John Jalsevac bids farewell to AIS West, he continues his Esol Education tenure with his new role as School Director at American International School in Cyprus (AISC). Mr. Jalsevac has served Esol Education for the past 8 years as Founding Director at American School Hong Kong and in Cairo. Mr. Jalsevac's appointment as director of AISC makes him the first educator to lead three different Esol schools. Throughout his 40-year career in teaching and education leadership, Mr. Jalsevac has delivered exemplary programs that are characterized by their rigor, holistic approach and inspirational nature. He is successful at maintaining and building learning communities where care and respect for one another is of paramount importance. His unwavering leadership and guidance will provide the AISC community a smooth transition, as Dr. Misha Simmonds hands over the baton he has so proficiently held during his years there.

ESOL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP MEETING



The annual Esol Education Leadership Meeting was held this year in March, hosted at Esol's Fairgreen International School in Dubai. The event saw the heads of ten Esol Education Schools from across the globe gather together with the Executive Board and Esol team members to discuss student achievement, teacher professional development, growth and assessment, job-alike sessions and curriculum development. Individual schools presented education best practices, while we heard about the exciting changes that artificial intelligence will rapidly bring to the world of international education. These annual meetings offer school leaders a unique opportunity to learn, grow and network with their fellow leaders, gain invaluable insights into the current education landscape, as well as forecast future trends.

AIS WEST ANNOUNCES PLAN TO MOVE TO NEW CAMPUS IN EMAAR MISR'S BELLE VIE DEVELOPMENT



The summer of 2026 will see the AIS West Campus relocating from its current location in Greens, Cairo to a new state-of-the-art, purpose-built campus in Emaar Misr's Belle Vie development in New Zayed. This marks Esol Education's second partnership with Emaar Misr, the Middle East's undisputed leader in real estate development, following the announcement that our AIS Main Campus will relocate to Uptown Cairo in the summer of 2025.

Enjoying direct access to the Dabaa Corridor and links to the Alexandria-Cairo Road and the Middle Ring Road, the new AIS West Campus in Belle Vie will be easily accessible for AIS families in Sheikh Zayed City and surrounding neighborhoods. The 500-acre Belle Vie development intertwines lush green landscapes with unique homes that feature outstanding architecture. The new campus will be situated on a 55,000 square meter plot on the perimeter of Belle Vie. With an advanced design, the new campus will exceed AIS West's current site in standard and quality.

With fantastic upgraded educational facilities for both AIS Egypt campuses located in first-class neighborhoods by Emaar Misr, Esol Education is looking forward to a bright future, continuing to serve families in Cairo with its holistic, world class American and International Baccalaureate educational programs.

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BAHRAIN

AUBH CAREER FAIR 2024



In the ever-evolving landscape of education and career development, opportunities abound for ambitious young individuals to chart their paths toward success. The AUBH Career Fair serves as a vital platform for students to connect with leading employers, and this year's event brought together more than 24 industry representatives and industry experts, facilitating invaluable networking opportunities and opening doors to a myriad of career possibilities. This year's event welcomed underscored the importance of adaptability, resilience, and forward-thinking in navigating the professional landscape. The Annual AUBH Career Fair acts as a catalyst for professional growth, encouraging students toward their career aspirations with confidence. Whether exploring internship opportunities, seeking guidance from industry professionals, or making meaningful connections that could shape their futures, students and alumi left the event inspired and empowered to pursue their goals relentlessly.

FOSTERING A CULTURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP



AUBH's Entrepreneurship Week served as a catalyst for fostering a culture of entrepreneurship among students, igniting their passion for innovation and creativity. Through panel discussions, keynote speeches, and interactive sessions led by industry experts and successful entrepreneurs, students were inspired to explore their entrepreneurial potential and turn their ideas into reality.

The event provided a platform for students to network, collaborate, and exchange ideas, fostering a vibrant ecosystem of innovation on campus. By nurturing the entrepreneurial mindset, AUBH aims to continually empower the next generation of leaders and change-makers to make a lasting impact in the world of business and beyond.

WEARABLE TECH WORKSHOP BY MIT-MISTI-GLOBAL LAB



In partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)'s International Science and Technology Initiative (MISTI), the American University of Bahrain (AUBH) recently concluded the "Building Interactive Wearable Technology from Scratch" workshop, for the second consecutive year. This program is designed to spark innovation among students from across Bahrain. This unique initiative brought together both high school and university students, fostering a collaborative environment where young minds could explore the exciting world of wearable technology. Led by instructors from MIT, participants delved into topics like 3D printing, rapid prototyping, and coding. This hands-on experience equipped students with the skills to build interactive wearables, opening doors to potential applications in robotics, healthcare, and even fashion. Some of the student projects included Braille Speaker, Gesture Controlled RC Car, and Innovative Safety Bracelet for Kids. The workshop brought together a diverse group of passionate engineering, computer science, and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) (Information and Communication Technology) students eager to explore the forefront of wearable technology. The event fostered an environment of creativity, learning, and practical experience and further exemplified MIT and AUBH's commitment to fostering innovation in today's youth, laying the groundwork for a future generation of Bahraini tech leaders.

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN ABU DHABI (AISA)

EMBRACING MID-YEAR TRANSITIONS

Assuming the role of Interim Director mid-year at the American International School in Abu Dhabi (AISA) has been a rewarding experience for Dr. Andrew Torris, School Director. With established processes within the school, he shared that his focus was on understanding community needs and providing consistent leadership. Dr. Torris credits open communication and transparency, the school's culture of excellence and dedicated staff, students, and families for the smooth transition. AISA's talented faculty blend experience and fresh ideas, fostering continuous learning. "Witnessing students' extraordinary passion and achievements, nurtured by phenomenal faculty, has been the highlight," said Dr. Torris. Overall, the transition presented opportunities for positive change, enhancing academic rigor, inclusivity, and community connections.



SUCCESSFUL CIS AND MSA PREPRATORY EVALUATION

AISA recently underwent a preparatory evaluation by the Council of International Schools (CIS) and the Middle States Association (MSA) as a part of the school's accreditation renewal process. This evaluation is a crucial step in the school's pursuit of continuous school improvement. The visit reaffirmed AISA's commitment to providing a rigorous curriculum that meets the high expectations of every grade level. AISA faculty is dedicated to exemplary teaching practices that emphasize essential skills such as communication, self-management, and research, with a focus on IB approaches, preparing our students for global success. The evaluators praised the school's clear outcomes, high-quality teaching, and the meaningful connections fostered between local and global communities, all backed by a robust assessment strategy. Celebrating these achievements, AISA remains committed to creating an engaging learning environment that inspires, challenges, and nurtures our students for their future.

TRANSDISCIPLINARY ARTS

Art at AISA is not only about painting and drawing; it's also about exploration, creativity, and transdisciplinary learning! In Grade 1, students delved into the world of animals, creating Papier-mâché models of a chosen creature. This project was inspired by their homeroom inquiry about animals and their behavior. Moving up to Grade 2, the focus shifted to marketplaces. Here, students worked with clay to craft miniature replicas of goods commonly sold in local markets. This hands-on approach connected art with the wider community, highlighting the diversity of products available. In Grade 4, the art room became a canvas for landscapes! As students explored changes seen in Earth's terrain in their homerooms, they used fiber art techniques to carefully arrange yarn, strand by strand, creating intricate scenes of landforms in Art class.

DUNECREST AMERICAN SCHOOL

DUNECREST'S DAZZLING MUSICAL

Dunecrest's winter musical "Singing in the Rain" wowed audiences in January earlier this year. The production not only highlighted the exceptional talent and dedication of our students but also underscored the inclusive and collaborative ethos of our school community. Beyond their mesmerizing performances, Dunecrest students showcased their versatility by taking on various backstage roles, including lighting, sound, costumes, and set design. Special recognition goes to our dedicated teachers whose guidance and support were pivotal in bringing the production to life!

TECH TITANS

A resounding applause to Dunecrest's remarkable students, Maryam in Grade 11 and Adam in Grade 12 for their exceptional accomplishments in the realm of Computer Science! Both have achieved the prestigious status of Apple Swift Associates, showcasing mastery in coding iOS apps. Their dedication and talent were spotlighted and honored by HH Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan - Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence - at a distinguished ceremony that recently took place in Abu Dhabi. Maryam's outstanding iProtect app has also found its place on the AppStore, a testament to her ingenuity. Congratulations to Maryam and Adam for their inspiring achievements, setting the bar high to Dunecrest's commitment to excellence in technology and innovation!



FARM TO TABLE

During an educational field trip to the Emirates Bio Farm, Grade 1 students from Dunecrest American School embarked on an exciting experience to learn about the path food follows from the farm to the tables. This field trip was more than just a chance to explore – it was an immersive, hands-on learning experience designed to bring the complexities of food production to life for our young learners. From the initial planting of seeds to the rewarding harvest, students witnessed firsthand the journey food undergoes before it reaches our plates. This interactive learning opportunity not only deepened their understanding of food origins but also fostered a profound appreciation for the entire process. By actively participating in such immersive experiences and field trips, learners not only expand their knowledge but also develop a strong sense of connection to the real world.



FAIRGREEN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY

Fairgreen's recent International Day was hailed as one of the most memorable community events to date. Vibrant stands represented over 40 countries, each showcasing shared values of diversity and international mindedness. The event catered to all ages, with a lively Global Cafe featuring morning music performances for our busy parents, engaging scavenger hunts, and educational activities for students. The performances showcased the immense talent within our community, while the food selection took attendees on a journey through various culinary traditions, offering up the flavours of the world in one delightful experience.

FIN'ONMINIAL FASHION

Fairgreen Secondary students secured an exclusive spot in the Monaco finals of Junk Kouture, the world's largest sustainable fashion competition. Though competition was fierce and only a select few teams per country were chosen, our talented students, Inaki, Courtney, and Mal stood out with their exceptional Sustainable Design Project, "Fin'nominal." Redefining fashion through innovation and sustainability, students used recycled materials to craft stunning couture pieces that advocate for social change. The Fin'nominal team chose to spotlight marine conservation, raising awareness about the delicate marine ecosystem and the impacts of shark finning, delivering a powerful message about environmental stewardship. Their remarkable achievement underscores Fairgreen's commitment to nurturing global citizens and empowering youth to drive positive change.



FAIRGREEN CERTIFIED AS A PLATINUM GREEN SCHOOL

Fairgreen International School recently achieved the "Green Schools® Certification – Platinum," underscoring the school's comprehensive and holistic approach to sustainability in six essential categories: Waste, Water, Green Space, Energy, Health & Safety, and Sustainability Education and Innovation. The rigorous certification process involved assessments, guidance, technical audits, reporting, connections with environmental organisations and sustainability solutions providers. The school's values, unwavering student engagement, state-of-the-art facilities, and a focus on student wellbeing have together played a pivotal role in earning this accolade. The Green Schools® Certification is an internationally recognised sustainability programme by e-EcoSolutions, with a central goal of transforming educational institutions into environmentally responsible Green Schools. The programme aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and promotes sustainable practices, ultimately empowering students to become responsible stewards of our planet.



AMERICAN SCHOOL HONG KONG (ASHK)

RAISING AWARENESS FOR YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Eight ASHK teachers and their family and friends took part in a 60km walk around Hong Kong Island from January to February. The Weez Walk aims to raise awareness of youth mental health and wellbeing, and support the KELY group. By joining Weez Walk 2024, teachers contributed towards raising awareness, providing resources, and supporting KELY Support Group programmes that offer hope to young people battling mental health issues, taking one step towards combatting alarming statistics, showing compassion and support for those in our community who need it the most.

As part of an extended initiative to raise awareness for youth mental health, the ASHK Elementary Student Council created a "red packet sale", allowing students to buy red packets with chocolate coins to give to their friends for Chinese New Year. They also sold raffle tickets at the Chinese New Year flower market. Altogether, ASHK raised just under 5,000 HKD!

A REMARKABLE COMMUNITY CELEBRATION AT ASHK

Chinese New Year holds great significance to ASHK and our entire community. Chinese language, history, and culture is deeply embedded in our identity at ASHK. In February, ASHK celebrated Chinese New Year with a wide array of traditional activities. The event featured a captivating lion dance, student performances, Chinese art show and a flower market.



Students across all grades worked hard on their art pieces and put tremendous effort into rehearsing for the performances. The Chinese art show showcased incredible artwork, from watercolor paintings to 3D art pieces. The assembly showcased outstanding dancing, Wushu, singing, and drama performances. The games at the flower market created excitement and enjoyment for both parents and students. The dedication and hard work from the entire community coming together to enjoy the festivities was truly heartwarming.

BUILDING LIFE SKILLS

At ASHK, both Elementary and Secondary students experience a "Week Without Walls" during every school year. Stepping out of the traditional classroom setting and immersing themselves in the natural world and the local community provides a great opportunity for students to broaden their world knowledge and discover more about themselves. Most recently, Grade 2 students went to Pak Tam Chung in Sai Kung, our Grade 3 went to Bride's Pool in Tai Mei Tuk and our Grade 4 and 5 went to Hoi Ha in Sai Kung. Students participated in hiking and outdoor activities, and explored old village houses, developing a deeper understanding of the environment and Hong Kong's history. These experiences equip students with essential life skills and empower them to be responsible global citizens. They learn to navigate unfamiliar environments, work collaboratively with their peers, and develop resilience and adaptability in facing challenges.

AMERICAN SCHOOL IN EGYPT-MAIN (AISE-M)

DESIGN YOUR OWN ANIMAL?

It's indeed possible, as Grade 4 at AIS Egypt demonstrated during a recent learning celebration that promoted their trans-discplinary unit. Students were tasked with designing their own animal by combining two existing species! This unique lesson included the subjects of English, Science, and Social Studies, allowing students to learn about multiple disciplines at the same time. They explained the adaptations that their hybrid species would have, such as its optimum living conditions and survival methods. To expand their comprehension, students were required to create a 3D model of their animal, accompanied by an essay.

MUN: LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Over 200 students participated in the 32nd annual AISMUN conference. For three days delegates debated issues ranging from cyber warfare, racial discrimination, women's education rights and nuclear weapons. This year's theme, "Be the Change, Take the Challenge," was the culmination of the hard work put in by the MUN Secretariat team. This team is composed of seniors, many of whom have participated in MUN since they were in Middle School. AISMUN 2024 allowed students to experience how the United Nations operates, as well as providing them a platform to debate global issues. After lively hours of debate and discussion, all the committees ultimately passed resolutions attempting to address some of the global issues discussed.



INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

The Middle School piloted and implemented an innovative cross-curricular program for Grade 6 this academic year. The Hub model was created to support a student's developmental transition from Primary to Middle School with social-emotional and academic learning in mind. All students experience the same rotating schedule that includes three Hubs: Innovation (Science, Green Program, Art), Global (Arabic, English Language Arts, Social Studies), and Synergy (Mathematics, Physical Education, Media & Technology). Each week, students explore different topics during Genius Hour.

During this block of time, students are provided the opportunity to investigate areas of interest, collaborate, research new areas, present ideas with their group members, and share their final projects with an authentic audience. The Hub Teachers co-plan to create lessons with common themes, topics, and skills and decide on quarterly projects that focus on student interest, real-life application, and fun! Students are excited about school, their teachers, their peers, the activities, and the overall AISE community, which is our ultimate goal.



AMERICAN SCHOOL IN EGYPT-WEST (AISE-W)

GREEN POWER

Building on the success of AIS West PTO's "Go Green" campaign launched in 2018, AIS students are now working towards creating the first "teaching greenhouse" on campus. The PTO, under the leadership of Ms Heba Dandan, Grade 3 teacher, collaborated with Urban Greens, an agriculture company in Egypt, and secured a grant from the United States Forest Service (USFS) to establish the greenhouse and transfer knowledge to vocational schools in Egypt. AIS West students will act as peer tutors and transfer their planting program knowledge to vocational school students across the city. AIS West PTO aims to build a network of participating schools and serve as a knowledge hub. They prioritize sustainability by implementing automated watering systems and utilizing campus resources for planting. Eventually, the greenhouse will be relocated to the new campus in 2026 as part of a larger urban farming project. *By: Heba Dandan PTO & Teacher in Grade 3*

CELEBRATING LANGUAGES & CULTURES

With the vision of promoting cultural diversity and language appreciation, our Mother-Tongue Committee was established in 2023 by Dr. Dina Taher, AIS West Middle School Principal, along with a group of passionate teachers and culture-lovers across campus. In addition to celebrating the mother tongue of our various students, the committee aims to foster understanding and respect among students of different nationalities. Through a series of events and celebrations, they



take students on captivating journeys across various cultures. This fosters a sense of pride and belonging and fulfills the mission of raising informed and engaged local, regional and global citizens. Some of the initiatives include an Arabic book club and a Mandarin language club. Events hosted inlcude Sudan National Day, Spanish and French celebrations, and a multicultural book fair on the World Arabic day. Upcoming on their agenda is the celebration of Poland National Day in May 2024, promising more enriching experiences for students and parents alike.

STUDENT ART AT THE GRAND EGYPTIAN MUSEUM

Competing against 100 other schools in Egypt, 14 AIS West Art students explored the theme of "Future in the Age of Technology" at a recent art competition. They developed innovative concepts for their artwork under the guidance of their Art Teacher, Ms. Ayah, drawing inspiration from Vincent Van Gogh's words: "Great things are done

by a series of small things brought together." Zein from Grade 6 achieved 2nd place in the collage category, while Layla from Grade 8 secured an impressive 3rd place in drawing and painting. Winning artists were honored with a week-long celebration that included ceremonies, interactions with renowned artists, and a special exhibition at the prestigious Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM). The experience was truly remarkable and inspiring for all involved!

CAIRO ENGLISH SCHOOL (CES)



CES SHINES AT CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL

CES extends heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to all those students who have been recognized by Cambridge International for their exceptional achievements. Their hard work, resilience, and dedication have set them apart, and they serve as an inspiration to their peers and the entire school community. These remarkable achievements are a testament to the high-quality education provided by the school and the commitment of both students and teachers.

Eyad Kamel, Jude Sadek, and Karim Eid achieved the "Best Across Eight" award. Jude secured the first place in both Egypt and Cairo, while Eyad and Karim earned second and third places respectively in both regions. Nour El Shenety has been recognized as the "Top in Egypt" for Design & Technology in addition to securing the "Best Across Seven" award. Sandra Youssef has also received the "Best Across Seven" award and achieved first place in Egypt and Cairo.
The remarkable performance of Sara Fady Nabil has earned her the "Best Across Nine" award, along with the first place in both Egypt and Cairo.

Cambridge AS Level Awards:
Anne El Sheikh, a CES Head student, has showcased her exceptional skills in Economics and has been recognized as the "Top in Egypt" for this subject. Laila Ali has also achieved the "Top in Egypt" award for Mathematics and the "Best Across Three" award, securing second place in both Egypt and Cairo.
Mohamed Abdel Aal and Head Student Shady Awad have both received the "Best Across Four" award. Mohamed achieved third place in both Egypt and Cairo, while Shady secured first place in both regions. Additionally, Shady also received the "High Achievement" award in History and was recognized as the "Top in Cairo" for Chemistry.

Cambridge International A Level in Cairo:
Graduate Ali Zeitoun has made us proud by achieving the "Best Across Three" award and securing first place in both Egypt and Cairo.

ARTIST IN THE MAKING

CES student, Latoya Habib from Year 2 made the entire community proud with her winning submission at the Haya 10th Annual Art competition in Cairo! This young talented artist entered the competition with a street view of old Cairo, a prodigious artwork, highly commended by judges. Latoya's artwork was then made into a small carpet by Oriental Weavers, which showed students the different styles of presentations that artwork can take. Studies have shown that art making decreases stress levels and lowers anxiety, helping with a child's overall mental health. Developing creativity — whether your little artist is doodling, sculpting with clay, or making noodle art — also activates the reward centers in the brain. For young people, this means that arts and crafts activities make them feel good and help them naturally relax. They walk away with a sense of accomplishment and the motivation to get creative again.

100 DAYS OF SCHOOL

Every year, CES' Early Years department celebrates 100 Days of School! Prizes are given out for best costume, with winners carefully judged, and selected by members of the CES Primary Student Council. The first 100 days in school for the Foundation Stage students is a time to reflect on all the learning that has taken place so far as they commence their educational careers. Students at CES dressed as their 100-year-old selves and we were amazed by their creativity. Activities were planned throughout the day for all students, and it was certainly a day to remember! For many of CES' students, the school journey commences here in Foundation Stage and ends an incredible 2,520 days later when they graduate in Year 12!

AMERICAN SCHOOL BAHRAIN (ASB)

FIRST OASIS SPORTS CONFERENCE AT ASB

American School of Bahrain (ASB), has recently become a proud member of the esteemed OASIS Activities Conference (OAC), hosting football and volleyball tournaments early this year. The tournaments welcomed teams from different countries, including Kuwait, Egypt, KSA, and Jordan, who competed fiercely on the field. The event proved to be a resounding success, drawing a large number of parents and students from various schools who enjoyed a thrilling day of sports and forged new friendships. The tournaments showcased an incredible sense of sportsmanship and camaraderie. The competitions concluded with a ceremony, where multiple winning teams were honored across various categories. These games showcased a captivating display of talent, determination, and sportsmanship reflecting the OASIS spirit of collaboration and leadership among member schools and student participants.

A MUSICAL WINTER

ASB students recently set the stage ablaze during the school's annual winter concerts, showcasing their incredible musical talents. The concert series included the Elementary school winter concert, ASB Singers, and ASB band, and attracted an enthusiastic crowd of proud parents and staff. The concerts were a testament to the dedication and hard work of the students, who demonstrated their remarkable ability to learn musical instruments with astonishing speed. From the youngest performers in Elementary School to the vibrant sounds of the ASB band, the stage came alive with their impressive talents. ASB places a great importance on music as an integral part of its curriculum. These winter concerts not only showcased the students' musical abilities but also highlighted the school's commitment to nurturing artistic expression and fostering a love for music among its students.



WORLD SCHOLARS CUP HELD AT ASB

ASB recently hosted the prestigious World Scholars Cup (WSC), bringing together over 800 students from diverse countries and schools. The event showcased collaborative writing, captivating debates and scholarly challenges, fostering new friendships and promoting cultural understanding among the next generation of global leaders. The WSC format encompasses team debates, collaborative writing, the Scholar's Challenge, and the Scholar's Bowl. These events test various skills, encouraging participants to develop persuasive arguments, work cohesively in teams, and demonstrate their knowledge in a fast-paced environment. This year marked ASB's third round at WSC, with the first seeing students advance to the Tournament of Champions at Yale University, scoring 21 silver and 9 gold medals! This year's round saw 27 ASB students compete, yielding remarkable results, including five trophies, 79 gold medals, and 61 silver medals. Among our junior participants, ASB achieved the impressive feat of securing the top team position in the Scholars Challenge, showcasing their exceptional knowledge and critical thinking skills. Looking ahead, all ASB participants have qualified for the global round in Baku, Azerbaijan.

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN CYPRUS (AISC)

IMPACT FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The long-standing partnership of the American International School of Cyprus (AISC) with "Hope For Children" (HfC) continues to grow in its community impact through the activities of our student Children's Rights Ambassadors. Ambassadors complete training in human rights through an afterschool club. Then they work to turn their training into action. In November, AISC ambassadors marked UN World Children's Day by visiting pre-schools to inform young children about their rights. In December, they organized a sale of tote bags featuring artwork from the 2023 Children's Rights Art Campaign to support HfC educational programs in rural schols.Over the holiday season, the Ambassadors, together with the music program, raised funds through bake sales and concerts to purchase slippers for boys under the care of HfC. As a result of these actvities our students were received a special invitation to speak at the organization's end-of-year press conference, proudly representing the AISC community.



GLOBAL CITIZENS IN ACTION

This year, two different overseas experiences enabled high school students from the American International School of Cyprus (AISC) to put the school's mission to develop "socially responsible global citizens" into action. One was the Model United Nation (MUN) conference at the New York University campus in Abu Dhabi in October.

In addition to MUN activities such as General Assembly simulations, AISC students and teachers also had the opportunity to meet their counterparts from sister Esol Education school, American International School in Abu Dhabi, which made the trip extra special. In February, another group travelled to The Hague, Netherlands and participated in an international youth workshop entitled "Seeking Justice: From Nuremberg to the Hague." It focused on international justice, including an MUN-style Security Council simulation as well as a visit to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Reflections from students from both trips emphasized how they made their learning come alive and will influence their future studies and careers.

STUDENT ATHLETES MAKE THEIR MARK

Through dedication, perseverance, and hard work, student-athletes from the American International School of Cyprus (AISC) achieved much success this past season.

Varvara Abramkina (G6) ranked among the top 5 in her category at the International Skating Union figure skating competitions in Bulgaria and Slovenia.

At a country-wide swimming competion, our girls' relay team secured the first position in the 4x25 freestyle relay. In individual competition, Arielle Lee (G6) clinched gold in the 25m breaststroke, Korbin Chynoweth (G6) was victorious in the 25m backstroke. Angelica Rando Georgiou (G7) won the 25m freestyle, and Joanita Rando Georgiou (G7) placed first in the 25m butterfly.

Kyriacos Pyrishis (10) and Panagiotis Pyrishis (G11) and secured second place in doubles competion Tournament at the Master's Tennis Academy.

Finally, Maeve Evans (G11), emerged champion of the prestigious Pancyprian 3000m running competition.

These models of our core values inspire the entire AISC community to strive for excellence.

UNIVERSAL COLLEGE - ALEY (UCA)

FUTURE INNOVATORS

At UCA, students from Elementary to High School embark on an immersive journey in coding and robotics, cultivating problem-solving skills and computational thinking. Hands-on experiences allow young learners to engage in programming and robot design. Our Secondary courses, an engaging combination of interactive lessons and practical projects, help senior students gain a foundation in coding languages, and learn to apply these skills to controlling robots. Karim Fayad, an eleventh grade student, credits the class for notable improvements in critical thinking and navigation skills. Similarly, Nour Salman, a seventh grader, highlights enhanced problem-solving abilities and newfound confidence in tackling challenges independently. Massa Kadamani, a sixth grader, emphasizes that the precision required in programming lead to heightened attention to detail— a significant personal achievement. These testimonials collectively underscore the benefits of the curriculum, making it a valuable educational endeavor.

VOICES OF EXCELLENCE

UCA Voice is a student-run magazine that shines a spotlight on the school community. Engaging event coverage captures the essence of the school and showcases exceptional student writing across various subjects. The publication's storytelling approach stands out, delving into events from the perspective of those directly involved. Whether it's a thrilling sports match or a thought-provoking performance, readers get to experience the excitement and emotions firsthand. By prioritizing authenticity and excellence, UCA Voice empowers students to share their voices and experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and appreciation for our school's diverse talents and perspectives.

INDIAN AMBASSADOR VISITS UCA

UCA had the pleasure of receiving the distinguished Indian Ambassador to Lebanon, Sir Md. Noor Rahman Sheikh, along with an esteemed delegation from the embassy. This significant visit was seamlessly integrated into the Social Studies curriculum for students in the seventh and eighth grades, fostering an enriching educational experience. His Excellency spoke to our students about India's profound historical and cultural legacy, and they took the opportunity to pose thought-provoking questions. In a generous display of friendship and support, the ambassador bestowed a collection of books to UCA's library, which will undoubtedly be valued assets for students and faculty alike, enhancing the school's academic resources and broadening the community's understanding of India's rich heritage.



A GROWING FAMILY

The past eight years have seen Esol Education embark on an exciting journey of growth, establishing four new international schools and making strategic investments in higher education. Here we explore each unique institution and the array of programs it offers.

Eight years ago, Esol Education opened American School Hong Kong, its first school in the East Asia region. This was followed by the establishment of Dunecrest American School and Fairgreen International School in Dubai in 2018. American School Bahrain in Riffaa in the Kingdom of Bahrain was next inaugurated in 2020, and Esol Education was soon invited to become a strategic partner in American University of Bahrain, which had opened its doors a year earlier in 2019.

"These five new institutions in the Esol Education portfolio have collectively experienced an average annual enrollment growth of 74% since their respective launches," remarked Tammam Abushakra, Advisor to Chairman, "This is a testament to our vision of serving our school communities with high-quality educational offerings, tailored to the needs and cultures of our host cities," he added.

American School Hong Kong (ASHK) was Esol Education's first foray outside of the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East region, with schools already operational in Egypt, UAE, Cyprus and Lebanon since 1976. Esol was selected by the Education Bureau through a competitive bidding process for the opportunity to establish a new American school on an existing site. ASHK opened in 2016 following the HKD 140 million renovation that transformed the campus into a modern facility with spacious classrooms, sciences labs, specialist rooms for music, art, and drama, a gymnasium, outdoor sports facilities and a library learning centre. The school has, today, grown into a tight-knit learning community, offering a superlative holistic American educational program with the IB Diploma Programme® pathway, accredited by the Western Association of Colleges and Schools (WASC). With a focus on



technology, ASHK offers a robust STEAM and robotics program, athletics and arts program and a wide range of extra-curricular offerings including Model United Nations and leadership opportunities such as Week Without Walls. ASHK's emphasis on Chinese language and culture has been lauded by parents looking to preserve their children's cultural identity in an increasingly globalized world. The school has also created a unique and distinct English Language offering that includes a "Foundational English Program" for beginners, and a "Mainstream English as an Additional Language (EAL) Program," supporting those students who are primarily Chinese language speakers integrate quickly into the mainstream classroom. Seasonal celebrations such as Christmas and Chinese New Year see the entire school coming together as a family, and the annual Terry Fox Run offers an opportunity for students to fundraise and make a difference.

Fairgreen International School, Dubai's first sustainability-focused school, opened in 2018, located in the unique eco-conscious community of The Sustainable City in Dubai. The school's learning facilities extend to the city's bio-domes, animal sanctuaries and the SEE Institute Hub of Sustainable Education and Research, a centre of sustainability research, technological advances and innovations. Fairgreen's school culture is rooted in the fundamental concepts of urban, economic and environmental sustainability, and a community understanding of sustainable living, aligning seamlessly with the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate® (IB).

Esol's only IB Continuum School, Fairgreen offers all four of IB's Primary Years (PYP), Middle Years (MYP), Diploma (DP) and Careers Programmes (CP). Fairgreen's IBCP is developed and implemented in partnership with the Sustainability Management School (SUMAS) of Switzerland, including online coursework, advisory meetings, field experiences and mentorship. Like its sister schools, Fairgreen fosters real-world learning with a variety of distinctive programs such as Jane Goodall's Roots and Shoots™, urban farming via rooftop gardens and vertical, aeroponic farms, while extra-curriculars like Eco-Council, Week Without Walls and Diplomathlon enhance the learning experience. With a diverse, eco-minded community, Fairgreen features an action-packed calendar, and families fondly look forward to the school's musical productions, UAE National Day and International Day celebrations, as well as the unique "Hallow-green" events, where the community is challenged to wear sustainable costumes made out of recycled materials.

Dunecrest American School, Esol Education's flagship American international school in Dubai, was also inaugurated in 2018. The school occupies an 8-acre modern, state-of-the-art campus, with outstanding facilities including connected classrooms, labs, performance spaces and libraries, with atheltics facilities comprising an indoor gymnasium and weight room, swimming pool, tennis court, regulation-sized soccer field and running track. With an experienced founding leadership



team, Dunecrest achieved International Baccalaureate® Diploma Programme (IBDP) authorization within the first year of operation, followed by the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges (MSA) accreditation in the subsequent academic year. With a focus on inquiry-based learning and academic excellence, Dunecrest offers an American curriculum based on AERO/Common Core standards, with an IB Diploma pathway in Grades 11 and 12. Centered around its CREST values of Creativity, Respect, Excellence, Service and Teamwork, Dunecrest distinguishes itself as a welcoming, community school, with a rich array of student experiences both academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular. With an emphasis on well-rounded, holistic learning, students are actively encouraged to participate in sports leagues, school productions and wellbeing programs. Leadership development and real-world learning are encouraged through participation in intitatives such as National Honor Society (NHS), Week without Walls, Model United Nations (MUN), TEDx Youth, World Scholars Cup and Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots™. Known for its tight-knit community, Dunecrest enjoys a busy community event calendar with the seasonal Halloween, Thanksgiving and Winter celebrations in addition to UAE National Day, Ramadan Community Potluck and the much awaited International Day.

American School of Bahrain (ASB) opened its doors in September 2020 on a 17-acre best-in-class campus, designed insightfully with advanced features, easily offering families the best school facilities on the island.

Using space to its advantage, the campus includes generously-sized classrooms, learning pods, labs, libraries and breakout rooms. Its athletic complex comprises an indoor gymnasium, two swimming pools, tennis and basketball courts and a regulation sized soccer field surrounded by a running track. With an emphasis on happiness and wellbeing as a core path to student achievement, ASB follows the American curriculum based on AERO/Common Core standards, and also offers the IB® Diploma Programme for students in Grades 11 and 12. The school received its IBDP authorization in 2022, and a double American accreditation from WASC and MSA accreditation followed in 2023. Alongside academics, ASB students enjoy enriching experiences with co-curricular and extra-curricular activities including Fine and Performing arts, Experience Week, participation in local and regional sports leagues, World Scholars Cup and more. With an active parent association, the school eargerly awaits community events such as the annual Halloween "Trunk or Treat," International Day, Bahraini National Day and the traditional Bahraini Ramadan Ghabga and Girgaoun celebrations.

In 2021, Esol Education acquired a strategic stake in the American University of Bahrain (AUBH). As part of the AUBH Board of Directors, the Esol Education team supports the University's growth and development in various ways.

AUBH's innovative, high-tech, 75,000 square meter campus is located in Riffa, Bahrain. Along with AUBH's D-Lab, Media Lab, and new Integrated Collaborative Engineering (ICE) Lab, the campus includes



"...a testament to [Esol's] vision of serving our school communities with high-quality educational offerings, tailored to the needs and cultures of our host cities.



a well-resourced library, Sports Center with indoor and outdoor courts and fields, vast Student Commons, and an Auditorium for special events. AUBH is licensed by the Higher Education Council of the Ministry of Education in Bahrain, and is a CIQG Member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) in the United States. AUBH has also received U.S. accreditation through the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). AUBH is also recognized by Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Jordan. AUBH offers a range of degree programs across its College of Business and Management, College of Media and Design and College of Engineering and Computing. A wide range of events and initiatives offers students a deep dive into a range of disciplines, such as Generative AI Hackathon, Building Wearable Technology Workshop in collaboration with MIT, internships at CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) in Switzerland, Entrepreneurship Week, while annual events such as the Career Fair, Youth Day, Sports Day, International Fair and Ramadan initiatives offer community and workforce engagement opportunities for students.

"2024 will send off Dunecrest's fourth graduating cohort, while Fairgreen, ASHK and AUBH each graduate their second cohorts, and ASB hosted its inaugural graduation this year," shared Mr. Abushakra. "We are so proud of how these new learning communities have enriched the Esol Education family, with stellar leaders, committed and caring teachers and graduates heading to outstanding universities and careers," he added. "The coming years will see American International School in Egypt relocate its two campuses to new, purpose-built premises constructed in partnership with Emaar Misr, the region's leading real estate developer, offering our families in Cairo first-class educational facilities for their children, in line with our organization's continuous development plans."



AUBH GRANTED ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP AT CERN

In a series of firsts and with a milestone achievement, the American University of Bahrain (AUBH) has been approved as an associate member of the Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS) scientific collaboration at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, marking a significant milestone in the university's commitment to advancing scientific research and collaboration on an international scale. This is considered the start of an agreement that will span at least a decade.

Under this comprehensive partnership, students and faculty at AUBH will gain global advanced insights into the world of science and technology. The partnership also encompasses further collaborations such as the involvement of faculty and students in research, physics-related and joint collaborative projects, internship opportunities, participation in publications, and a series of events in celebration of CERN's 70th anniversary.

CERN is renowned for its groundbreaking scientific discoveries and cutting-edge advancements in particle physics, including the discovery of the Higgs Boson, the invention of the World Wide Web and more. The American University of Bahrain's partnership with CERN/CMS through internships provides aspiring AUBH scientists and engineers with a once-in-a-lifetime chance to work alongside world-class researchers, gaining invaluable hands-on experience in the field. Through this experience, students obtain a unique blend of theoretical knowledge and practical application, nurturing their talent and fostering their passion for exploration.

Dr. Bradley J. Cook expressed enthusiasm about this significant achievement, stating "Becoming an associate member at CMS is a testament to our university's commitment to pushing the boundaries of scientific discovery and an indication of our quality of education. This collaboration will not only benefit the university but will also contribute to Bahrain's position as a hub for innovation and scientific excellence in the region."

The CERN Advisor for the MENA region (Martin Gastal) also welcomed the affiliation of AUBH to the CMS collaboration. "AUBH has now joined a network of 247 scientific institutions from 57 countries, bounded together through a passion for science and academic excellence. We are proud to be welcoming them into our team. A significant illustration of the implementation of this partnership will materialize with the imminent arrival of two AUBH interns at CERN who will be stationed with us for 12 months. Through this first exchange of personnel, we are very much looking forward to further developing the relationship between CERN and Bahrain."

This partnership will also position AUBH as a key player in the international scientific landscape and highlights Bahrain's dedication to fostering cutting-edge research and innovation. AUBH's inclusion as an associate member of CMS reflects the university's dedication to providing its students and faculty with unparalleled opportunities for research and professional development. The affiliation with CMS further solidifies Bahrain's position on the global stage as a nation actively engaged in cutting-edge scientific exploration.

International partnerships align with AUBH's objectives of providing transformative hands-on experiences, fostering student passion for exploration, and inspiring young minds to move beyond the boundaries of knowledge.



"The partnership with CERN/CMS through internships provides aspiring AUBH scientists and engineers with a once-in-a-lifetime chance to work alongside world-class researchers, gaining invaluable hands-on experience in the field."

THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE ACTION: A JOURNEY OF EMPOWERMENT WITH GIRLUP

Sophie Darwish, a 2024 Senior at American International School in Egypt, and the President of the UN-supported GirlUp initiative started her journey as a change-maker early in Middle School. As a young student embarking on a change mission, she initially questioned her ability to make an impact. "At first, like many young individuals, it was easy to struggle with the thought of 'what difference can I alone make?' However, GirlUp taught me the power of collective action, as well as what changes I could make if I truly pushed towards my goals," she said. "Since joining GirlUp, my commitment and love for the club –and the difference it makes– has only grown stronger with each passing year."



Witnessing firsthand the difference that GirlUp made in her community, made Sophie realize the significance of the club's mission. Girl Up is a girl-centered leadership development initiative, focusing on equity for girls and women in spaces where they are unheard or underrepresented. The organization operates a global network of regional affiliates impacting 270,000 girls and youth leaders in 155 countries and all 50 U.S. states, developing transformative leaders who advance gender justice worldwide. It motived her to lead and expand the club's efforts, empower more voices, and affect even greater change.

Over the years, the AIS GirlUp Club has fostered a close partnership with the Baheya Foundation, a non-profit charity and breast cancer hospital in Egypt renowned for offering free treatment to women battling breast cancer. As President this year, Sophie aimed for GirlUp to actively contribute to the foundation's mission, beyond just fundraising.

"A visit to the Baheya Hospital for a volunteer day provided us with a closeup look at the comprehensive services and care provided to patients," shared Sophie. "Among these, the Baheya Boutique particularly captured our attention. This unique concept allows every patient the opportunity to select six pieces of clothing, four times a year, at no cost, from a selection of new or gently-used donated clothes," she added. The boutique has partnerships with clothing brands for additional donations and has even received contributions from famous actors, including dresses that patients can borrow for special events.

Motivated by the desire to support this incredible service and mobilize the entire AIS community, Sophie organized a school-wide clothing drive, similar to the school's annual food drive. This initiative would not only inform everyone about the boutique's amazing work but also provide a meaningful way for the school community to come together to make a positive difference.

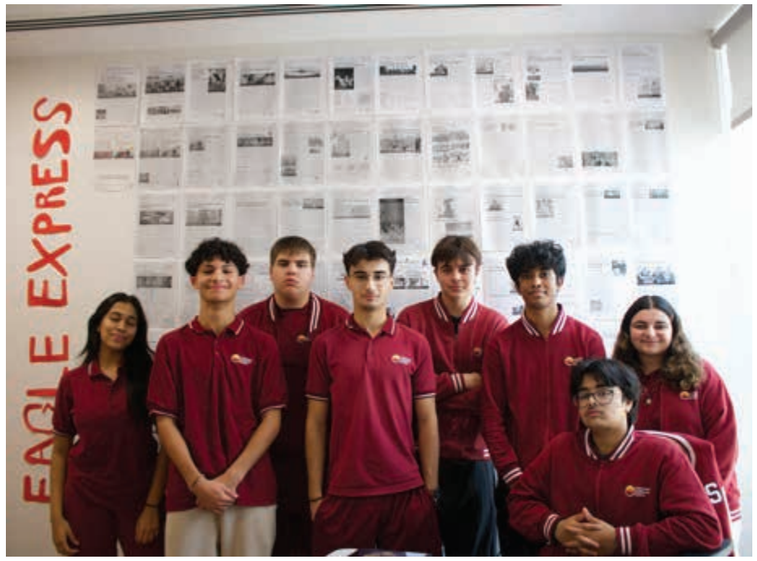
Sophie's goal for the AIS GirlUp Club is to create a tangible impact both within the local community as well as by inspiring individual club members by their collective actions. By engaging in volunteering, fundraising, and establishing meaningful partnerships, the club strives to contribute significantly to improving the lives of girls and women. "Our initiatives aim not only to raise awareness about issues affecting women globally but also to provide direct support and resources that can make a real difference. I want every member to know that in some way, something they did within the club has had a positive impact on a women in our community," said Sophie.

Ms. Neveen Salem, IB CAS Coordinator and Head of the Social Studies Department at AIS Egypt, and advisor to the Girl Up chapter at the school, believes that Sophie success comes from her integrity and dedication, her unwavering reliability and ethical conduct. "Sophie exemplifies a remarkable blend of attributes. Her charisma, evident in her interactions, undoubtedly enhances her interpersonal appeal. Her penchant for humor adds a distinctive charm to her character, fostering an environment of positivity and camaraderie," she explained further.

Going forward, through more intiatives like the Baheya Boutique campaign, Sophie hopes to empower girls and women and create a more equitable and supportive environment for them to thrive. This mission guides every activity and event organized by the AIS Girl Up Club, to leave a lasting and positive mark on the world.

"GirlUp taught me the power of collective action, as well as what changes I could make if I truly pushed towards my goals."

CAMPUS CHRONICLES: UNVEILING THE EAGLE EXPRESS TEAM



Step into the vibrant world of student journalism at Dunecrest American School as we embark on an exclusive interview featuring the dedicated Grade 10 student editors, Eyas Malaysheh and Jad Abu Ghaida. From the exhilarating brainstorming sessions where ideas take flight to the meticulous late-night edits, they extend a warm invitation for you to join them on their remarkable journey. Get ready to peel back the layers, uncover their unwavering passion, navigate the thrilling challenges, and bask in the glory of their triumphs as they navigate the intricate landscape of running a student newspaper. Learn more about the inspiring role a school's community can play in empowering students to achieve their goals.

What inspired you to launch a newspaper for students?

Jad: We wanted to create a student-led newspaper to highlight what happens inside the school and also to shine light on some of the amazing initiatives from our students and staff.

What challenges did you face?

Eyas: Well, there are definitely many challenges when creating a newspaper. From getting people to submit the articles on time to finding the format and design that would work best. However as a team we found ourselves overcoming these challenges which has been our most important learning.

What were your goals whilst creating the Eagle Express?

Eyas: One of the main goals was to reach students all over the campus from Elementary all the way to Senior school. I feel this publication helps to unite us and bring us all together as one.

Jad: The second goal was also to make it easily accessible and go digital. We achieved this by creating our own website, and also have the Eagle Express on the school's official website.

How did the Dunecrest community support your initiative?

Jad: We received a lot of support from the Dunecrest community. As an example, after we we published our first issue, we received a whole bunch of congratulatory emails from parents, staff and students who told us how much they liked the issue and told us to keep going! That's how the school came together as one and inspired us to continue our efforts.

What's been your learning objective?

Eyas: Our learning objective was to set ourselves a challenge. We came together as a team to create something the school has never seen before!

According to its founders, the Eagle Express is more than just a school newspaper; it's a testament to the power of unity through words. The publication's mission is to serve as a bridge between students, faculty, and the community, fostering a deeper understanding of our shared experiences and diverse perspectives. Eagle Express strives to inform, entertain, and inspire while upholding the highest standards of journalistic integrity.

Every student has a unique story to tell and a distinctive perspective to offer, and the paper's dedicated team of student journalists, photographers, designers, and editors work collaboratively to bring these stories to life. Through rigorous reporting, thoughtful analysis, and creative storytelling, we aim to cultivate a new generation of media-savvy individuals.

"One of the main goals was to reach students all over the campus from Elementary all the way to Senior school. I feel this publication helps unite us and bring us all together as one."

STANDING UP FOR CLIMATE CHANGE SOLUTIONS

Esol Education students from Fairgreen International School, Dunecrest American School, and two campuses of American International School in Egypt had the opportunity to attend the recent COP28 UN Climate Change conference held in Dubai in November 2023. This edition of COP was the biggest of its kind, hosting 85,000 participants including more than 150 Heads of State and Government, representatives of national delegations, civil society, business, Indigenous Peoples, youth, philanthropy, and international organizations. COP28 concluded the first "global stocktake'" of the world's efforts to collectively limit the global temperature increase to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels by 2100, and to counteract the existing effects of climate change. It was reported that progress across all areas of climate action was too slow – from emissions reductions, strengthening vulnerable communities to climate finance and technology support. Member countries were called upon to speed up their transition to renewable energy and accelerate action 2030.







Students joined COP28 via Esol Education's partnership with a youth program, "#Decarbonize," organized by CGE Education. Esol's Fairgreen International School, with sustainability embedded in its curriculum was designated as the lead school for this year's conference, on the heels of Esol's AIS Egypt being designated as the lead school for COP27 held in Sharm El Shaikh in 2022. #Decarbonize is the world's largest, multilingual school-based program on climate education, advocacy, art, and action. Esol students joined their peers from around the world for an action packed itinerary at the COP28 conference venue that included mock COP conferences, debates and presentations, school visits, panel discussions, inspirational talks by industry leaders, a science fair and cultural visits. Students showcased projects they had worked on in their classes, sharing some solutions they brainstormed to some of the biggest challenges the world is facing.

"It's made so happy to see so many people come together, not just to talk about issues but to actually do something about them," reflected Serena Elsokari, Grade 10 student at Fairgreen. "This is my second COP conference," shared Jody Abdelmonen, Grade 8 student at AIS Egypt. "The speeches at Extreme Hangout Zone were inspiring and I am so impressed with all the innovation, technology and ideas being generated," she added. AIS Egypt students' initiatives to combat climate change at COP 28 caught the attention of

"Esol students joined their peers from around the world for an action packed itinerary at the COP28 conference venue that included mock COP conferences, debates and presentations, school visits, panel discussions, inspirational talks by industry leaders, a science fair and cultural visits."

H.E. Rania Almashaat, Minister of International Cooperation, who then invited them, upon their return, to attend the 23rd Annual Report launch on "Platforms for Policy and Practice" - a true testament to their impactful work.

Esol Education schools focus on a inquiry-led, project-based teaching approach, where students are encouraged to apply global and local contexts to their learning, generating relevant, actionable ideas and strategies. "Events like these get students to focus on real-world problems, think about solutions and how to implement them," said Mr. Daniel Cruz, Social Studies Curriculum Leader from Dunecrest who accompanied his class to the event. "This is how they will be able to be change-makers in the world tomorrow."

MISSION RESPONSIBLE

Dr. Joseph Nettikaden, Chief Information Officer at Esol Education, discusses how education leaders can respond to the explosive growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms by taking timely decisions, and offering steady leadership to harness the power of AI for good. Responsible and ethical use of AI is of paramount concern, and we can shape the future by creating measured guidelines for our institutions, students, teachers and families.

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

Much has been written and discussed about the rapid advancement and adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and the risks it poses to the future of education, and indeed the future of human capital. After the rapid user growth of OpenAI's ChatGPT, the company told Bloomberg recently that it has seen a surge in the adoption of its enterprise version, with teams in over 80% of Fortune 500 companies implementing the tool.

A 2023 report by global management consultancy, McKinsey & Co., estimated that current generative AI and other technologies could automate up to 70 percent of employees' time, while adding $2.6 trillion to $4.4 trillion of value annually across the 63 use cases analyzed (to compare, the UK's GDP in 2021 was $3.1 trillion.) Sal Khan, founder of Khan Academy, one of the world's largest educational technology platforms, believes that AI is about to transform education as never before.

With the launch of Khanmigo, an AI powered learning platform, Khan foretells a future where every teacher has an AI teaching assistant, and every student can benefit from an AI-powered personal tutor.

Are we heading towards a cold, disconnected future with robots roaming classrooms? Hardly likely. Human interaction has always been and always will be at the heart of the learning journey. Research has shown that teachers impact student achievement more than any other factor, including facilities and services.

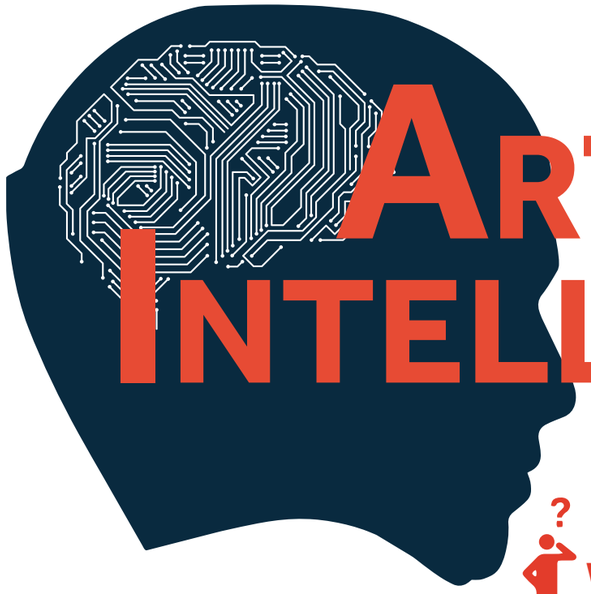
A Cambridge study suggest a positive correlation between prioritizing students' social and emotional wellbeing and significant long-term economic gains. These noncognitive skills can only be learned from a kind and caring teacher providing a safe space for children to grow and learn.

AI can, however, provide advanced learning tools to enable efficient learning – students no longer need to memorize vast tranches of knowledge in order to parse and critically examine a topic; to foster quicker, independent research and inquiry without fear of bias or judgement; and to improve quality of assessment by automating data analysis and reporting for teachers and leaders. Multi-level instruction with self-paced learning is another exciting scenario, where the teacher plays a guiding role, but students take charge of their own learning.

Whether you believe AI is here to better the future or ruin it forever, we are already using it in classrooms, and it is certainly here to stay. And despite the excited chatter and doomsaying surrounding it, AI is still in its infancy, but we are at the brink of what promises to be a sea of exciting, transformational breakthroughs. Here, then, lies the opportunity for leaders. Rather than fearing the future, we get to pave the way for responsible and ethical use, crafting policies and safe usage guidelines that help harness the power of AI and optimize its remarkable benefits. As education leaders, it becomes incumbent upon us to carefully examine the impact AI has at an organizational level and school level, as well as on individual constituents be it teachers, students or parents.

Let's ask ourselves how we can ensure equitable access, protect user privacy, and monitor and measure impact.

> *Let's examine how we can build a school culture that promotes ethical and fair use, training and community engagement, promoting positive discussions around embracing AI tools.*



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

WHAT DO STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS THINK OF AI IN EDUCATION?

PRIVACY & SECURITY

62%

[1] of students are concerned about the security and privacy of their data.

GUIDELINES FOR AI USE

72%

[2] of students say that guidance on how to responsibly use Generative AI for schoolwork and within school rules would be helpful.

INCLUDE AI IN CURRICULUM

88%

[3] of educators feel students should be taught how AI works in primary or secondary school.

NEED CLEAR POLICIES

79%

[4] of educators say that their district does not have clear policies on AI in education.

AI LITERACY A CRUCIAL FUTURE SKILL

60%

[5] of educators agree that AI literacy will be a crucial skill for jobs in the future.

BENEFITS OF AI

67%

[6] of parents believe that the potential benefits of AI to K-12 education either outweigh or are equal to the potential drawbacks.

FEEL SCHOOLS PREPPING FOR AI-FUTURE

53%

[7] of parents feel that their schools are preparing students to succeed in an AI future.

HOW WILL AI IMPACT THE ECONOMY AND WORKFORCE?

JOBS ENHANCED OR REPLACED BY AI

40%

[8] of global jobs will be complemented or replaced by AI.

JOBS IMPACTED BY AI

60%

[9] of jobs in advance economies may be impacted by AI

CHANGE IN JOB REQUIREMENTS

65%

[10] of the skills required to succeed in jobs are expected to change by 2030.

1- CDT, September 2023, 2- CDT, September 2023, 3 - EdWeek, December 2023, 4 - EdWeek, December 2023, 5 - Capgemini, May 2023, 6 - National Parents Union, October 2023, 7 - National Parents Union, October 2023, 8- IMF, January 2024, 9- IMF, January 2024, 10 - LinkedIn, November 2023

Let's examine how we can build a school culture that promotes ethical and fair use, training and community engagement, promoting positive discussions around embracing AI tools.

Let's assess and select platforms that offer high-quality and reliability of knowledge that is within our students' contextual framework, and that are transparent about their sources, free of bias and culturally inclusive. Let's build a data-focused approach in our schools, and train our teachers to use AI tools to elevate their teaching craft. With a robust attention to data integrity, building a data-centric platform can help them alleviate rote tasks by automating assessment reports, aggregating student achievement data, identifying learning gaps and differentiate instruction.

Let's teach our students about responsible use of AI, critically examine its output, how to use it effectively as a tool that not only promotes learning but also helps them express themselves creatively, while protecting their privacy and others' intellectual property. Generative AI models that are trained on reliable sources can evolve into interactive libraries. Students can be taught how to use these to fact-check, gather information, generate ideas, brainstorm concepts and take a deep dive into topics of exploration and different perspectives, while ensuring that their work synthesizes and analyzes the ideas versus replicating them. Students can use AI tools to revise and improve their work by analyzing for clarity, grammar and writing style, while maintaining their integrity and originality.

Powerful data analysis tools can support with visualization of complex datasets, and students can be taught how to use these alongside the principles of data analysis and interpretation.

Let us also examine how we are developing AI literacy and preparing our students for careers in an AI driven world. AI is already impacting career preparation and opening up new avenues for graduates. Generative AI Engineering, Large Language Model (LLM) Integration, Virtual Operations, Quantum Security, Prompt Engineering are emerging fields, all of which require balancing digital skills with business operations and human skills.

The opportunities are indeed endless, and for education leaders, the time to act is now, by fostering AI literacy among all stakeholders, building an engaged and informed learning community and developing staff capacity, with a lazer sharp focus on critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. In other words, business as usual.



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.

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

An accomplished education leader for 30 years, Dr. Bradley J. Cook, President of American University of Bahrain, shares his valuable insights on the future of education with *STRIDES*, reflecting on his personal experiences and the inspirational lessons he learned.



Dr. Bradley J. Cook has spearheaded the American University of Bahrain (AUBH) as President since the summer of 2022. Dr. Cook joined AUBH from Snow College, Utah in the United States, where he served as President since 2019, leading the university through record growth. Dr. Cook has also previously served as Provost at Southern Utah University (SUU), President of Abu Dhabi Women's College and worked at the American University in Cairo (AUC). Additionally, he served as a Commissioner for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Having spent his formative years in the Middle East, Dr. Cook holds the region close to his heart, earning a Doctorate of Philosophy in Middle East Studies from the University of Oxford, as well as Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Stanford University.

Dr. Cook, what drove your interest in pursuing Middle East studies and your continued commitment to developing education in this region?

I grew up in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a kid. My parents were educators and moved their young family from the high deserts of Utah to Dhahran in the 1970's. This period of life was very defining as it led to me getting three academic degrees focused on the Middle East, and a career that allowed me work in Egypt, Kuwait, UAE and now Bahrain. As a result of those formative four-years in KSA, I have been fortunate enough to live, teach, and publish on this remarkable part of the world. I've come to see the Middle East as a second home, and I

> *We know that teaching and learning are not the same thing, so we need to adapt our teaching roles from a 'sage on the stage' model to a more of 'guide on the side'.*

have a deep commitment to contributing to the economic and leadership development here. My wife, Jen and I, absolutely love living in Bahrain.

In your opinion, what is the most urgent mission for higher education today?

In my opinion the most important mission of universities and colleges is preparing students for the rapid changes in the job market and advancements in technology. Universities need to adapt to the needs of a 21st century learner and workforce by emphasizing critical thinking, adaptability, creativity, and digital literacy. Universities need to also do a better job at connecting to industry and offering relevant internships and integrating career readiness programs in the curriculum. Experiential and inter-disciplinary education is much more impactful on learning than the lecture, a siloed approach that has characterized universities for centuries. Lectures might be an efficient way of teaching, but they are a very ineffective way of learning. As we know, teaching and learning are not the same thing, so we need to adapt our teaching roles from a "sage on the stage" model to a more of "guide on the side."

What do you believe are the transformative drivers for education for the coming years?

I think there are at least seven primary drivers for education right now.

1. Technology Integration: As educators, we are in an exciting, but scary, moment when it relates to technology advancements. I believe universities will increasingly leverage technology to enhance learning experiences. Technologies like virtual and augmented reality, gamification of learning, and artificial intelligence have the potential to revolutionize learning and can be a very good thing for students.
2. Personalized Learning: Every student learns differently and has different needs. Students will have more personalized learning pathways tailored to their interests, strengths, and goals. Adaptive learning technologies will track progress and provide individualized support to enhance student success. Intelligent tutoring through technologies like generative AI have the potential of providing a much more personalized education.
3. Competency-Based Education (CBE): I believe there will be much more emphasis on competency-based education in the future, rather than student success measured in contact-time and standardized exams. Competency-based education can be more effective and economical than traditional classroom instruction. Students may be able to finish a course more quickly because they can work at their own pace, cutting down on the time needed to teach the course. Further, because CBE emphasizes competency mastery, students can avoid wasting time and money on material they already know. Competency-based learning prepares students for the future. In today's evolving job market, employers are seeking workers with specific skills and competencies, rather than just a degree.
4. Interdisciplinary Programs: Future universities may offer more interdisciplinary programs that combine diverse fields of study to address complex real-world problems. Collaboration across disciplines will be emphasized to foster creativity and innovation.
5. Modularization of education: As educators we need to provide opportunities for a broad range of learners. Universities will need to offer more flexible programs, micro-credentials, and upskilling opportunities for both traditional students and working professionals. Earning a four-year degree along with internationally recognised professional certificates is a powerful combination that gives employers better insight into the actual skills of graduates.
6. Experiential Learning: Hands-on, experiential learning opportunities such as internships, research projects, and community engagement will be integral to the future curriculum of universities. Universities will need to have much more focus on developing practical skills and fostering real-world experiences.
7. Industry Partnerships: Universities will need to forge stronger partnerships with industry to bridge the gap between academia and the workforce. Industry-sponsored projects, mentorship programs, and work-integrated learning opportunities will prepare students for successful careers.

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

AUBH has a beautiful and unique campus. Having opened in 2019, we are a new university, with just under 1,000 students now. I'm looking forward to seeing the student-body grow to our full capacity of 3,500, and experience the vibrance and energy that comes with that number of students.

We also have a goal of becoming the most international university in Bahrain. We now have students from over 30 countries but aspire to having many more nationalities join us. Along with a more diverse student-body, we want to build on existing international partnerships with universities and centres from around the globe.

Our goals are nothing less than becoming a premier international university, differentiated by our American-model of education, emphasizing career-facing majors and integrating life-long skills sets such as critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and resilience.

> *"The best outcomes for me [from my career in college football] were life-long lessons on teamwork, discipline, time-management, resilience, and dealing with both victory and defeat."*



You played corner back in college football at Stanford University, where our sources tell us you had three interceptions in a single game and once intercepted Troy Aikman. What were the most memorable moments of your football career?

Ah, yes. I loved being a student athlete. I feel so fortunate to have been able to compete at the highest levels of intercollegiate athletics. There are so many memorable moments, including the one you mention with UCLA during the Troy Aikman era. But to tell you the truth, the best outcomes for me were life-long lessons on teamwork, discipline, time-management, resilience, and dealing with both victory and defeat; all very powerful and transformative skills that have helped me in every job I have ever had, long after hanging up the cleats.

What has been your most unforgettable experience as an educator?

¡Given the wide range of powerful experiences we get as educators, the very best memories relate to student success, watching young people self-actualize and become successful professionals and global citizens. A recent milestone that was quite moving was seeing the first cohort of graduates from AUBH last year. Our faculty and staff put so much sacrifice and work into preparing our students, and to see these students complete their degrees and move on to great careers is extremely gratifying. This first commencement was made even more special in that it is the ultimate proof of concept for the university's vision and mission.

RAPID FIRE

1. 3 books you would recommend for seniors?

- Mindset, by Carol Dweck
- Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, by Stephen Covey
- The Four Agreements, by Don Miguel Ruiz

All three of these books were transformational for me and I think are "must-reads" for all young people.

2. Top tip for parents sending kids off to university?

I would say encourage your kids to be independent. This is a time of life when they have to learn to navigate life on their own. Encourage your kids to take responsibility and be accountable for their decisions, whether that be managing their own schedules, budgeting their finances, and making decisions about their academic and social life.

3. The best advice you've ever received?

Learn to love uncertainty, and don't be afraid to fail.

4. Tech you would like to master?

I need to be better at Excel! There is always more to learn there. I also love playing with presentation software. I would love to be better at packages such as Apple Keynote, Prezi and Canva. But who's got that kind of time?

5. Your favorite movie of all time?

The 1994 movie, The Shawshank Redemption. Classic.

6. Most inspirational travel destination?

Another tough question given the vast number of places that have inspired me. If I had to select just one, I might say Nepal. The beauty and majesty of the Himalaya Mountain ranges are both awe-inspiring and humbling. Its hard not to be moved by these mountains that are surreal in their beauty and grandeur.

FORTIFIED FRONTIERS

This issue *Strides* visits the forts of Bahrain, unexplored historical landmarks that stand witness to centuries of history, as the island played a significant role as a maritime trading hub between the West, Arabia, the Indian sub-continent, and beyond.

A mighty little island in the Arabian Sea, Bahrain has served as a bridge between cultures and civilizations for thousands of years. From the Dilmuns, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians of antiquity, to the Portuguese, British, and present-day ruling dynasty, this desert island presides over a rich history, shaped by its strategic location in the Arabian Gulf, its importance as a trading hub, and the influence of various regional and global powers. Situated at the heart of ancient and modern trade routes, including the Dilmun trade routes between Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) and the civilizations of the Indus Valley in the Indian Subcontinent and beyond; Arabian Peninsula Trade Route, the maritime Silk Road, Spice Route and Pearl Trading Route, Bahrain's busy ports have overseen the exchange of goods such as precious metals, gemstones, ivory, copper, pearls, spices, textiles, and ceramics. These trade routes further helped shape Bahrain's history, economy, and cultural heritage.

Photo credit: Ms. Bianca Briers, Grade 5 Teacher at American School of Bahrain

The island's success and natural geographical advantage also left it vulnerable to invasion, and rulers had to fortify the coasts not only to protect their sovereignty and safeguard their citizens but also to defend against piracy, territorial conflicts, and other threats, offering commercial traders safe passage for onward journeys. One of the most fascinating aspects of Bahrain's history, therefore is its collection of forts, which have stood as symbols of defense and power throughout the centuries. These forts not only served as military structures but also played significant roles in shaping the country's heritage. These were built by the many ruling dynasties and civilizations that have inhabited the region over the centuries. Many of these forts were constructed or expanded during the 16th century by the Portuguese, who occupied Bahrain for a period of time. Subsequently, the forts were further developed and maintained by the Al Khalifa dynasty, which has ruled Bahrain since the 18th century. Today, the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities has contributed to the preservation and restoration of several forts in the country, which offer insights into Bahrain's rich history and cultural heritage, showcasing the region's maritime past. Each fort has its own unique architectural style and historical significance, reflecting the diverse influences that have shaped Bahrain's cultural heritage over the millennia.

Ms. Bianca Briers, a Grade 5 Homeroom Teacher at Esol Education's American School of Bahrain believes they are the best experiences on the island. "In 2017 I decided to have a change in scenery, I exchanged Cape Town, South Africa for Bahrain, an island country in the Arabian Gulf. Arriving in Bahrain, I was introduced to the Bahrain Fort during our first week of orientation and it will always be a fond memory of living here!" she shared. "When you visit a fort you stand in awe realizing that they built it many years ago without the technology we have today and you start to wonder about the experience of having lived there. All of a sudden you feel more proud of Bahrain and its rich history and cultural heritage. Whenever relatives or friends visit me in Bahrain I always have the forts on top of my exploring list. They are always a highlight and teach them so much about this unexplored island in the Arabian Gulf." Ms. Briers shares a round-up of the forts of Bahrain: Bahrain Fort, Arad Fort, Riffa Fort, and Bu Maher Fort.



"When you visit a fort you stand in awe realizing that they built it many years ago without the technology we have today and you start to wonder about the experience of having lived there. All of a sudden you feel more proud of Bahrain and its rich history and cultural heritage."


RIFFA FORT


ARAD FORT


BAHRAIN FORT

Bahrain Fort

The Bahrain Fort, also known as Qal'at al-Bahrain is one of the famous forts in Bahrain. The ancient site of Qal'at al-Bahrain in the northwestern part of the island is considered the main harbor and the capital of Dilmun. This UNESCO World Heritage Site dates back to the Dilmun civilization, which thrived in Bahrain over 4,000 years ago. The fort's strategic location near the water made it a vital trading hub in ancient times. Today, visitors can explore the impressive archaeological site, walk through the ancient ruins, and learn about the history and culture of the region.

Arad Fort

Another noteworthy fort is Arad Fort, located in Muharraq. This fort, believed to have been built in the 15th century, was a defensive structure to protect against potential invasions. Its unique architecture and strategic position overlooking the sea make it an iconic landmark in Bahrain. The fort has been beautifully restored and is open to the public, offering visitors a glimpse into Bahrain's past.

Riffa Fort

Sheikh Salman bin Ahmed Al-Fateh Fort, commonly known as Riffa Fort due to its location in Riffa, is a historic landmark and stands witness to one of the most important point in time in Bahrain's history. The fort is situated on a cliff overlooked the desert valley between East Riffa and West Riffa. Within its beautiful architecture lives the memory of the ruling family of Bahrain, the Al Khalifas. Originally constructed in the 19th century, this fort served as a residence for the ruling Al Khalifa family. It offers a fascinating insight into the royal history of Bahrain and showcases traditional Bahraini architecture.

Bu Maher Fort

Bu Maher Fort is located at the entrance to Muharraq Island in Bahrain. The fort is strategically positioned near the coast, guarding the entrance to Muharraq Island, and overlooking the Arabian Gulf. Its location makes it easily accessible for visitors who wish to explore this historical landmark. The old Muharraq settlement was Bahrain's capital from 1810 to 1923, the peak years of the pearling economy, and is today the predominant city of Bahrain's second-largest island. The Pearling Path also includes visiting the Bu Maher Fort, which guards the entrance to Muharraq Island, and the Portuguese Fort in Bahrain's capital city, Manama. The location of Bu Maher Fort has made it an important defensive structure throughout the centuries. It was built to protect the entrance to Muharraq Island and served as a gateway to the island's bustling and vibrant city. The fort's construction dates back to a time when Bahrain faced potential invasions and needed a defensive wall to safeguard its shores.

Each of the forts tells a unique story and contributes to Bahrain's cultural heritage. Exploring these forts allows visitors to immerse themselves in Bahrain's history and better understand the country's past. The forts stand as reminders of Bahrain's resilience and serve as important cultural landmarks that continue to captivate locals and tourists alike.

Whether you are interested in history, or architecture, or simply want to experience the charm of these ancient structures, the forts of Bahrain offer a captivating journey through time and a glimpse into the country's vibrant past.

A GREATER WHOLE

As the international education sector grows towards a network model, standardization, while bringing efficiencies and quality improvements, risks limiting the autonomy and subsequently, diluting the spirit of individual member schools. A balance, however, can be found, shares Dr. Ahmed Mitwalli, Chief Strategy Officer at Esol Education, and the sum can indeed be greater than its parts. Here, he explores a model where school leaders can activate network benefits for their schools while maintaining their community's autonomy and independence, thus keeping the essence of a school community intact.

By: Dr. Ahmed Mitwalli, Chief Strategy Officer, Esol Education

From the writings of the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle and the concepts of Gestalt psychology to the work of theoretical physicist and Nobel Laureate, Murray Gell-Mann, the world of science, mathematics, philosophy and art have long sought to explain and quantify how complex systems evolve, or "emerge," from the interactions of seemingly discrete parts, creating a greater whole.

A school perfectly exemplifies this long-standing theory of emergence, where the efforts of individual teachers, leaders, students and their families manifest as a greater community that returns immense, immeasurable, intangible value to its constituents, over and above exam results and university entries.

Over the last 20 years, the international school landscape has experienced a shift from individual, independent, non-profit schools serving expat families, to a large and rapidly growing industry, increasingly dominated by small to large networks of schools. In the face of this change, how can forward-thinking leaders benefit from a closely connected group dynamic, to provide significantly more value to their respective schools, and emerge as a stronger, more cohesive community?

When companies attempt to standardize and optimize their operations in search of synergies and efficiencies, they sometimes lead to a loss of autonomy and community that educators, staff, and families value in their school environment. Yet there are ways to counterbalance the independence



of member schools with targeted initiatives and methodologies that can leverage the scale and scope of the group. This strategy can bring value to each individual community and help the group evolve as a stronger, greater whole. With a common goal of progressing together, silo mentalities can be transformed into learning mindsets, where new initiatives can be collaboratively piloted and refined, not just internally but across member schools, together mining shared resources, organizational memory and experience, without compromising the unique character and identity of each school.

It starts with an operating model that uses comprehensive governance and support to achieve the highest quality. Organizations must strive to empower highly qualified leadership teams in their core academic areas, while supporting them with more harmonized processes and centralized resources in business and operations. At Esol Education, for example, we provide quality assurance and best practice sharing in academics, strategic direction and management in core business operations such as Finance, IT, HR, and partner/regulator management, and centralized or outsourced operations in services that

With a common goal of progressing together, silo mentalities can be transformed into learning mindsets....mining shared resources, organizational memory and experience, without compromising the unique character and identity of each school.

benefit the most from scale or are better provided by third parties, like benefits, procurement, and transportation.

At first, exploring synergies outside a school's core educational offering may offer the most frictionless entry point for school leaders. It is easier to leverage network benefits in areas such as business, operations and administration. These are less sensitive, and small changes can quickly bring forth the value of the network, forming the "easiest" set of benefits to secure, though not necessarily where the most value might be. Economies of scale in purchasing goods and services across schools offer greater purchasing power, leading to better value for everyone. Sharing best practices for different functional areas such as human resources, staff/teacher onboarding as well as standard operating procedures, including related documentation such as policies and handbooks, offer a greater operational efficiency. Strong network relationships with regulators, accreditors, universities, and accreditation bodies can facilitate school improvement. A consistent and global approach to school governance, performance management, succession planning, and transition management enables a steady helm during times of leadership change, ensuring institutional knowledge is carried over and a school community is fully supported throughout the handover period and beyond.

Academic harmonization, while challenging to achieve, is an area that would most benefit from a collaborative network approach, with higher quality benefits and access to opportunities for schools than they would be able to attain as stand-alone entities. Professional development, stands out as an exemplar, where a group of schools would benefit from bringing together educators and staff from across schools. With over 1000 educators in the Esol network, the potential for sharing knowledge and generating excitement among like-minded colleagues is powerful. Our initiatives in PD have been a great source of enthusiasm for our staff, offering learning opportunities and building stronger relationships between schools. Working together on aligning academic standards is another area where schools and educators can form working groups to tailor pedagogies and resources within the high-level framework of American curriculum standards. This ensures world-class academic standards and enables efficiency and effectiveness through recommended, not dictated, resources, tools and pedagogies. A recent project on aligning Computer Science teaching and learning at Esol Education was a great step forward, with teachers from four schools working together to develop a superb curriculum model. Sharing approaches to distance learning also proved very helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Enrichment programs are another area where a network connection can provide a much-needed boost. While it may be difficult for an individual school to partner with a university or external institution to provide college-level programs for gifted students or source world-class future-focused resources and toolsets, a bigger group will have the reputation and relationships to implement a plethora of enrichment programs. At Esol Education, examples have included an AI training program in partnership with a top US university, a pre-collegiate prep summer session for our Sophomores and Juniors, and a Common Core aligned sustainability training with a prominent US-based institution.

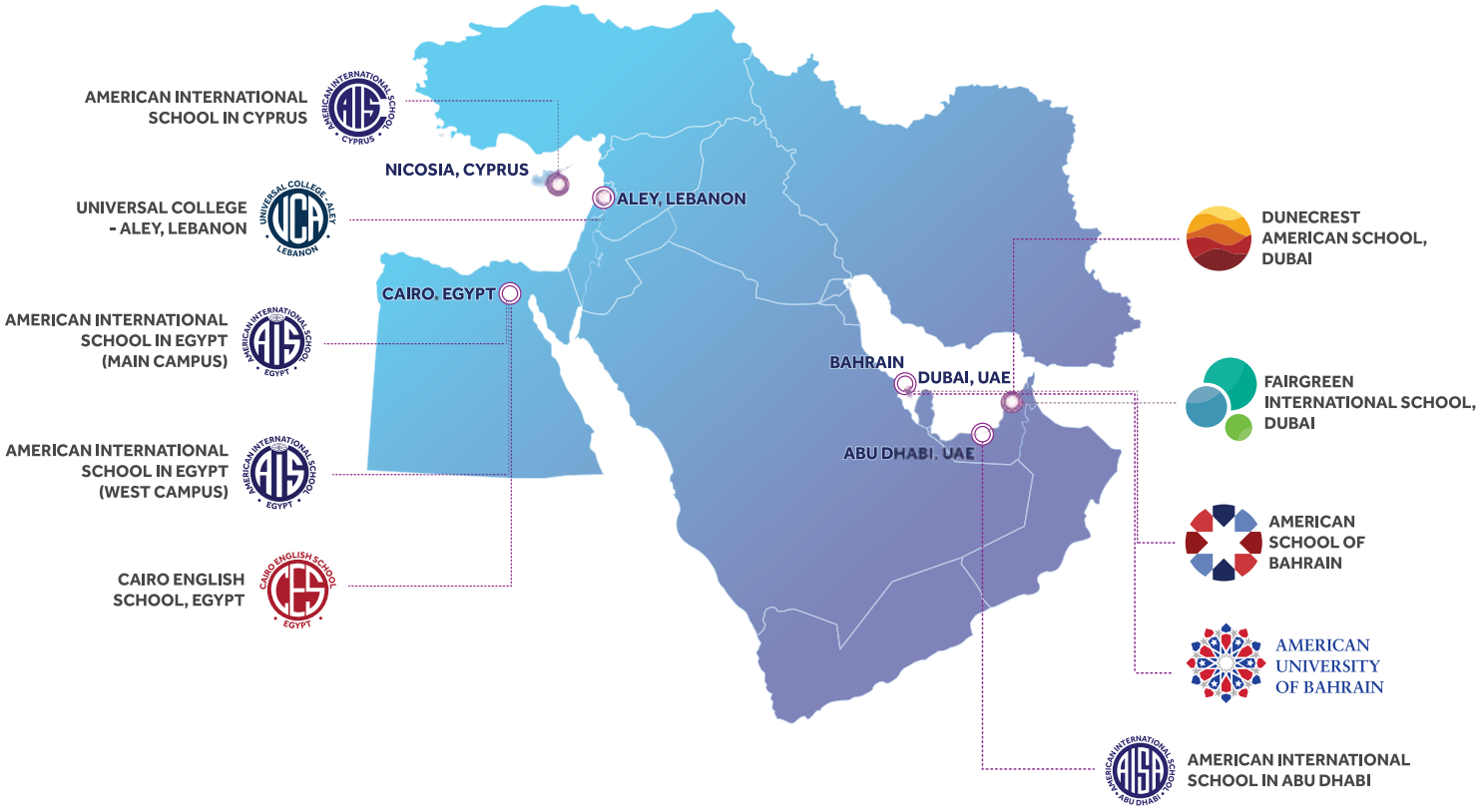
In this age of AI and data, the value of the network and its wealth of data and resources will only become more important. How well a group and its member schools extract value from a plethora of resources will depend on its ability to maintain this balance of leveraging scale and scope with prescriptive solutions so as not to dilute the community experience offered by individual entities but add value to their shared experience.



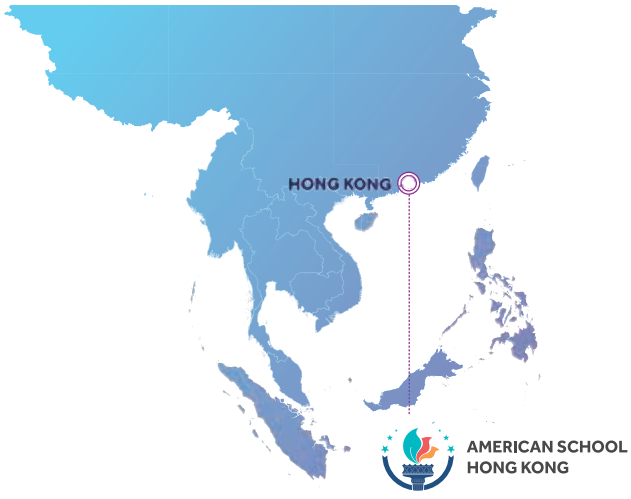
Dr. Ahmed Mitwalli has served as the Chief Strategy Officer for Esol Education since 2014. Serving on the organization's Board of Directors, he is responsible for new opportunities and development as well as cross-network collaboration. He also oversees the American School Hong Kong, the first Esol school in East Asia. Prior to joining Esol Education, Dr. Mitwalli was a Partner with McKinsey & Company, where he worked for 12 years with clients in healthcare and education on technology, organization and strategy. Dr. Mitwalli holds a Bachelors, Masters, and Doctor of Science degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is the holder of five patents and member of several honor societies.

The Esol Education schools

MIDDLE EAST & MEDITERRANEAN



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