

DragonNews

🌸 Spring 2025



EXCELLENCE ISSUE

- Staff Profile: Meet the Kushners, p12
- An HIS Love Story: Alumni Reunite, p22
- How MYP Film is More than Movies, p37
- Your New Soundtrack to Life at HIS, p41



Excellence Issue

Table of Contents

4 From the Superintendent

COMMUNITY

6 Community Events
12 Meet Our Staff: Mr and Mrs Kushner
14 Raising Bilingual Kids: Practical Tips Every Parent Should Know
16 Embracing Technology in Education: A New Era of Learning
17 The Benefits of Maintaining a Creative Mindset
18 What's in Your School Bag?

ALUMNI

20 Meet Our Alumni: Prachi Sukhnani, Class of 2018
22 An HIS Love Story: How Two Alumni Reunited Years Later

LOWER SCHOOL

25 The Role of Play In Early Childhood Education
26 Fostering a Love of Reading From Early Childhood
27 Why Sleep is Crucial to Children's Health and Development
28 Art and Understanding at the Grade 4 Exhibition
30 Helping the Planet at the Lower School Science Fair

UPPER SCHOOL

31 The Power of Togetherness We're Building at HIS
32 I Went to Guizhou to Teach, but the Students Taught Me
34 The Importance of Learning to Give Back
35 Building a Caring Community
36 An Exciting Two-Year Journey in DP Biology
37 More Than Movies: How MYP Film Builds Real-World Skills
38 How I Climbed a Mountain and Learned to Never Give Up
40 The Power of Technology for Self-Improvement

41 HIS Spotify Playlist
42 Connect With Us

"Can you spot me?"
Look for **5** hidden dragons





From the Superintendent

Dear HIS Community and Friends,

We are thrilled to celebrate a significant milestone at Hangzhou International School (HIS) – reaching an enrollment of over 1000 students!

Our diverse community includes students from more than 50 nationalities, speaking over 30 languages, all united by a single mission: to provide international learners with opportunities to pursue academic and personal excellence in a caring community.

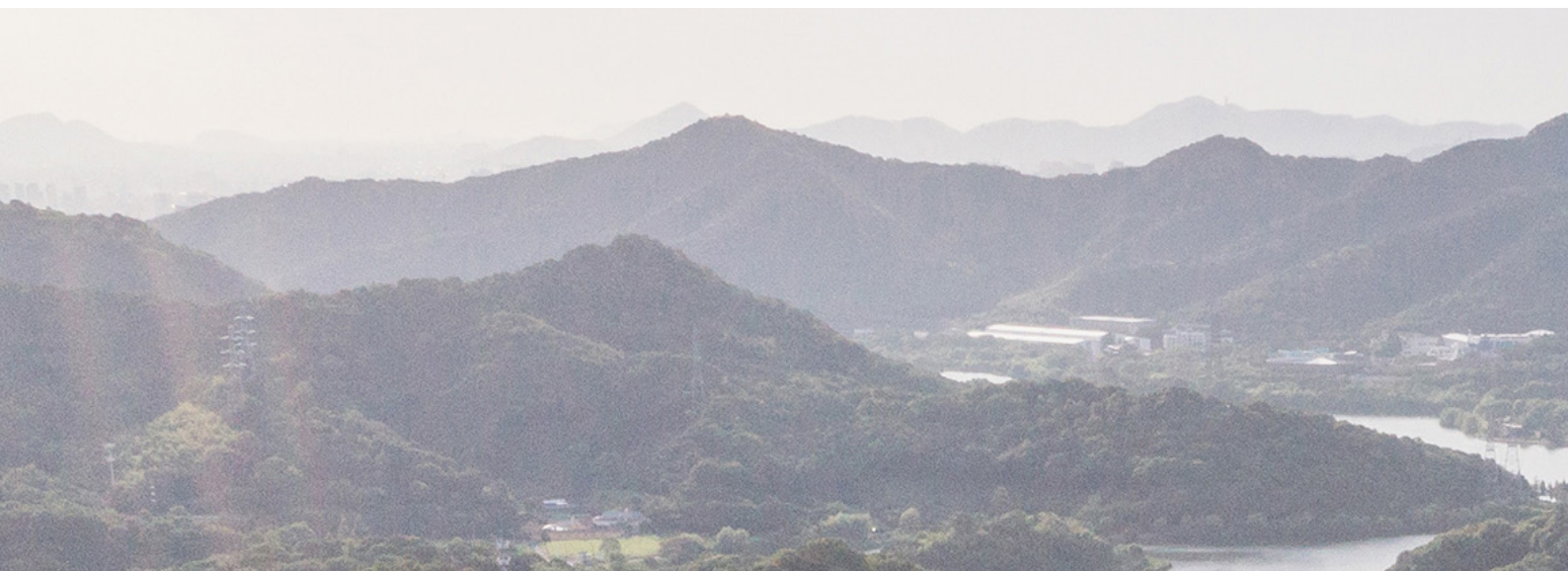
At HIS, we believe in offering meaningful and challenging opportunities that cater to the unique intelligences, learning styles, skills, interests, passions, needs, hopes, and dreams of each of our students. Achieving this requires the unwavering support of families and the dedication of our professional and experienced educators. In this edition of DragonNews, we are excited to share stories of “Excellence” at HIS.

Several years ago, we asked our faculty to describe what learning looks and feels like at HIS. This exercise helped shape our vision for learning, which

sees students who are actively engaged, included, motivated, committed, inspired, excited, challenged, and ultimately, successful. Our rigorous learning program aims to develop students' capacity to understand complex, ambiguous, provocative, and personally or emotionally challenging content.

The success of our program is evident in our outstanding NWEA scores, which consistently exceed international norms, and our legacy of excellence in IB Diploma and SAT results. For the past decade, HIS has proudly maintained 100% participation in the IB Diploma Program, with an average score of 32+ points and over 10% of students achieving 40+ points. For the past three years, HIS high school students have averaged an outstanding score of 1356 on the SAT college entrance examinations.

Excellence is not just a goal at HIS; it is a habit. Aristotle once said, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” At HIS, we believe that all students can achieve excellence



if we work together as a community and provide opportunities tailored to each student's potential.

We celebrate our successes and support our students when they encounter challenges, viewing mistakes as valuable learning experiences. Thomas Edison famously said, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." This mindset is crucial for our students to develop a lifelong positive attitude towards learning and resilience.

Our commitment to excellence extends beyond academics. We encourage innovative thinking, problem-solving, positive approaches to learning and a solutions-oriented mindset. Our students excel in athletics, aquatics, the arts, design and technology, robotics, leadership and model United Nations, showcasing their diverse talents and achievements.

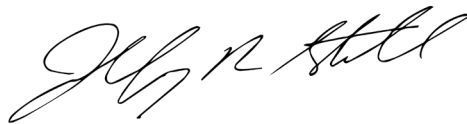
We have excellent performances, productions, exhibitions and community events. And we have an excellent group of people to serve and support our students with the HIS Mission: our excellent staff, faculty, administration and parents. HIS is truly an excellent international school and you have made an excellent choice!

As a true community school, we offer a robust range of opportunities for all students, supported by active parent involvement and external partnerships. We believe that everyone is a lifelong learner, and we strive to provide opportunities that enhance student learning and foster excellence. Our schools support families with information sessions, parenting forums, and strong guidance, while also offering comprehensive professional growth options for our faculty.

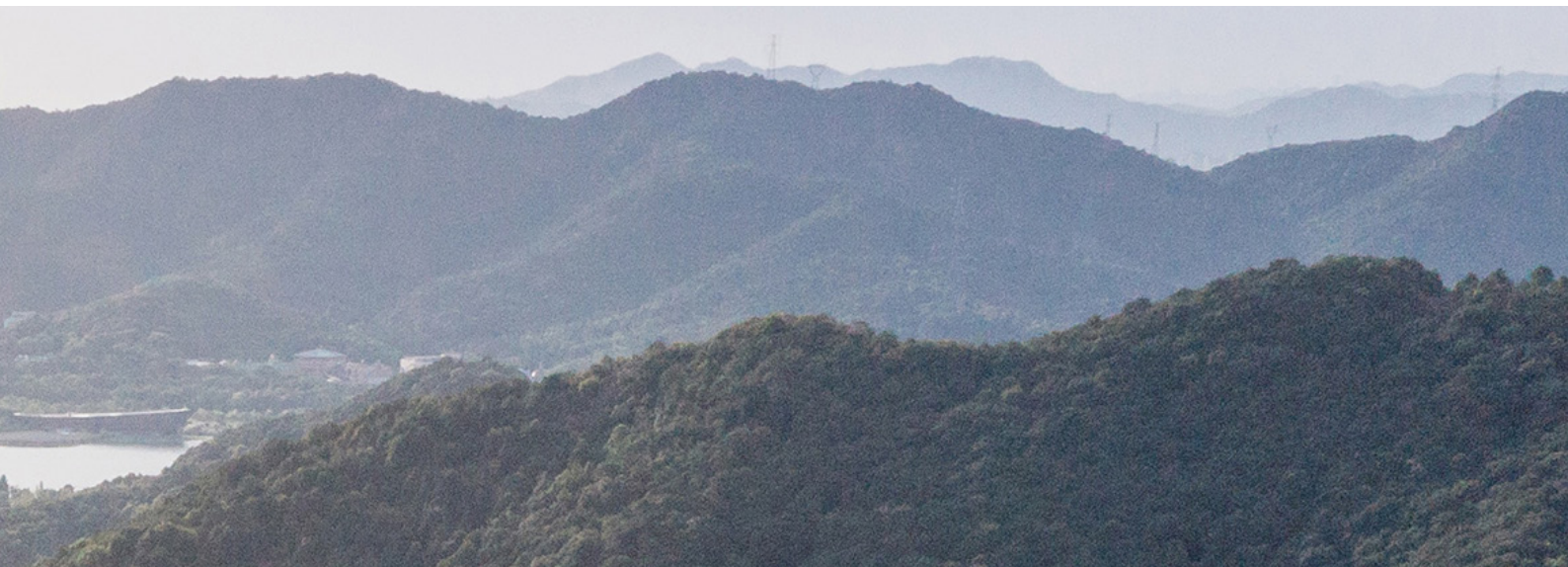
At HIS, we are dedicated to helping our students achieve excellence now and in the future. We are proud of our students' accomplishments and look forward to their continued success as leaders, artists, academics, and athletes. Their future is indeed bright!

Enjoy this edition of DragonNews and thank you for being a part of our HIS community.

Gooooooo Dragons!!!



Jeffrey R. Stubbs
Superintendent, Hangzhou International School





“ART ISN’T JUST ON THE WALLS” DANCE PERFORMANCES

December 17

Stepping into the unknown, our advisory students were plunged into darkness as they were led into our Black Box theater, only to then be surprised by a variety of dance performances from our Grade 8 to 10 dance students. Our Upper School dance students’ end-of-semester showcase, “Art Isn’t Just On The Walls”, was truly a mind-blowing experience.

Inspired by the energies of hip-hop dance battles and non-traditional museum exhibits, the showcase pushed boundaries and traditional performance spaces. Guided by flashlights, our advisory students moved between performances as if witnessing art come to life off museum walls, while the dancers themselves performed under a single spotlight.



FIRST DAY BACK TO SCHOOL

January 13

After a restful break, our students and faculty were back on campus ready for an incredible year ahead and enjoying the sunshine. It was a beautiful sunny day to kick off the semester, and of course, our students were already filled with excitement for the semester.



SSL ROUND 3 SWIM MEET

January 18-19

HIS was proud to host Round Three of the 2024-2025 Shanghai Swim League (SSL). It saw our community rally together to host an amazing event.

Congratulations to our HIS Dragons for their outstanding performances at the swim meet. Competing against 450 swimmers, the entire squad did incredibly well, bringing home a total of 39 medals and achieving 115 personal best times!

This was HIS’s first time hosting a Shanghai Swim League meet, and it truly was a successful weekend. Thank you to everyone who made the weekend one to remember and laid out a warm welcome to all the visiting schools.

VEX ROBOTICS COMPETITION

January 18-19

Congratulations to all our Junior Robotics Teams for their outstanding performance at the VEX Robotics competition held in Shanghai.

Our Grades 4, 5 and 6 students and Robotics coaches have put in tremendous effort throughout the season, and their hard work has truly paid off. Our Junior Robotics teams finished with three VEX IQ AWARDS:

- Third Place: Dragon B team
- Judges Award: Dragon D team
- Excellence Award: Dragon B team



BASKETBALL ACAMIS IN XI'AN

February 13-15

Our Girls and Boys Varsity Basketball teams competed in Basketball Tournaments in Xi'an and Nanjing during February. The Division 1 teams headed to the ACAMIS Tournament in Xi'an and played 3 days of tough basketball against five other schools.

Both teams went into the final day of play seeded third in their respective tournaments and playing in the semi-final round. The girls held a half-time lead and came agonizingly close to a win, losing 28-26 to the eventual tournament champions from Discovery College Hong Kong. The girls bounced back to win the 3rd place playoff.

The boys team also started their semi-final well and got out to an 11-point lead before being pegged back by YCIS Shanghai and falling just short of the Championship match and finishing in 4th place overall. Well done to both teams!



COMMUNITY

PAFA KITCHEN: KOREAN STREET FOOD

February 17

February saw yet another delicious PAFA Kitchen! This time our parents made Korean street food with our amazing parent chefs Kristine and Yunjeong. The class started with a lesson on how to make kkakdugi, a pickled radish kimchi, and gimnap.

It was fun to see everyone's skills as they rolled the gimnap. While the class was mastering this technique, the Korean moms also prepared some delicious hot odeng tang (soup) and tteokbokki (spicy rice cakes) to share.

Finally, it was time for the best dish: dessert! Our PAFA chefs learned how to make hotteok, a Korean pancake filled with sweet and nutty goodness, served with a scoop of ice cream on top. It was the perfect way to end the session.

We have some amazing parent chefs at HIS and we love seeing our parents and friends learn how to make so many delicious dishes with each other!



CURRICULUM NIGHT: DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

February 26

Thank you to all our parents who attended the Design and Technology Curriculum Night and to all our Upper School students for taking their time to demonstrate the role it plays in student learning at HIS.

Parents had the opportunity to explore both our Lower School and Upper School Design and Technology learning spaces, and it was a fantastic opportunity for them to gain insight into how we use Design and Technology to foster creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills in our students.

We were also thrilled to have Mr Em, our Lower School Design and Technology teacher, lead two engaging learning sessions in our Black Box, where he explored how we can develop a growth mindset through Design and Technology.





ACAMIS ROBOTICS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

February 28-March 1

Our robotics teams proudly competed in the ACAMIS VEX Robotics China National Championships in Guangzhou, facing off against nearly 90 teams from international schools across China.

Our junior robotics teams achieved incredible results, securing 9th and 10th place! Beyond the matches, they showcased their expertise in driver skills challenges, alliance formations, engineering notebook submissions, and judge interviews.

Notably, two of our teams won prestigious awards—one receiving the Judges Award and another taking home the Inspire Award. Out of hundreds of teams, our Upper School robotics team also finished 17th in all of China!

A heartfelt thank you goes to our amazing coaches for their immense support throughout the whole robotics season, and our parent cheer squad for bringing the gold dragon spirit all the way to Guangzhou!



US DRAMA "THESE SHINING LIVES"

6-7 March

The audience at HIS Upper School play "These Shining Lives", held in the intimate surroundings of The Box blackbox space, was struck by the powerful performances on display by the student cast.

Based on the harrowing yet inspiring true story of the women who worked at the Radium Dial Company in the 1920s, the play highlights the dangers these women faced while painting watch dials with radium, a substance that was falsely claimed to be harmless. As they fall ill, the play follows their fight for justice against a corporation that values profit over the lives of its employees.

A huge congratulations to our inspiring actors and stage crew who did justice to these women and truly captivated the audience in telling their tragic story. Bravo to the cast, crew, and directors!





FILM WORKSHOP WITH SHANGHAI VANCOUVER FILM SCHOOL

8 March

In partnership with Shanghai Vancouver Film School (SVFS), HIS recently welcomed two visiting film professors—Dean Burns, the Head of Writing for the Film & Television Program at SVFS, and Darren Borrowman, the Head of the Film Production Department at SVFS.

Together, they led an engaging filmmaking workshop for our Upper School students, focusing on three key areas: script writing, directing, and directing acting.

During the workshop, our aspiring student filmmakers learned many filmmaking tips and practical knowledge on how to enhance their scriptwriting skills, master the art of shooting short films, and effectively direct actors.

They are now ready to produce their short films for the upcoming Hangzhou Student Film Festival, scheduled to take place on April 25th at HIS.



Compiled by
NATALIA STUBBS
PR & Communications Specialist



Meet Our Staff

JUSTINE KUSHNER | Upper School Science Teacher
MATT KUSHNER | Upper School Mathematics Teacher

Met Justine and Matt Kushner, a teaching couple at HIS with a son in Lower School. They first worked at SCIS, our sister school in Shanghai, before joining HIS in 2021, and recently received their 'Jade Dragon' award, having worked for both schools for more than 10 years.

HI JUSTINE AND MATT, THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO THIS INTERVIEW! TO BEGIN, CAN I ASK WHERE YOU ARE ORIGINALLY FROM, AND WHERE YOU MET?

You are so welcome! Justine is originally from Johannesburg, aka 'The City of Gold' in South Africa, while Matthew is from Philadelphia in the USA. We met each other in Johannesburg.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST COME TO CHINA, AND WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS?

We arrived in China in 2014, to work at Shanghai Community International School (SCIS).

We were impressed by everything the megacity offered and how easy things were like transport, shopping and the comfort of our housing. The cleanliness, safety and efficient service was immediately noticeable. The hospitality of our host school was appreciated.

WHEN DID YOU START WORKING AT HIS, AND WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR FIRST DAY?

In July 2021 we decided to move from SCIS to HIS. It was a steamy day at the old Binjiang campus, surrounded by trees, birds and views of the Qiantang River. The staff were very welcoming and the students energetic.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE STUDENTS AT HIS?

We both find the students at HIS to be empathic, supportive, inclusive, kind and to have positive attitudes. They're motivated to do well, friendly, and appreciative of teachers.



WE'VE NOW BEEN IN OUR NEW CAMPUS FOR A FEW YEARS, BUT WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER MOST ABOUT THE OLD CAMPUS? ANY STANDOUT MEMORIES OR OCCASIONS?

Memories that spring to mind include the yellow-beige-faced brick front; its convenient proximity to buses, shops and restaurants; and the cold/hot outside walk to the cafeteria.

In colder months Justine recalls being cold in the hallway as she stood by the photocopy machine waiting for her copies to finish. She always made sure to wear her winter jacket!

WHAT WERE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE NEW CAMPUS? DID YOU COME FOR A TOUR BEFORE IT OPENED?

We did not see the campus before it opened due to Covid restrictions, but we did have great videos and photos to get us excited. When we finally arrived, we were impressed by the massive futuristic architecture; the surrounding Xianghu scenic areas, with nature everywhere; and the space! The campus felt more like a university than a school.

HOW HAS CHINA CHANGED SINCE YOU FIRST ARRIVED A DECADE AGO?

With the addition of Alipay, WeChat and Didi, being an expat in China is much easier than it was in 2014. The access to a wide variety of foods and goods (such as Epermarket, JD and Taobao), as well as easy transportation and services, mean life has just been getting better and better.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE THINGS TO DO IN HANGZHOU AS A FAMILY?

We really enjoy walking and biking around the lakes and exploring new temples, cultural areas and local eateries. Also discovering new malls and bus routes!

WHERE HAVE BEEN YOUR MOST MEMORABLE TRIPS IN CHINA?

There's so many to count, including Beijing, Xi'an, the Inner Mongolian desert and grasslands, Sanya, Harbin, Xiamen, Wuxi, Yangshuo, Nanjing, and Jiangxi province.

IN 3 WORDS, SUM UP WHAT HIS MEANS TO YOU.

Community, opportunity, action.





Raising Bilingual Kids: Practical Tips Every Parent Should Know

NATY BOHORQUEZ | HIS Parent

My name is Natalia, though I go by Ms. Naty as it's easier for children to pronounce. Originally from Colombia, I was raised in the United States and have been living in China since 2012.

My passion for teaching English as a Second Language emerged after traveling through Europe, Australia, and Spain. It was during this time that I became fascinated by how English serves as a universal bridge, connecting people from different backgrounds. Being fluent in both Spanish and English, I often found myself bridging the gap by translating for others.

Though it was never part of my original plan to become a member of an international family or community, life led me to meet my husband, 李宝良, whom I married in 2014 – we then had a child in 2015. Together, we opened an English language training school where I

specialized in language development for young learners.

Understanding the importance of raising a bilingual child, we were confident in our decision to raise our son Sebastian with both English and Mandarin from the start. Initially, we were uncertain about introducing a third language, Spanish, due to the limited exposure to it in China. However, we ultimately decided to incorporate it into his daily life.

By the time Sebastian started speaking (at around 15 months), he was already using a mix of English, Mandarin, and Spanish. He would often say things like, "Wo yao drink agua." In fact, his first word was "cato," (cat) a blend of English and Spanish. We didn't worry about this language mixing, because we knew he would sort out the sounds on his own as he matured.

Nine years later, Sebastian is fully fluent in both English and Mandarin, which are his native languages. Spanish, on the other hand, is his weaker language—not because it was too difficult for him to learn, but rather because I did not prioritize it consistently. Still, Sebastian has a strong foundation in Spanish because he was exposed to it from an early age. He can read and comprehend basic everyday conversations.

Looking back, I recognize that I dropped the ball with Spanish, which resulted in it becoming his passive language. However, at the age of 6, I made a conscious decision to reintroduce Spanish, and I've had great success in maintaining regular exposure to it ever since and Sebastian is consistently improving.

If you want to raise bilingual or multilingual children, here are some of my



top recommendations. My insights are drawn from both personal experience and professional expertise. Raising bilingual children requires consistency, patience, and intentional strategies.

1. DECIDE IF IT'S A GOOD FIT FOR YOUR FAMILY:

Deciding to become a bilingual or multilingual family is a commitment that requires careful consideration and ongoing effort from the parents. It's a decision best made early, as the earlier children are exposed to multiple languages, the more natural the learning process becomes.

There are many benefits bilingual or multilingual children often enjoy like improved problem-solving skills, greater flexibility in thinking, and enhanced cultural awareness. Additionally, they are better equipped for future global opportunities. However, the journey isn't without challenges. We have encountered difficulties like balancing language exposure at home and favoring one language over others.

To overcome those moments, it was crucial for us to stay patient with him, model positive language practices, and remind ourselves of the long-term rewards of raising a multilingual child. We knew it was well worth the effort.

2. START AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE:

I often joke that I'd love to begin working with my students even before they're born—and I'm not entirely kidding!

Language is essentially a collection of sounds unique to each culture, so the earlier your baby is exposed to those sounds, the sooner the learning process begins. Personally, I started singing songs in both Spanish and English to Sebastian when I was about 7 months pregnant, while his dad would sing and speak to him in Mandarin.

I believe this early exposure is one of the reasons why Sebastian has such excellent

pronunciation in all three languages and why he finds it easier to pick up additional languages. He even enjoys mimicking songs in Japanese and French. However, it's important to note that it is never too late to start.

3. NEVER WORRY THAT THE KIDS WILL GET CONFUSED:

I've heard some parents say, "I'll let my child learn Mandarin first, and once they're proficient, I'll teach them English." However, children are far more capable than we realize. When my son was just 4 years old, he could have a conversation with my husband in Mandarin, then immediately switch to talking to me in English—without skipping a beat. Occasionally, he would mix in a word or two of Spanish.

Children's brains are naturally wired to distinguish between languages. Research shows that babies can identify different languages from a very young age. By about 6 months old, they can recognize which language is being spoken based on distinct phonetic cues (the sounds and rhythms of the language). As they continue to hear and interact with each language, their brains create separate mental representations for each one.

4. BE INTENTIONAL:

Be intentional about providing lots of exposure to each language in engaging and meaningful ways—Seek out opportunities for your child to interact with native speakers, and incorporate language-rich activities such as reading, playing, or even traveling, which can reinforce language learning while making it enjoyable.

For example, when Sebastian was 6 years old, I decided to take a more deliberate approach with Spanish. I created "Spanish class" as a special and fun time, turning it into an enjoyable bonding experience rather than a formal lesson. Twice a week, we'd visit a bakery after school where

Sebastian could choose two items of his choice. We'd then sit together, and I'd have a book, coloring activity, or toys for role play ready.

Another example: when Sebastian was 4-5 years old, we loved playing "I Spy." However, I only played it using Spanish for colors. If he grew tired, we switched to English, and that was perfectly fine. I always made sure the activity remained a game, not a lesson. Additionally, I incorporate Spanish into our daily routine by giving simple commands, such as "brush your teeth," "come eat," "time to sleep," or "put on your shoes," all in Spanish. We also have specific days when we watch Spanish only cartoons.

5. BE PREPARED FOR CHALLENGES:

Raising a bilingual child comes with its challenges, but it's important for parents to remain patient and keep in mind the long-term benefits. If your bilingual child starts speaking later than their peers, don't be concerned—they'll get there.

Bilingual children often take a little longer to start speaking, but when they do, you'll enjoy the reward of two languages for the price of one! While my son didn't experience speech delays, I've worked with students who took longer to begin speaking. Yet, when they finally do speak, it's truly a beautiful moment to witness.

In 2022, I had the privilege of working in the Early Years department at HIS for two years, which gave me an incredible opportunity to explore early childhood development in greater depth. In 2024, I completed my master's degree in international education and bilingualism.

My focus now is on sharing insights and offering guidance to parents interested in IB education and raising bilingual or multilingual children, like my own experiences. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions—I'm always happy to help.



Embracing Technology in Education: A New Era of Learning

DANIE DE BEER | Director of Technology

At Hangzhou International School (HIS), we recognize that technology is not just a tool but a vital component of our students' educational journeys. As we navigate this era of rapid digital advancement, we are committed to integrating these technologies to make learning more engaging, interactive, and effective for our diverse student body.

TRANSFORMING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The classrooms at HIS are evolving to meet the needs of 21st-century learners. With the introduction of white boards, HD Projectors, tablets, and laptops, our students enjoy personalized learning

experiences that cater to their individual styles. Teachers harness these tools to present information dynamically, allowing visual learners to thrive with videos and interactive simulations while kinesthetic learners explore educational apps that promote hands-on exploration.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EDUCATION

One of the most thrilling developments in educational technology is the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI). At HIS, we are exploring how AI can provide personalized learning experiences tailored specifically to each student. Intelligent platforms analyze progress and suggest resources suited to students' unique strengths and areas for growth, enabling them to learn at their own pace and enhance their academic outcomes.

BENEFITS OF AI IN EDUCATION FOR OUR STUDENTS:

1. **Personalized Learning:** AI identifies individual learning styles and adjusts lessons to ensure every student's needs are met.
2. **Instant Feedback:** Students receive immediate insights into their performance, helping them pinpoint areas for improvement and adapt their study strategies effectively.
3. **Administrative Efficiency:** By streamlining administrative tasks like grading and scheduling, AI allows our educators to devote more time to teaching and engaging with students.

CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

While the advantages of incorporating technology, especially AI, into our educational framework are significant, we must also acknowledge the challenges. We are dedicated to addressing issues such as the digital divide, ensuring that every student has the necessary access to technology and the internet. Furthermore, ongoing training and support for our teachers are essential as they integrate these tools into their teaching practices.

As we navigate these advancements, we take data privacy seriously and strive to ensure that our systems are designed to support all learners equitably, addressing any potential biases that may arise in AI algorithms.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

As the future job market increasingly demands technologically proficient professionals, HIS is committed to preparing our students for success. By equipping them with the skills to navigate cutting-edge tools and AI systems, we enhance their academic achievements and their readiness for a technology-driven world.

In embracing technology and AI in education, we aim to provide an enriched and engaging learning environment at HIS. The potential of these innovations to transform education is substantial, and we are dedicated to approaching this journey thoughtfully, ensuring that every student reaps the benefits of this pivotal shift.



The Benefits of Maintaining a Creative Mindset

SHAIAN GUTIÉRREZ | Marketing & Design Specialist



How does creativity enhance effectiveness in our daily lives and jobs? Though it is easy to put all our effort into skills we may wrongly prioritize over creative problem-solving, creativity is a practical skill that every person should seek to strengthen.

While pursuing my pre-architecture degree, I distinctly remember a key moment in the technical drawing course, when the professor shared a story from her time in the field. On one project there was an architect who had studied purely history and materials (which is important) and another who began with a degree in visual arts, later gaining accreditation for architecture.

Amid construction, the team encountered a major problem. While the first architect had a very profound bank of architectural knowledge, it was the architect with experience in visual arts who was able to work through and solve the issue through several quick

perspective sketches of the building yet to be fully constructed. It was their sharp ability to think creatively and problem-solve that truly came to the rescue.

Many people are inclined to believe that not all fields require an imagination, yet even STEM students and professionals benefit greatly from using a creative mindset.

For example, the most skillful mathematicians maintain that visualization is the key to fighting off the logical inner monologue that keeps you from making quick calculations. They assert that - although a common strategy in mathematics - memorization will only get you so far in life.

Instead, visualizing is the key to long-term comprehension and the secret to success for many. In the end, it's your creative thinking that will set you apart.

So, the question now is how can you become the quick-thinking, creative,

hero-architect from the story? It's easy - don't neglect your creative side! Practice, practice, practice, and remember you aren't limited to just one creative pastime, invest in any project or skill you're already interested in.

However, you can't set down this magazine, make one sketch, and declare a permanent capacity for creative thinking - you must take the time to strengthen this part of your brain every day, with the goal being to build your creative thought process into a lifelong habit.

Creative hobbies to get you started:

- Learning a language
- Crochet
- Playing an instrument
- Singing
- Writing
- Illustrating
- Origami
- Sculpture
- Gardening
- Ceramics
- Painting
- Decorating
- Photography



What's in Your School Bag?

Interviews by
GABBY HE
PR & Marketing Officer



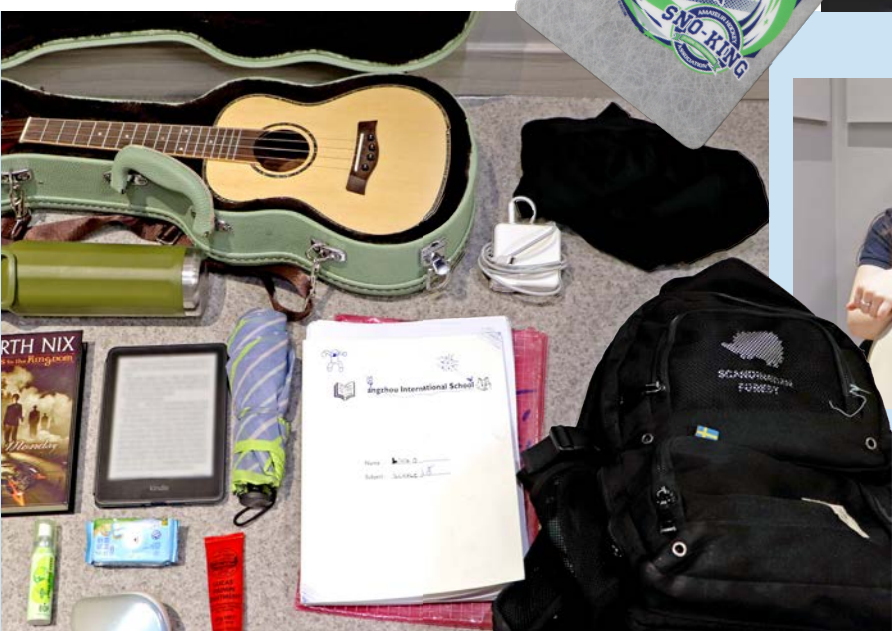
Broderick, G4

CCAs: Robotics, Coding, Musical (playing the Huntsman in the Lower School production, *The Rockin Tale of Snow White*)

Outside of School: Regular ice hockey practice

Homework Routine: 30-40 mins each day

"This tag is a cherished memento from my ice hockey team in the US, a reminder of my journey before arriving in China"



Livia, G8

CCAs: MUN, Track and Field, Upper School play (plays a reporter in *These Shining Lives*), Ukulele for Songwriting class

Outside of School: Loves reading fantasy books and drawing

Homework Routine: 1.5 hours each day

"When I'm not studying, you can usually find me lost in a fantasy world on my Kindle—reading is my ultimate escape"



Ian, KG

CCAs: Mixed Martial Arts, Boxing

"We're going on a school field trip to the science museum"



Once a Dragon, Always a Dragon!!!

There have been so many lovely visits from our HIS Alumni Gold Dragons in the past few months. We love it when our alumni stop by and visit us at the school campus.

Are you an alumni?
Would you like to
arrange a visit?
Connect with us at:
alumni@hisdragons.org.cn



THE CHEMOUNY FAMILY



DAVID SHAO (Class of 2012) proudly wearing his new letterman jacket



Left to right: **BENJAMIN B.** (Class of 2026), **DANIEL BRANHAM** (Class of 2021), **CHRISTIAN ENGBERG** (Class of 2019), **MATHIAS ENGBERG** (Class of 2021), **DEV DATWANI** (Class of 2020)



Left to right: **AANYI CHADHA** (Class of 2022), **FLORA MOON** (Class of 2023), **MANYA JAIN** (Class of 2023)



Left to right: **IRIS HUANG** (Class of 2024), **SERA BAJAJ** (Class of 2024), **ATHENA NI** (Class of 2024)



Meet Our Alumni: Prachi Sukhnani, Class of 2018

PRACHI SUKHNANI | Class of 2018, Jade Dragon

“International schools see people come and go, but HIS has never lost its tight-knit, familial community. That sense of belonging is truly special”



WHEN DID YOU ATTEND HIS AND HOW LONG WERE YOU HERE FOR?

I attended HIS from 2006 to 2012 and then again from 2015 to 2018, when I graduated, for a total of nine years.

CAN YOU SHARE MORE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES AND JOURNEY AT HIS?

I started at HIS in Grade 2 when it was a small, growing school, and I got to grow alongside it. I left for a few years, living in Dubai and Nanjing, but I missed HIS and Hangzhou too much and had to come back.

International schools see people come and go, but HIS has never lost its tight-knit, familial community. That sense of belonging is truly special.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES FROM YOUR TIME AT HIS? WHAT ARE THE THINGS YOU MISS THE MOST?

Too many to count! Cozy Christmas movie days with hot chocolate in the original, red-carpeted auditorium, tossing my graduation cap across the playground where I used to play, and playing volleyball on the blue-top after lunch. I even remember skinning my knee on it back when it was the red-top!

I also remember the Invention Convention in Grade 5, all the hard work and care we put into West Lake MUN conferences, and representing HIS at

various ACAMIS and MUN conferences.

Beyond that, I have fond memories of my teachers and the HIS community in general. I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for all the teachers who saw potential in me and encouraged and guided me to grow in new and interesting ways.

WHAT KIND OF CCA (CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES) DID YOU JOIN AT HIS? HOW DID THESE HELP YOU IN UNIVERSITY?

MUN was a huge part of my life from Grade 7 to Grade 12, shaping my leadership, public speaking, and problem-solving skills. It made me adaptable, detail-oriented, and eager to learn—traits that serve me well today.

I also participated in various sports teams like volleyball and basketball and attended a few ACAMIS conferences. All these experiences taught me resilience and teamwork.

AFTER GRADUATING, WHAT UNIVERSITY AND PROGRAMS DID YOU ATTEND? DID YOU FEEL WELL PREPARED FOR UNIVERSITY?

I attended the University of Toronto, graduating in 2023 with a degree in Engineering Science with a major in Aerospace Engineering. My program gave me a broad engineering foundation before specializing in aerospace.





Since I enjoy hands-on work, some highlights include an aircraft design class where my team designed, built and flew a blended-wing body RC plane, and a space systems class where we designed a rover concept to collect scientific information about Mercury.

Outside of classes, I was deeply involved in the University of Toronto Aerospace Team's satellite division. I took on technical leadership roles and contributed to two CubeSat spacecraft missions and saw one of them launch on a SpaceX Falcon 9 in 2023.

For a year, I also interned at Sinclair Interplanetary by Rocket Lab in Toronto, gaining hands-on experience in spacecraft avionics and manufacturing.

Stepping into engineering is a transformative and challenging experience that nothing can truly prepare you for. However, HIS gave me the confidence to embrace learning and take on new challenges. That mindset carried me through the tough times.

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY UP TO?

I'm a Space Systems & Avionics Engineer at Rocket Lab in New Zealand, working on satellite systems and reaction wheels:

Satellites: I design spacecraft which help the world stay informed and connected. My role involves ensuring subsystems on the spacecraft can work together physically and electrically, assembling and testing them, and supporting them through their launch and beyond.

Reaction Wheels: These are specialized components that precisely control how satellites rotate in space, and my amazing team manufactures thousands of wheels a year. My work involves supporting and improving the manufacturing line, experimenting with new ways to improve our design, and debugging our products.

I also provide commentary for Rocket Lab's launch livestreams on YouTube! Our Electron (and in the future, Neutron) rockets launch frequently, and it's an honor to share my passion for space with a global audience—a great way to put those MUN public speaking skills to use.

HIS' focus on fostering well-rounded learners and effective communicators has made me a cross-disciplinary engineer, able to tackle challenges across systems, testing, manufacturing, mechanical, and electrical engineering.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

To keep learning, designing, and building spacecraft that expand our knowledge of Earth and beyond. The sky isn't the limit!

LOOKING BACK ON YOUR TIME AS A JADE DRAGON AT HIS, WHAT VALUES OR LESSONS DO YOU STILL CARRY WITH YOU TODAY?

Beyond the classes I took, HIS taught me to connect and collaborate with people from all over the world.

One of my core values is personal growth, and HIS nurtured my curiosity and gave me space and confidence to dive into new fields, whether in engineering, public speaking, photography, fitness, or learning new languages.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT HIS STUDENTS?

- Be curious and open to unexpected opportunities—the world has more in store for you than you can imagine.
- Be prepared to work hard and fail at times. Building resilience and adaptability as a learner will take you very far.
- Grades matter for university, but after that, experience and skills define your path—don't tie your self-worth to numbers!

Interview by
NATALIA STUBBS
PR & Communications Specialist





An HIS Love Story: How Two Alumni Reunited Years Later

AMELIA TI | Class of 2013, Jade Dragon
BRANDON EGGER | Class of 2015

“We’re each other’s best friends and feel very lucky we’re able to find a best friend, soulmate, teammate in one, and even more lucky that we got to fall in love with each other twice in one lifetime”

Two high school sweethearts from HIS share their heartwarming tale of reuniting after a decade apart. Now residing in Kansas City, Missouri, the couple are busily preparing for their upcoming wedding in November this year. Amelia shares their story.

WE’D LOVE TO START BY HEARING ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY AT HIS

We are both from California but opposite ends—I’m from the Bay Area (San Jose) and Brandon is from Orange County, south of Los Angeles.

We both moved to Hangzhou because of our dads’ jobs. I attended HIS from Grades 6 to 12 (2006 to 2013), while Brandon attended HIS from Grades 6 to 10 (2008 to 2013).

I am 1.5 years older than Brandon so I was actually a junior when he was a freshman, mind you there were only 300 students total from Pre-K to Grade 12 when we were at HIS! My older brother Stephen, Class of 2012, and younger

sister Alina, as well as Brandon’s younger brother Nick, also attended HIS.

WHAT ACTIVITIES OR CLUBS WERE YOU INVOLVED IN DURING YOUR TIME AT HIS?

We both participated in pretty much every activity and club available since the options were pretty limited during that time.

I was on the volleyball team, student council, yearbook committee, and Habitat for Humanity, and was president during my junior year. Brandon was on the volleyball, basketball, and soccer teams, as well as the yearbook committee and Habitat for Humanity (I’m pretty sure he only joined the last two to spend more time with me!).



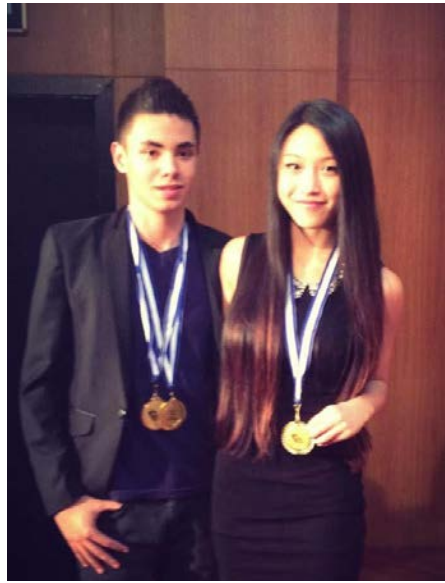


CAN YOU SHARE THE STORY OF HOW YOU BOTH FIRST MET AT HIS?

We knew of each other for a while since the school was so small, but did not really interact until Brandon was a freshman in High School.

Brandon was friends with my older brother, Stephen, since they were on all the sports teams together. Brandon and I later became friends since we were both on the varsity volleyball team and also shared some classes together—Spanish, AP Biology, AP European History, and Graphic Design. As we spent more time together, we began developing a crush on each other.

I knew he liked me right away (it was obvious) so apparently, according to his memory, I messaged him (we used Skype Messenger back then) during one of our classes and basically confronted him: “I know you like me”, and that was that. I was drawn to Brandon’s humor and goofiness, caring nature and thoughtfulness. Brandon says he was drawn to my independence, candidness, and cool, calm, and collected demeanor. Also, I seemed to have everything together, according to him, which shy Brandon found appealing.



AFTER GRADUATION, LIFE TOOK YOU IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS. WE’D LOVE TO HEAR ABOUT THE UNIVERSITIES YOU CHOSE AND THE PROGRAMS YOU PURSUED FOLLOWING YOUR TIME AT HIS

I graduated from High School at HIS and moved to New York to attend NYU. I studied Nutrition and got my Bachelor’s then my Master’s. Brandon moved back to California to finish High School and later attended SDSU (San Diego State) where he studied Finance. We both joined a sorority and fraternity where we met our friends for life, but me and Brandon drifted apart.

THEN, AFTER 10 YEARS APART, YOU BOTH RECONNECTED! WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

It was nostalgic, serendipitous, unbelievable almost. We both had a giddy feeling during that first conversation 10 years later.

WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO REACH OUT AND RECONNECT AFTER SUCH A LONG TIME?

It was completely random. I was relatively newly single and trying to live my best life while still in NYC. I was on the dating apps but started to feel a bit burnt out and discouraged.



Around Thanksgiving that year, I took a trip with my sister to Portugal (my first time in Europe and first time traveling with just my sister, who’s 8 years younger). During our trip, we were reminiscing about the old times including my ex’s (i.e. Brandon).

He would pop up in my mind randomly here and there over the past decade. I would wonder what he was up to, if he was doing well, what he ended up doing with his life. We stayed friends on social media platforms since our relationship didn’t end badly—we had broken up due to distance and timing.

A couple of days later while I was at the airport leaving Portugal, I received a DM on Instagram—it was Brandon responding to one of my IG stories: “Damn, I love Lisbon. I hope you had a good time! And long time no talk lol!”

Seeing this unexpected message immediately brought a smile to my face. Brandon was actually also in the air when he sent that message (he was flying back from California to Kansas City where he now lived; he had moved there for work).

We talked non-stop for the first 36 hours and within the first 72 hours of >>

ALUMNI

reconnecting, he bought a flight to NYC to see me on December 15th, 2023.

When we saw each other for the first time again after 10 years, it was like no time had passed. We started dating and doing long distance between NYC and Kansas City before I eventually moved to Kansas City for Brandon (and we moved in together).

HOW HAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP EVOLVED SINCE REKINDLING YOUR CONNECTION?

It was so easy from the beginning because we were the same people we were 10 years ago, just more mature and grown.

We could still see the 'old' Brandon and Amelia in the present-day Amelia and Brandon. We could be honest with each other from the very start because we didn't feel like we had to put up a front or pretend to be someone we were not because we knew each other so well, deep down.

Our relationship has mainly evolved because our communication skills have evolved since our teenage years. and that's mostly attributed to the experiences we've had through college, career, and just life and adulthood.

We listen, validate, affirm, and support each other through everything. We genuinely enjoy each other's company and have fun no matter what we're doing together. We're each other's best friends and feel very lucky we're able to find a best friend, soulmate, teammate in one, and even more lucky that we got to fall in love with each other twice in one lifetime.

WHAT ARE YOU BOTH UP TO THESE DAYS?

We now both live in Kansas City. Brandon moved here in May 2023 for work, and I moved here in July 2024 after 6 months or so of long distance. We moved in together. Career-wise, I am a Senior Manager of Clinical Operations at a health tech

start up, working remotely. Brandon is an Associate Director of Investments at a publicly traded REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust). We just got engaged in December 2024, right before Christmas, while we were in Taipei visiting my family.

YOU MENTIONED BEFORE THAT HIS HAS A SPECIAL PLACE IN BOTH YOUR HEARTS, CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT WHAT HIS MEANS TO YOU BOTH?

HIS has a special place in our hearts because living abroad and attending school in China during our formative years is such a unique experience that not many people get to have. It will always be special because that's where our love story started.

“HIS has a special place in our hearts because living abroad and attending school in China during our formative years is such a unique experience that not many people get to have. It will always be special because that's where our love story started”

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES FROM YOUR TIME AT HIS?

Our favorite memories were the road trips we took for sports games and other class trips. I used to live across the street from school, and we would always do homework at the cafe by my apartment complex, or take a tuk-tuk to the nearby Starbucks or alley for street food after volleyball practice.

We generally miss how seemingly 'easy' life was back during the HIS days—that

may not be entirely related to the school itself but just that age, and being young and care-free.

ARE THERE ANY MEMORIES THAT HAVE CARRIED OVER FROM YOUR TEENAGE YEARS?

Brandon has been playing the piano since he was a child. Back in Hangzhou, he even tutored other kids. I remember fondly that he would be able to play any song that I asked him to by just listening to the song only a couple times. He has such a unique ear for sound and music.

When we were teenagers, he would frequently make grilled cheese sandwiches and French onion soup when I would go over to his apartment after school. Over the years, anytime I made a grilled cheese, I would think of him.

LASTLY, CONGRATULATIONS FROM EVERYONE AT HIS ON YOUR UPCOMING WEDDING!

Thank you! We are getting married in early November this year. Our wedding will be in Kansas City since it's smack in the middle of the country—about the same distance from California and New York, where all of our friends and family are.

Interview by
NATALIA STUBBS
PR & Communications Specialist



The Role of Play In Early Childhood Education

MELANIE HART | Pre-Kindergarten Teacher



Inquiry through play-based learning provides children with purposeful opportunities to develop the essential skills and knowledge that prepare them for life in Elementary school and beyond.

As early childhood teachers at Hangzhou International School (HIS), we aim to provide a challenging educational environment and a quality curriculum for all students through core concepts, essential skills, enriching experiences, inquiry-based approaches, and higher-level thinking skills.

A balanced curriculum caters to the students' talents and abilities, both creatively and intellectually. In early childhood at HIS, play is a crucial part of the students' understanding of the world around them as it provides opportunities to explore, create, develop social skills, role-play, express themselves, learn about emotions, release stress, test limits, take risks, and enjoy themselves by bonding and making friends.

As teachers, we nurture creativity through all forms of creative expression, including play, as well as provide learning that is inquiry-based and interdisciplinary in nature as it creates relevant links for the students.

Some of the leading philosophies in early childhood education all support play as an essential part of children's learning. For instance, Rudolf Steiner believed that education should nurture the whole child (the physical, cognitive, and emotional) in a safe and learning-rich environment.

Meanwhile Maria Montessori believed that meaningful activities were the important play of early childhood and let the children decide how they wanted to 'play' and learn, while the philosophy of the Reggio Emilia schools support learning through all the senses and allow the children to take their learning to new places by providing a child-centered curriculum.



Play is an integral part of these three major early childhood pedagogies as it supports both the academic and social aspects of learning through a child's perspective.

In play-based learning, it is the teacher's role to act as the facilitator. We guide students in generating their own questions about their learning and help them locate the resources they need to find their own answers.

As a PYP school, play is recognized as an important part of our Early Childhood Education program at HIS, with these opportunities provided to the children in our well-resourced classrooms, in our creative and engaging Indoor Discovery zones, and in our challenging and dynamic Outdoor Discovery areas.





Fostering a Love of Reading From Early Childhood

RIA MARAIS & IVY ZHANG | ECE Librarians

In our Early Childhood Education (ECE) library, reading is a vibrant and interactive experience that lays the foundation for lifelong literacy. These spaces are thoughtfully designed to engage our Early Years through Kindergarten students, fostering a love for books and storytelling.

For our ECE children, reading is not merely about decoding words; it encompasses a wide range of skills and experiences. Reading involves listening, visual recognition, and comprehension. Children learn to associate sounds with letters, develop vocabulary, and understand the structure of stories.

They explore concepts such as characters, settings, and plots, all of which contribute to their cognitive and emotional development. We foster a love for reading and build an

understanding of the role books play in how they access information.

When our children enter the library, they are greeted by a colorful array of picture books, board books, and interactive materials. The layout encourages exploration, with cozy reading nooks, comfortable seating, and inviting displays that capture young imaginations.

Storytime sessions are a highlight, where librarians and reading volunteers read aloud, using expressive voices and animated gestures to bring stories to life. This not only captivates children's attention but also enhances their understanding of language and narrative structure. Our ECE library has both an English and Mandarin librarian, engaging with students and helping them to access books that interest them.

For our librarians though, it is not only about reading, and our team incorporate multi-sensory experiences. Some of those experiences include puppets, musical instruments, and art supplies, allowing children to engage with stories in diverse ways.

For instance, after a story about animals, children might create animal masks or participate in a related craft. This hands-on approach helps reinforce themes and vocabulary, making reading a holistic experience.

In ECE overall, the wide open spaces provided by our unique building give children an opportunity to access a variety of engagements and promote social interaction through group activities and play areas.

Children learn to share, take turns, and express themselves while enjoying books together. In addition, we offer parent workshops that provide strategies for reading at home, emphasizing the importance of daily reading routines.

Our ECE library is a dynamic environment where reading is not just an individual activity but a communal experience. We offer a gateway to imagination, critical thinking, and emotional understanding.

By cultivating a love for books through engaging storytelling and interactive play, our library plays a crucial role in developing early literacy skills and fostering a sense of curiosity in young learners.



Why Sleep is Crucial to Children's Health and Development

KIOMI YEOMAN | Kindergarten Teacher



In my experience as a teacher and a mom, I've learned how crucial sleep is for children. It's a big deal for their health and growth – not just physically, but emotionally and mentally too.

In Early Childhood Education (ECE) at Hangzhou International School, "nap time" is still important. It's not just about giving kids a break; it helps them learn to do things on their own and handle their feelings better.

Having a routine that teaches kids to be responsible and respect others' sleep is a great way to show them how to be caring and thoughtful. And it's not just

about being in a good mood; getting enough shut-eye also affects how well kids get along with their friends.

Good sleep helps them focus, control their emotions, and play well with others. By encouraging healthy sleep habits and giving children time to chill out quietly, teachers can help them learn important skills and create a cozy, supportive classroom atmosphere.

Getting enough sleep is also super important for older children's brains to develop well, remember things, and learn effectively. Good sleep helps them control their emotions, be less cranky,

moody, or have behavior problems. It's key for their physical growth, immune system, and staying healthy, lowering the chances of becoming overweight or developing other health problems.

Studies prove that children who sleep well do better in school, focus better, and are better at solving problems.

Setting up regular bedtime habits and making sure kids get enough sleep really helps them feel good, be more resilient, and grow up well.

Here's what scientists who have studied the effects on children have found:

- Infants require about 14-17 hours of sleep per day, including naps.
- Toddlers (1-3 years) need around 11-14 hours of sleep per day, including naps.
- Preschoolers (3-5 years) should aim for 10-13 hours of sleep per day.
- School-Age Children (6-12 years) require 9-12 hours of sleep per night.
- Teenagers (13-18 years) need about 8-10 hours of sleep per night.

Getting a solid night of sleep isn't just a nice-to-have—it's a must-have for every kid's health and development. It's like fuel for their little bodies and minds, helping them grow, learn, and be their best selves during the day.





Art and Understanding at the Grade 4 Exhibition

COLIN GONZALEZ | Grade 4 Teacher

“As we reflect on this successful event, it’s clear that our unique community—filled with diverse experiences and a collaborative spirit—must be leveraged at every opportunity”

At Hangzhou International School (HIS), we are lucky enough to have a vibrant combination of cultures, experiences, and talents that set our community apart.

Our students possess a wealth of knowledge about the world that is both unexpected and fascinating, and it is essential that we leverage this unique understanding in our educational journey with the students.

Recently, our fourth graders showcased their learning through an art exhibition that brilliantly highlighted their understanding of various cultures.



The collaboration between the Grade 4 team—comprised of Mr Bastedo, Ms Rabs, Mr Young, Ms Jessie, Mr Gonzalez and Ms Vicky—and our talented art team, Mrs T and Ms Sissie, was pivotal to the event’s success.

This partnership gave students the opportunity to explore the intricacies of cultural expression while creating high-quality art pieces that reflected their diverse experiences and research.

As I observed the exhibition, I was struck by the joy on the faces of our students: Debra, nestled between her loving parents, wore a big smile while standing under her mask, while Hugo shared how an Italian class he took as a child inspired his research project.

Heetai and Vincent, though initially hesitant, found joy in their creations as they engaged with their peers. The connections these children made with their learning were profound.

Our role as educators is to build cross-cultural understanding, tapping into the rich knowledge our students already possess.

Kindergartners excitedly recognized cultural symbols in the artwork—like baguettes and the Eiffel Tower—demonstrating their early understanding of global cultures. Their enthusiasm reminded us of the importance of accessing and enhancing the deep knowledge many of our students bring to the classroom.

The exhibition was not just a display of art; it was a celebration of community and collaboration. Parents beamed with pride as they witnessed their children's creativity, while tears of joy filled the eyes of teachers watching students with varying language abilities communicate their insights about art and culture.

The compassion within our community was palpable, as students and parents supported each other, visiting exhibits of classmates who might not have had family present.

This event exemplified the strong leadership and commitment of our educators, especially Ms Jessie, Mr Young and Ms Vicky, who have nurtured this tradition over the years. Their dedication allows older students to look back fondly on their past art exhibition while younger students eagerly anticipate participating in future exhibitions.

As we reflect on this successful event, it's clear that our unique community—filled with diverse experiences and a collaborative spirit—must be leveraged at every opportunity.

Each student's journey enriches our collective understanding, and makes HIS a remarkable place for learning and growth. Here, we do not just teach; we celebrate the intricate web of knowledge that our students weave, inspiring them to reach their maximum potential.





Helping the Planet at the Lower School Science Fair

MARTIN BRADER | Grade 3 Teacher



From February 19th to 21st, 2025, Hangzhou International School proudly hosted its inaugural Lower School Science Fair, showcasing the innovative minds of our Grade 1 to 5 students. This year's theme, "Helping the Planet," inspired a flurry of curiosity, creativity and critical thinking.

INSPIRING YOUNG INNOVATORS

The Lower School Science Fair was designed to ignite curiosity and foster a passion for scientific inquiry among our young learners. This year's theme was particularly poignant, encouraging students to investigate pressing environmental challenges and propose actionable solutions. Projects reflected the

students' understanding of sustainability, conservation, and the importance of technological innovation.

ENGAGING IN INQUIRY

The journey to the Science Fair began weeks in advance, with students exploring ways to help the planet. The wide variety of subjects, ranging from clean water, waste management and plastic pollution to animal conservation, sustainable cities and natural disasters demonstrated the knowledge, engagement and creativity of the children.

Projects displayed in the fair included methods of filtering water; innovations to collect plastic waste, designs utilizing recycled materials, investigations into

pollution and decomposition, as well as a wide variety of other inventive initiatives.

AN ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS COMMUNITY

The Science Fair was not just about showcasing individual projects but also about fostering a sense of community. Classes and families were invited to view the displays, ask questions and provide feedback.

As we look ahead, we are excited to see how our young scientists will continue to explore and advocate for a healthier planet. We look forward to seeing what innovative ideas children will explore in next year's Science Fair.

The Power of Togetherness We're Building at HIS

DYLAN TIDBURY | Upper School Language and Literature Teacher



Building a strong community, like we have here at HIS, transforms education into a collaborative journey where students thrive.

That's why part of our philosophy at HIS is that learning is enhanced by fostering a sense of belonging, not only enriching academic achievement, but also nurturing social and emotional development.

Building community develops individual attributes such as being open-minded, caring, and reflective, and prepares students to engage meaningfully with their peers and the world around them.

To help achieve this at HIS we have initiatives such as Advisory for Upper School students, a collaborative time which happens every morning for 25 minutes.

This is an opportunity where we are able to foster the development of community by bringing learners together across grade levels to participate and compete in different events, such as rock paper scissors tournaments and cup flipping races.

The sense of community is further developed by creating posters and chants used during competitions to rally their peers, fostering a sense of unity and school spirit.

These activities not only encourage friendly competition but also help students develop teamwork and communication skills as they strategize together and support one another.

In addition to competitive events, Advisory classes often include community

service projects. Learners participate in global initiatives, such as celebrating Labor Day, writing gratitude letters to their peers, and wishing teachers a happy Teachers' Day.

These initiatives help students understand the importance of social responsibility and the impact they can have on their community, not only deepening their sense of belonging but also encouraging them to become proactive and engaged global citizens.

At HIS we recognize that fostering a community among students, teachers and families is paramount. By embedding the ideas of trust and collaboration, we empower our learners to take risks, embrace challenges, and celebrate successes together.





I Went to Guizhou to Teach, but the Students Taught Me

NAOMI XIA | Grade 9 Student

Hello everyone. My name is Naomi Xia, and I am a ninth grader at HIS. Last summer, during July of 2024, I received the opportunity to travel to Gao Pai Village in the mountains of Guizhou to teach a summer school with a group of other students.

Gao Pai is a tiny village, so small it doesn't come up on the internet. It's in a remote location: even after arriving at Guizhou, it required a train transfer and almost two hours of winding mountain road to access the village.

The Gao Pai School is the most prominent building in the town. It's four stories tall, with only two classrooms on each floor and no plumbing or air conditioning. However, it is by far the best building in

the entire village. Outside the school gates are leaning wooden houses with ladders instead of stairs and tin and straw rooftops.

The students we taught were largely "left-behind" children whose parents had migrated to urban areas for work, leaving them in the care of one parent or other relatives.

I was assigned to a second grade class. Instead of teaching specific school subjects, we tried to teach lessons that encouraged hands-on activities, creativity, and surrounded exploring the beauty of the world. As an older student explained, our classes aimed to inspire new interests and encourage the kids to see the larger world. Examples included Arts and Crafts, Choir, and a class dedicated to introducing wild animals and famous global landmarks. We

made miniature volcanos with vinegar and baking soda, tie-dyed T-shirts, and drew pictures of rainforest animals together. The summer school was optional, yet on the first day I was surprised by how many children showed up. However, it was difficult to encourage any of them to participate in class unless there was a clear and singular correct answer:

We tried to close the distance between us by teaching in a casual manner. I tried and unfortunately failed to make jokes, but afterwards I found the students talked to me (and laughed at me) more.

During one break, I tried teaching a group to play nursery rhyme clapping games, which became popular as the whole class joined in. As a result, there are a few



dozen kids in the mountains of Guizhou who know how to play Coconut Crack and Stella Ella Ola.

One my most memorable experiences regarding formal lessons was an activity where kids described what they most wished to do once they grew up. Their answers were strikingly similar: reflecting a shared curiosity for the world beyond the mountains and goals related to exploration and new experiences:

"I want to live in a city."

"I want to see the Great Wall in person."

"I want to see a skyscraper."

"I want to travel the world."

It was hard to realize that most of their largest aspirations are something that we experience in our everyday lives: travelling, flying by airplane, chocolate, or simply living in a city. What was more, having to "realize" that fact was surprising for me.

I live in an international environment, and I'm not unfamiliar with researching issues and trying to understand the struggles others go through, but I did not expect the impact that seeing stark difference between our lives and the lives of left-behind children gave me.

Witnessing something firsthand is unlike any insight we could ever scrape from typed words on a webpage. It makes the people real, alive and vibrant with their own unique traits. People like:

- The girl with a round face who liked to watch me doodle
- The boy who likes Messi
- The tiny boy with the enormous pet beetle who chased us around the field with it
- The girl with the ponytail who is really good at dancing
- The tall girl who wanted to learn piano and sat doing so with me for the whole break
- The boy with a nick on his chin who likes chocolate and singing pop songs

- The girl who made faces in the back of the room and brought her baby brother to class
- The boy who left class to help his grandmother with their crops

These children represent only a miniscule fraction of kids in similar environments. There are more than 61 million left-behind children in China's rural areas.

How many of these kids are never encouraged to explore their passions, never realize how many possibilities this world offers, are never given the opportunity to conceive the diversity of the world?

Left-behind children are a highly vulnerable population, often lacking the attention and resources needed to thrive, and the absence of a responsible guardian. Official programs training social workers to address the issue only reach 0.5% of left-behind children. There is a critical shortage of a professional workforce to protect and support them.

We were fortunate enough to have met these children in Gao Pai, and I sincerely hope we've made at least a small change to their lives, but there are millions more who need our attention and care.



SIGN UP FOR 'STUDENT MAGAZINE' IN CCA3!

In the upcoming CCA 3, I will be leading a student-led magazine. It will focus on expressing our interests and providing a platform for students to explore and share their passions in a casual and friendly tone.

Through short, well-researched articles students can discuss topics of passion, bring attention to urgent issues or intriguing subjects.

In a photography section, students will have the opportunity to share the unique angles in which they see the world, and a section will be dedicated to creative works and drawings.

If you are interested, please sign up in the upcoming CCA session! I look forward to seeing you there, and sharing with the HIS community our work.



The Importance of Learning to Give Back

CHADDWICK PLOTZ | MYP Individuals and Societies Teacher

As part of the HIS Learner Profile, students engage in community activities that show empathy and charitable work. During the first semester, Upper School students helped lead in two activities: Movember in November, and Secret Santa the following month.

MOVEMBER

Movember is a worldwide organization that raises money and awareness for men's health. As their Global Scientific Chair Dr. Colleen Nelson says, "Together with the brightest minds in research, we aim to achieve significant breakthroughs in the hope of beating prostate cancer. Our disruptive funding approach identifies revolutionary ways to accelerate health outcomes by creating strong, global collaborative teams."

HIS teachers have had a Movember team which has raised awareness and money for over 10 years. Cancer has affected many of us within the HIS community and is something that resonates strongly with many of our students, parents, and faculty. This year during the month of November, the HIS Movember team was able to raise and donate over US\$600 to the Movember organization.

Twelfth grader Ronan M. has donated to HIS Movember for several years. His first donation was back in 6th grade when he raised US\$100. When asked why he continues to support Movember each year he said, "Having known Mr. Plotz for many years, and the many cases of prostate cancer that my family has experienced, every year I

feel like even the smallest donations to the fund helps the lives of others."

This year, 7th grader Maram A. was a first time participant. "I decided to donate because I read the website and really liked what they stood for. My uncle passed away from cancer and I wanted to help. After I donated, I was speaking to my father about it, and he thought it was a great idea and cause and told me to donate more, which I did!"

SECRET SANTA

The second event the HIS community took part in this year was the 7th annual edition of Secret Santa. The idea originated with trying to spread a little bit of holiday joy, help teach empathy, and to bring cheer to all our students, staff and community.

Looking for a charity to support, we wanted to find an organization that promoted education and were introduced to Wheels to Africa, an "organization whose principal purpose is to collect bicycles for needy communities in Africa... to serve as an educational and volunteer platform for developing tomorrow's

leaders... and to perpetuate a 'pass it on' commitment to aid those who are less fortunate." When checking with our South African staff members about the group, it seemed to be a perfect fit!

This year, Secret Santas were sold to all ages across the school—from 2-year-olds all the way to the 12th grade. In total, over 2,500 Secret Santas were distributed to enthusiastic students and teachers (that's average of more than 2 per person!).

Students who participated in the event wrote messages and sent joy across our entire school recognizing things others did, or just saying a kind word.

One student in Lower School felt a particularly close connection to the cause, buying multiple Secret Santas and distributing them to friends and classmates. When asked why, she related she wanted to share the qualities of kindness and generosity. Office staff, bus monitors, and a/y's whose contributions often go unnoticed were also recognized by fellow staff members and students.

Tenth grader Rhema H., who first participated in Secret Santa when in 2nd grade, said she first started sending them because "I just liked candy canes. Later, as I started understanding the meaning behind them more, it became a great way to share the Christmas spirit. After all, who doesn't like to get a nice surprise?"

In total, the Secret Santas raised RMB10,000 for Wheels to Africa.



Building a Caring Community

MATT HAMILTON, DEE BULL-BEDDOWS & SURESH DASS
Upper School Student Support Team



The Student Support Team (SST) at Hangzhou International School (HIS) aims to fulfill the school mission to provide international learners with opportunities to pursue academic and personal excellence within a caring community.

One framework we utilize to achieve this goal is Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). MTSS is an evidence-based approach that makes up both academic interventions and emotional support strategies to promote the success of all students. MTSS at HIS consists of three tiers of support, each increasing in intensity and personalization:

TIER 1: UNIVERSAL SUPPORT

Tier one is the foundation of MTSS and is designed to be a 'whole-class' approach, meeting the needs of the majority of students (usually 80-90%).

At HIS, Tier 1 means providing culturally responsive instruction that is differentiated to accommodate our multilingual learners,

while keeping English as the thread that ties all instruction together. For example, a Science teacher might use visual aids, hands-on experiments, and activities where students utilize their mother-tongue to summarize a video they watched in English. This allows all students to access class content.

TIER 2: TARGETED SUPPORT

When universal Tier 1 support is not sufficient, some students (typically 10-15%) may require more targeted intervention.

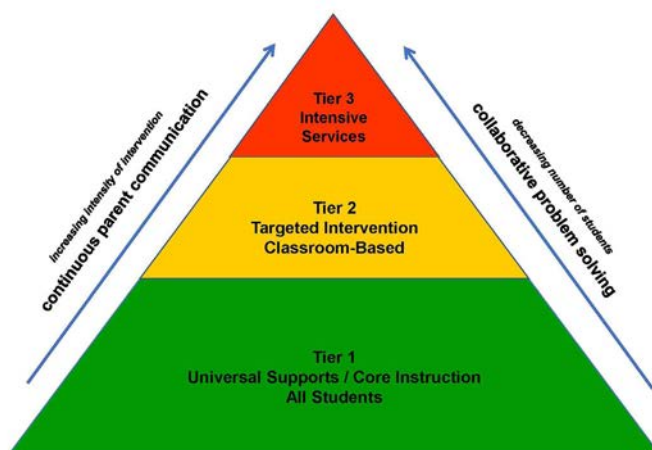
At HIS, this involves small group instruction or additional language support. For instance, a Social Studies teacher might work with Learning Support and EAL Specialists to provide extra sessions for students struggling with class vocabulary in English. It may also work in math when a group of students don't have the competency in a focus skill to move on to the next skill. They may work with a Learning Support Specialist in small groups, revising their knowledge with their peers so that they can more confidently move on to the next level.

TIER 3: INTENSIVE SUPPORT

A small percentage of students (usually 1-5%) may require more intensive, individualized support. At HIS, this may involve one-on-one instruction, specialized programs, assessment accommodations and modifications or collaboration with our Learning Support teachers, school Psychologist, Counselors, and Speech and Language Pathologists. Typically, MTSS at HIS might include the following:

1. Universal screening: Each term, all students take assessments in core subjects and language proficiency to identify those who may need additional support.
2. Progress monitoring: Teachers regularly assess student performance through formative assessments.
3. Data-based decisions: Our SST meets regularly to review student data and make decisions about interventions and support.
4. Culturally responsive practices: We ensure that interventions and assessments consider our students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
5. Family engagement: We involve families in the MTSS process, providing resources and strategies to support student learning outside of HIS.

MTSS helps us create a supportive, inclusive environment that addresses the diverse needs facing our students. It allows us to identify and address learning challenges early, provide targeted support, and see to it that all students may pursue academic and personal excellence within our caring HIS community.





An Exciting Two-Year Journey in DP Biology

JUSTINE KUSHNER | Upper School Science Teacher

I'd like to present an overview of our progress with the revised IB DP Biology Curriculum (2023-2025).

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) Biology curriculum has seen significant updates for the academic years 2023-2025. These changes reflect the IB's dedication to promoting critical thinking, scientific exploration, and the practical application of biological principles. The revised curriculum deepens the HIS students' comprehension of Biology while also providing them with vital skills necessary for their future educational and career paths.

A prominent feature of the 2023-2025 curriculum is the incorporation of current biological challenges and advancements. Topics such as genetic modification, climate change, and the decline of biodiversity are now highlighted, ensuring that HIS students grasp foundational concepts alongside their importance in today's context. This method encourages our students to confront real-world issues and reflect on the ethical aspects of biological research and its applications.

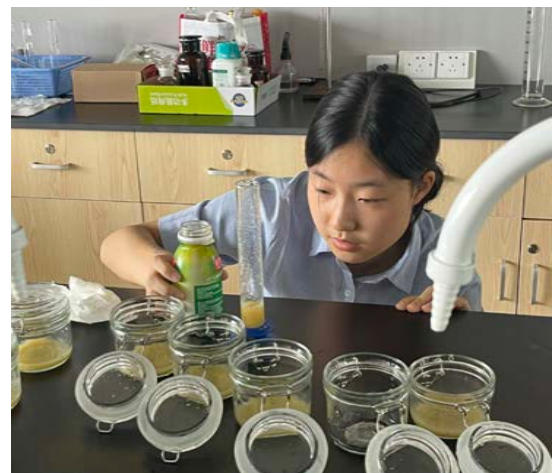
Additionally, the curriculum adopts a more inquiry-driven learning model. Our HIS students are motivated to create their own research questions, design experiments, and interpret data. This approach fosters a comprehensive understanding of the scientific method and nurtures critical thinking abilities. By participating in hands-on activities, students can relate theoretical knowledge

to practical situations, enriching their educational experience.

A strong emphasis is placed on cultivating essential skills for scientific inquiry:

- **Analytical Skills:** Our HIS students learn to scrutinize data and research outcomes critically, allowing them to reach well-informed conclusions. This ability is crucial not only in Biology but across various academic disciplines and professional environments.
- **Communication Skills:** Clear and effective communication is vital in the scientific field. Our HIS students are trained to express complex biological ideas concisely. This skill is indispensable for future teamwork and professional collaborations.
- **Research Skills:** The curriculum promotes independent research initiatives, where our students gain experience in designing experiments, gathering data, and presenting their results. This encourages a sense of ownership in their education and helps them develop strong research methodologies.
- **Ethical Reasoning:** Our HIS students are encouraged to contemplate the ethical consequences of scientific progress. This prompts them to critically evaluate the societal implications of their work and the responsibilities that come with being a scientist addressing global issues.

The new Biology curriculum emphasises real-life applications to equip our HIS students for future challenges in diverse



fields such as healthcare, environmental science, and biotechnology. For example, students studying genetic engineering can assess its potential advantages and disadvantages, enabling them to participate in informed discussions regarding genetic modification in agriculture and healthcare.

Additionally, the focus on climate change and biodiversity encourages our students to comprehend and tackle urgent global challenges. By examining ecosystems and the effects of human actions on the environment, students are better prepared to engage in conservation efforts and advocate for sustainable practices within their communities.

By promoting inquiry-based learning and highlighting the application of knowledge to real-world contexts, the new Biology curriculum prepares our HIS students to be informed citizens and responsible scientists in a rapidly changing world.

More Than Movies: How MYP Film Builds Real-World Skills

RHIANNON JOHNSON | Upper School Visual Arts & Film Teacher



MYP Film is a subject that fosters creativity, teamwork, project management, and communication.

Through hands-on filmmaking and critical analysis, students develop an appreciation for storytelling, genre, and visual communication while also gaining practical experience in problem-solving, collaboration and technology skills. At each grade level, students explore different aspects of film, gradually building a deeper understanding of the medium and its impact on audiences.

In Grade 6, students begin with the basics of camera shots and composition, learning how framing, angles, and movement create visual engagement and shape meaning. As they experiment with shot types, they develop teamwork and planning skills through small group projects.

In Grade 7, students take their knowledge further by using camera techniques

to craft a call-to-adventure story. They explore how shot selection, movement, and pacing create emotional engagement while working collaboratively to manage production tasks and meet deadlines.

By Grade 8, students push artistic boundaries with experimental filmmaking, breaking from traditional storytelling to explore abstract and non-narrative forms. Inspired by avant-garde cinema, they experiment with editing, sound, and surreal imagery, fostering creative risk-taking and problem-solving.

In Grade 9, students study color palettes, formalism and auteur theory, analyzing Wes Anderson's unique cinematic style and applying these techniques to their own work. They then delve into documentary filmmaking, learning how film can inform, persuade, and provoke thought. They research real-world issues, conduct interviews, and construct compelling nonfiction narratives.

Grade 10 students create short films that blend experimental techniques with documentary storytelling to express personal themes of identity and emotion through imagery, sound, and editing. Students then explore the world of Film Noir and Neo-Noir, examining how these genres use high-contrast, and suspenseful cinematography for dramatic effect. They engage with chiaroscuro lighting and study how neo-noir modernizes this technique. Applying this knowledge, they create their own neo-noir-inspired short films.

Throughout the program, MYP Film students learn not just how to make films, but how to analyze and communicate through visual media. The filmmaking process mirrors real-world project management, requiring teamwork, critical thinking, and adaptability. Whether students pursue film or another field, the ability to tell stories, collaborate, and problem-solve will empower them for the future.





How I Climbed a Mountain and Learned to Never Give Up

ANNE (YINYU) FANG | Grade 6 Student

At first, the idea of climbing Africa's highest mountain came from my mother.

She prepared all the equipment by herself, and planned everything together with a coach, Mr Li. For me, it was going to be a challenge, and for her, even more so. However, she still made the preparations, and she also had great trust that I could complete it.

With this knowledge and the fact that Mr. Li had been there previously, we travelled to Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. This journey was an adventure for both me and my mum. At that time, I didn't have much concept about it. After all, this was my first mountain, so I went without much pressure, but felt a lot of pressure once I started climbing.

The first day was probably the most difficult for me, and it was the day when I most wanted to give up. It rained heavily,

and I really hated the mud. It was the first day of climbing, so I didn't know my own physical strength and rhythm, or how to conserve energy. So, while others reached the base camp in 6 to 7 hours, we took almost 8.

After reaching base camp, my legs were extremely sore, and I lost my temper. The place was full of mud and my shoes were dirty. Although it seemed like a small thing, it made me very angry, and this small thing turned into a big deal. I said, "I want to go down the mountain." But my mother just told me no. Then I got even angrier and ignored her. I went to bed still angry. The next morning, our guide told us we only needed to walk for 2 hours that day, and my mood wasn't so bad. Actually, I'd started to accept it a bit.

We got up at six the next morning, and the guide brought us sugar water to replenish our energy. We got dressed neatly, washed up, and it was already



seven o'clock. We had some breakfast, and set off. The main task on the second day was to slowly ascend.

Throughout the whole journey, no one in the team talked. On the way, we came across two vultures. I was really brave and went up to take a look and even took some close-up photos. I found that they weren't afraid of people at all and didn't show any aggression.

On the third day, we walked on flat roads and climbed up little by little. It was a relatively easy day, but the journey was long. We didn't reach the campsite until five o'clock.

On the fourth day, we set off early in the morning just like before. This part of the journey was more like rock climbing. I thought it was quite fun, but we had to be very careful because there were some dangerous places. My mother was quite tired when climbing this part, while I didn't feel it as much. After reaching the top, we came across snow!

On the fifth day, we just kept climbing up and then going down slopes, one after another. Since we were still slowly rising in altitude, it was freezing cold and snowing all the way. Today we would reach a height of 4,900 meters, set up the tent, and go to bed early because we would attempt to reach the summit the next day, and we had to set off at midnight. I was both nervous and excited, and afraid that I might not make it to the top.

The sixth day was the day of the summit, and it was also the most nerve-wracking and terrifying day. I hadn't been able to sleep the night before, only getting 4 hours of sleep. Worse, my mother didn't sleep at all that night—she had altitude sickness. Everyone was in a heavy mood. However, we all decided in our hearts that we must climb to the top. No matter what the result was, at least we

could leave our footprints in the snow.

Reaching the summit was arduous. We took many breaks. Even when we reached 5,220 meters, I still wanted to give up. In the end, I realised I couldn't quit at the last hurdle. So I persevered and finally reached the top—5,756 meters—and rested for a long time.

To successfully reach the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, I'm very grateful for the help from my mother and Coach Li. Otherwise, I really wouldn't have achieved this result. But you also have to be determined, and not falter. I came to the conclusion that your progress can be due to the guidance of someone wise, or the instruction of a famous teacher, but it can also be a sudden realization of your inner desire, and strength of will.

I'm glad I climbed a mountain—and learned something new about myself.





Opportunities to Use Technology in our PHE Voyage

NICHOLA HOLLINGSWORTH | Head of Department - Physical and Health Education



At HIS we seek to allow students the opportunities to pursue academic excellence, the inclusion of technology in PHE is one of these opportunities for students to embark on a voyage of discovery and learning. We have developed our program to build students skills as they progress through the MYP PHE program.

"It's pretty hard taking videos and analyzing myself, but it helps me see my mistakes"
- Justin Grade 6

In Grade 6 students are introduced to using Technology for video analysis and presenting their skills and development through the unit Technical Development; Pickleball. Students use Hudle, photobooth, iMovie and PPT to capture and show their own strengths and areas

of improvement in different shots in the sport of Pickleball. After initially capturing their own performance and practicing their skills, they then film themselves to show their own development and improvements over the course of the unit.

"It is good because when you are playing you don't know how you move but when you watch the videos you can see and get better"
- Nathan Grade 8

Using Technology allows students to freeze frame and draw attention to the angle of their arm or the moment of release for the ball, this attention to detail is in itself an experiment and opportunity for reflection and growth. This use of technology and development of self-analysis continues through the grades utilizing different sports as vehicles in our Technical Development units; Table Tennis, Badminton, Archery and then a sport of their choosing to capstone their Technology in Sport development. They use this same video analysis and self-assessment in our Aesthetic Movement Units through; Rhythmic Gymnastics, Line Dance, Parkour, Cultures of Dance and Yoga.

Students in PHE develop 21st century skills as we help to prepare them for the future utilizing Technology in different aspects of their lives.

"It's been good because you can re-watch your process and evaluate yourself; it's good to compare yourself to professionals as well and then I can compare my first attempt to after I've practice and see the difference"
- Spring Grade 9





Playlist

If you could listen to one song for the rest of your life, what song would it be?

We asked our students, staff, parents, and the HIS community, and this is what they came up with:



Hangzhou International School (HIS) • 42 songs, about 2 hr 15 min

#	Title	Album	Recommended by
1	 Good Old-Fashioned Lover Boy - Rem... Queen	A Day At The Races (Deluxe Edition...	Delun S. (Grade 6)
2	 Hounds Of Love Kate Bush	Hounds Of Love	Camille C. (Grade 7)
3	 Sweater Weather The Neighbourhood	I Love You	Livia O. (Grade 8)
4	 IGOR'S THEME Tyler, The Creator	IGOR	Zeyad E. (Grade 7)
5	 Everyday Life Coldplay	Everyday Life	Ms. Gabby (HIS Communications)
6	 Life Des'ree	Supernatural	Susana Maria Jorge Lourenço Rosa (Parent)
7	 Blackbird Tash Sultana	Flow State	Ms. Everett (Grade 5 Teacher)
8	 Welcome To New York (Taylor's Version) Taylor Swift	1989 (Taylor's Version)	Meiqi L. (Grade 8) and Rose B. (Grade 5)
9	 Queendom AURORA	Sky: Concert in the Light	Annabelle W. (Grade 7)
10	 Hier encore - Instrumental version Charles Aznavour	Hier encore (Instrumental version)	Ring W. (Grade 7)
11	 メトロシティ imase, natori	メトロシティ	Richie L. (Grade 7)
12	 Never Gonna Give You Up Rick Astley	Whenever You Need Somebody	Jessica Yuk Tung H. (Grade 7)
13	 Le loup, la biche et le chevalier Henri Salvador	The Greatest Hits	Vanessa Lenzlinger (Parent)
14	 earthquake JISOO	AMORTAGE	Yu-Shin W. (Grade 6, JISOO in We Will Rock You)
15	 Shake It Off Taylor Swift	1989 (Deluxe)	Hannah K. (Grade 6)
16	 Welcome Horizons (From "Animal Cros... Miraculous Studio Orchestra	Welcome Horizons (From "Animal C...	Melody M. (Grade 6)
17	 Youth and Love - feat. MIKA Jack Savoretti, MIKA	Singing to Strangers (Special Editi...	Mr. Braithwaite (Social Studies Teacher)
18	 Somebody That I Used To Know Gotye, Kimbra	Making Mirrors	Marshall Z. (Grade 5)
19	 Pop Virus Gen Hoshino	POP VIRUS	Christina W. (Grade 9)
20	 무제(無題) (Untitled, 2014) G-DRAGON	KWON JI YONG	Elly H. (Grade 8)

I chose this song because it is a calm song that can be played in almost any scenario. It can't get repetitive fast like some other songs, and it is one of my favorite songs

It's one of the few songs that I would never get tired of no matter how many times I listen to it

The whole album is a creative masterpiece, and the story is unique. LISTEN TO THE WHOLE ALBUM AND REALLY LISTEN TO THE STORY!!!!!! it will not let you down

Everyday Life is a song to appreciate the ups and downs of our lives. It beautifully mixes deep emotions with messages of hope and togetherness, making it a song that feels meaningful and uplifting

Tash Sultana is a very talented Australian vocalist and multi-instrumentalist. They play the 12-string guitar on this song and their musicality is unlike anything I've ever heard from other modern artists

All her songs have special meanings and her ethereal voice is just magical making her sounding like an angel

Because it has a very nice beat and when listening to it, it feels very relaxing

Because Old songs are great to listen to, with rich rhythms, and they have encouraged me during the low points in my life! No exaggeration, this piece is truly worth revisiting!

Because it's the song I sang to my son when he was a little boy

I like this song because it reminds me of something that my grandpa said. He said that even though we get older, we still feel young

I enjoy listening to chill songs, and the lyrics and melodies match well with my favorite style of music

Listen to the playlist:



CONNECT WITH US

DragonNews magazine is published four times a year and is shared with the HIS and wider Hangzhou communities.

If you would like to contribute an article, have a suggestion for content, or want to ask a question, please email:
marketing@hisdragons.org.cn

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WE ARE SOCIAL

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Xiao Hong Shu

HIS DRAGON WECHAT STICKER SET



Scan the QR code to use the stickers!



"Did you find me?" 99 39 12, 17, 27, 31, 8, 39



★ INTERNATIONAL DAY ★

2025



Uniting more than 50 nationalities!

Save the Date!

Saturday, April 26

If you would like to organize as a country and participate in any way to celebrate your cultural background and community (for example, sharing traditional food, preparing games, performing on stage, or sharing celebrations from your country) contact

Ms. Andrea Stubbs

andreastubbs@hisdragons.org.cn



Once a Dragon, Always a Dragon!



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Founded in 2002, Hangzhou International School was the first international school in Hangzhou and remains the only non-profit, WASC accredited, IB World School in Zhejiang province.

