



# Connections

The ICS School Magazine • Issue 32 | 2023-2024



**inter-community  
school zurich**

EST. 1960

The Inter-Community School is committed to providing a supportive and enabling learning environment in which all members of the community are challenged to achieve their individual potential, encouraged to pursue their passions, and expected to fulfil their responsibilities.

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# Welcome to Connections

The ICS School Magazine • Issue 32 | 2023-2024

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In September, a number of ICS Grade 11 pupils participated in the annual **Round Square International Conference**, set amidst the historic surroundings of Oxford University.

Our Grade 12 students spent a full day at the **Aletsch Glacier** in September, measuring ecosystems, biodiversity, and calculating mass changes.

## September

# Snapshots 2022-2023

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## August



At the beginning of August, ICS welcomed our **new Head of School, Lucy M. Gowdie**. The Chair and the Board of Trustees of ICS, on behalf of the ICS community, wished her a very warm welcome.

For many families, the start of the school year means a new home, a new school, and for some, a new country. In August **we welcomed new families** to the ICS Orientation to make everyone feel at home.





In November, the annual **ICS Lantern Walk** was held. Preschool and Kindergarten families gathered around a bonfire to celebrate the tradition together.



Our Grade 5 Primary students put their German speaking and interviewing skills to the test during a November **regional radio programme**, courtesy of Powerup Radio - a station for and with children.

## November

## October

In October, the Grade 12 **TOK Trip to Verona** provided invaluable context for exploring, sharing, and interpreting knowledge in the Arts, History, and Human Sciences.

We celebrated "**Fancy Dress Day**" at the end of October with fun costumes, and even had a few dinosaurs roaming around the campus.



In December, the ICS Singers warmed up the winter night with festive cheer at the **Singing Christmas Tree**.

At the end of the year, our **ICS Career Fair** provided opportunities to interact with panellists representing careers in a variety of industries.



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In January, we could not help but sing along as our Performing Arts students and talented collaborators put on a spectacular production of ***Grease The Musical***.

As one of 8 schools taking part in the travelling exhibition of student art, ICS was pleased to welcome the **SGIS Exhibition** to our campus in January. The show included the work of 5 of our ICS Secondary student artists.



ICS hosted the **32nd Beyond COP 21 Environmental Symposium**. The first within Switzerland, this event unites schools for climate change awareness and solutions.

In the exhibition of the **Grade 5 PYP Projects**, our learners discovered the responsibilities associated with being internationally minded and how to help create a better and more peaceful world.

## January

## March

## February



Our **Focus Day** in February set an ideal opportunity for students in Grades 6-10 to reflect on goal setting, and become more aware of their social and emotional well-being.

During our Kindergarten **field trip to a local children's theatre** in February, our youngest learners took part in interactive experiences where they explored their imagination and gained insight into performing.





In May, we held one of our most beloved events, the **International Festival and Alumni Reunion** which celebrates the wonderful diversity of our community and the common thread that binds us all - learning.

We also introduced our new **English Language Acquisition Programme: Alegría** in May this year. A bespoke programme, unique to ICS, Alegría supports our EAL learners new to ICS.

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## May

## April

In April, we hosted our first-ever **Spring University Fair** with over 40 representatives from universities in Europe, the UK, and North America.

The school celebrated our **Grade 12 students on their last day on campus** before their IB exams. Spirits were high as our ICS community gave them a memorable send off in April before their exams.



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## June

In June, we came together as a community to celebrate our **Graduating Class of 2023**. This diverse group of 85 students has made an amazing impact on the school.

We ended the year with our **Residential Field Trip Week**, which serves as the closing crescendo to the school year. Students ventured throughout Switzerland, taking their learning outside ICS' walls.





# An introduction from our Head of School

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## **The Next Chapter**

At the dawn of this new year, I write to welcome you to the first edition of our Connections Magazine.

By name, and by design, this publication is aimed at highlighting who we are as a community, connected by one common goal - learning.

In my second year as Head of School, I write with immense excitement at what lies ahead for us, the adventures, the articulation of strategy, the ambition we have for our community of learners.

What follows in these pages are the highlights of the conclusion of our 2022 – 2023 school year, and they speak to our much-celebrated uniqueness.

Having come to better understand what it means to be part of this community, my initial observations of this school remain true, it is a joyous place.

What makes it so, is the energy of our educators, the commitment of our students, and the collective understanding of our families; that ours is a school where students know individual success, where they can pursue their passions, and where the responsibility they have to learn, so that they can live meaningfully and fulfilling lives, is etched into every facet of each new day.

This is the year where we reflect on all we have achieved on the journey of our 2019-2024 Strategic Roadmap. It is the year where we define what Belonging means in our community. It is the year where we reignite our Service-Learning Programmes, and it is the year where we push hard into the spaces of our curriculum that we want to continue to evolve.

I remain steadfast in my belief that the quality of the education provided at our school is unparalleled. That the commitment our educators have to the International Baccalaureate is unrivalled, and that the results of our Graduating Class of 2022 – 2023 are, thus far, unsurpassed in the Greater Zurich Area.

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**This is our school.**

We are a welcoming school, a humble and committed school, and we are a resilient school. From all corners of the globe, we have arrived in this place, and in so doing, we unite to drive our learning, so that our young people can change the world.

Our kind of education is one centred on every individual, knowing who they are, how they learn, and what they dream to be.

Welcome to the pages of our story, and to the beginning of our next chapter.

Yours faithfully,



**Lucy M. Gowdie**  
Head of School

# The Coram Shakespeare Schools Festival

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By **Chris Tierney**, Head of Secondary Performing Arts

*“All the world’s a stage, and all the men and  
women merely players.”*

How apt the above quote proved as a group of dedicated students ranging from Grades 6-10 began rehearsing *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at their lunchtimes. The goal was to participate in a prestigious festival, which would culminate in a performance on a professional stage at the Shaw Theatre in Camden, London.

An exciting first for ICS, this prospect captured the imagination of 32 students, who auditioned for the roles and volunteered for technical duties in readiness for the great adventure. Over the course of a semester, lines were learned, scenes rehearsed, costumes and props sourced, and itineraries discussed as the various parts became whole.

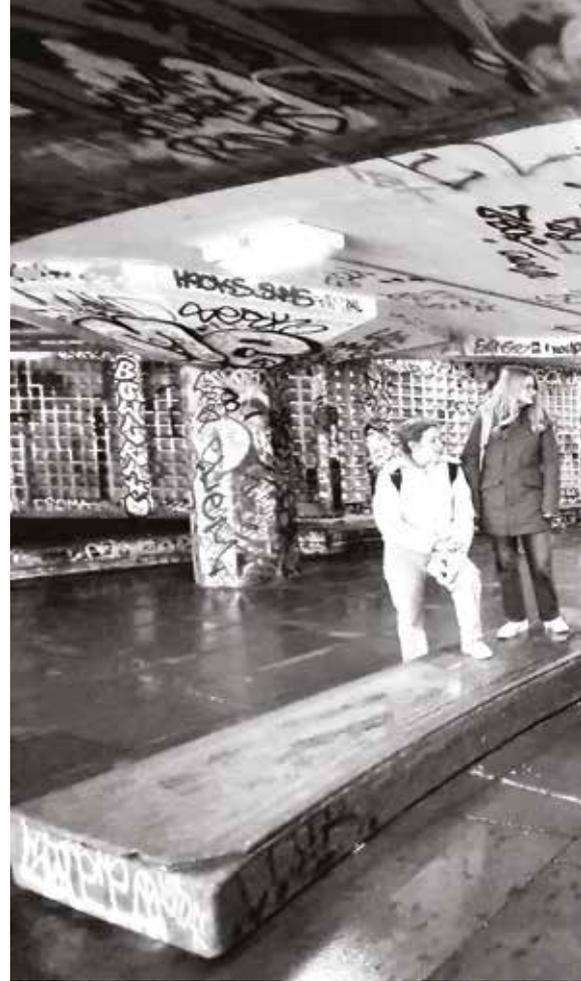
And what an itinerary it was. Departing on a Sunday morning from Klotten to our base in central London, we started with a guided tour of The Globe Theatre, which was a fascinating insight into the performance aspects of staging a play in the time of the Bard. Then followed a backstage tour of the National Theatre, in this incredible space, students discovered the different facets of modern theatre. We then had a fabulous day exploring the world of the making of Harry Potter at Warner Brothers Studios, at which the students' dreams of their childhood literally came to life in front of their eyes. It was a beautiful experience witnessing their sense of wonder.

The group visited two West End shows - the classic *Les Misérables*, leaving not a dry eye in the house as we followed Jean Valjean's struggles and *Back to the Future*, an adventure through time into the '50s. The students were totally thrilled, bouncing out of their seats at the breakneck speed of the story and showstopping tunes.

The group also had unique access to aspects of theatre not normally seen by the public, as we rehearsed our play in professional rehearsal rooms such as Pineapple Studios and The Actors Club, enjoyed a masterclass in stage combat given by professional actors, and felt the resonance of history in the walls of these revered venues.



*The students were show ready and eager to perform for their audience, including a significant number who flew over from Zurich to support our group. And how well they did; after a morning's technical and dress rehearsal under the guidance of the professional theatre staff, ICS was chosen as the performance to end the evening, top of the bill! There were three other performances by other schools preceding ours, all very wonderful, so we were rightly pleased.*



The students performed immaculately. Comments from the professional director included, "This was a truly magical show, and the company told the story with clarity and passion." and "The language was full of texture, and every word was clear. The actors understood their intentions, and the characters were continually trying to have an influence on one another, keeping the language engaging and active." High praise indeed.

The students were then treated to a game of ten-pin bowling and a visit to the Tower of London to cap off a truly amazing experience.

The staff team of Chris Tierney, Beth Hampton, Kelli Horner and Rob McHarg could not have been more proud of the way the group conducted themselves, representing ICS in the best possible way..



Uniting Schools for  
Climate Action:

# Our First Environmental Symposium



By **James Penstone**, Secondary Principal

In March 2023, ICS had the honour of hosting the 32nd Beyond COP 21 environmental symposium. This inaugural event within Switzerland aimed to unite schools by raising awareness and identifying school-based and locally sustainable solutions. Guided by Peter Milne of Target4Green educational consultancy, the symposium provided a platform for empowering students and encouraging collaboration.



*We see this year's symposium as a valuable starting point on a continuous and committed journey towards greater sustainability embedded within the life and physical fabric of the ICS community. We recognize the importance of acknowledging different perspectives and seeking continuous improvement.*

On Friday, 24 March, our school had the honour of hosting the 32nd Beyond COP 21 environmental symposium. Similar events have been hosted in multiple countries since 2016, through the guidance of the founding organiser, Peter Milne of Target4Green educational consultancy. This inaugural event within Switzerland aimed to unite schools by raising awareness and identifying school-based and locally sustainable solutions. Guided by Mr. Milne, the symposium provided a platform for meaningful discussions and inspiring actions.

#### **Preparations and Workshops Setting the Stage**

The symposium itself was prefaced the day before by a series of engaging workshops led by Mr. Milne. Students from Grades 3, 4, 7, 11, and 12, had the opportunity to explore the UN Sustainable Development Goals, examine the causes and responsibilities attached to the climate crisis, and consider how schools can play a crucial role in implementing lasting environmental actions. These interactive sessions served as a solid foundation for the symposium, instilling curiosity and inviting students and staff to make a positive impact.

#### **The Environmental Symposium Unfolds**

The symposium began with inspiring music from some of our talented ICS students. The audience, which assembled within the local Zumikon Gemeindesaal, was comprised of Grade 8 students from our school, as well as representatives from six other schools. Our guest schools were Schule Zumikon, Schule Looren Maur, Rietberg Montessori Schule, ZIS, IS Basel and ISZL.

To launch the day, we shared some research confirming the importance of the topic but also the fact that education can make a significant global contribution to ongoing mitigation efforts. We then introduced Mr. Milne, who presented a wide-ranging overview of the issues. He connected the United Nations sustainability agenda to a number of influential voices in the sphere of environmental responsibility, including a video message from Bill McKibben (the first mainstream author to highlight the realities of global warming).

Following the opening ceremony, the symposium unfolded with a series of breakout sessions. Group discussions and individual reflections centred on key topics such as sustainable practices, biodiversity conservation, renewable energy, waste management, and climate change mitigation. These sessions encouraged students to delve deeper into the pressing environmental issues we face. As an ongoing activity, students pledged to make sustainable choices in their daily lives, promote environmental awareness, and initiate projects that contribute to a greener future.

### **Keynote Speech and Local Exhibitors**

During the symposium, we welcomed Georg Klingler, our keynote speaker representing Greenpeace Switzerland. Mr. Klingler is both a prominent figure in the environmental advocacy scene and the manager of the local Hof Narr farm. His speech, accompanied by compelling data and insightful infographics, provided perspective on the environmental challenges from the Swiss context. He also passionately promoted the adoption of a plant-based diet as a powerful means of reducing our ecological footprint.





The symposium also featured a highly engaging exhibition where local organisations and enterprises showcased real-world sustainable solutions. These exhibits sparked conversations, broadened perspectives, and invited participants to consider innovative approaches to environmental challenges. The exhibition was enthusiastically visited by all participants of the symposium.

#### Empowering Students and Encouraging Collaboration

Another notable highlight of the symposium was the dynamic workshop facilitated by the student-led Environmental Action Team from Grades 11 and 12. These dedicated senior students invited participants from each attending school to share their current and potential environmental solutions from a school perspective. These student-led discussions were carefully planned and enthusiastically delivered, fostering a sense of optimism that there are very worthwhile actions that schools can commit to and also reminding us that we can learn from one another.

We see this year's symposium as a valuable starting point on a continuous and committed journey towards greater sustainability embedded within the life and physical fabric of the ICS community. We recognize the importance of acknowledging different perspectives and seeking continuous improvement.

#### Moving Forward with Purpose

In our efforts to create an engaging and interactive experience for all attendees in the future, we surveyed our Grade 8 students. We value the feedback received from our students, as it provides valuable insights for refining our approach in future environmental conferences hosted here at ICS. In response to this feedback, we are considering new strategies for the upcoming year, such as inviting a multi-grade group of student volunteers instead of the entire Grade 8 cohort.

Overall, we are very excited by the direction paved by this event. Our first environmental symposium not only brought together schools for climate action but also paved the way for exciting possibilities within our school community. By establishing valuable connections with other schools and enterprises, we can collaborate on local initiatives while maintaining a global perspective. This approach has the potential to empower our students to embrace authentic and constructive hope as they become active contributors to a sustainable future.

# Our 2023 Graduation

*“While we know the quality of our curriculum is exceptional, we know more about the quality of our teachers, and today, I honour them for bringing our young people to the end of the chapter of learning at our school.”*

By **Lucy M. Gowdie**, Head of School

In a space that I would usually reserve for strategic updates, I take this opportunity to celebrate this momentous occasion in the lives of our graduates and their families.

It is well known that the Diploma Programme, in all of its rigour, presents many challenges for our young people. Its robust design and renowned depth are often considered a harder year than the first year of college.

Educators do not work typical days. Their lives are defined by the school bell, and their work often lasts long into the evening, as they correct papers, answer emails, and address issues that have arisen throughout the day. The uniqueness of this work is often misunderstood, and only those who exist in the education space can understand the number of hats we wear in one single day.

We are amongst other things, mediators, coaches, mentors, administrators, designers, innovators, assessors, event organisers, role models, facilitators ... the list goes on. But the heart of who we are is teachers who want to inspire in our young people a passion to reach their full potential through the subjects that we teach.

It is our sincere belief that we have done this with the Graduating Class of 2023. That we have instilled in them a sense of self and the ability to drive hard towards their dreams. They are a cohort of respectful, creative, disciplined young people, and we are excited to join their families tomorrow to celebrate their achievements.

It would be remiss not to thank Mr. James Penstone, Mrs. Elinor Osborne, and Ms. Alexandra Carlin, for their leadership, their support, and their guidance of our young people, in this, their final year at the School. I pay homage to them for their belief in every individual who graduated and their commitment to their individual success.

And finally, to the Graduating Class of 2023, thank you. For the gift of your character, for your resolve, and for the contribution you have made to our school. I leave you with the words these words:

*“And then the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom”*

Anaïs Nin



35.5

Mean score of candidates  
awarded the Diploma

77

IB Diploma  
Students

44

Top Score  
of the cohort

96%

Pass Rate

38%

Awarded the  
IB Bilingual Diploma

30.24

World Mean

35.5

ICS Mean

Percentage of ICS  
students scoring over 35

60%

In the pursuit of your passions, and in fulfilling your potential, we honour your effort, and your endeavour. Today is the beginning of the next chapter in a remarkable story - The Story of You. May the pages be penned with words of purpose and of power, and may you write with a confidence born of the courage we gave you; to stay true to who you are, to make bold plans for your future, and to measure your success, not through the words you speak, but through the impact you have. Congratulations to each of you.

**Lucy M. Gowdie**, Head of School

# Our 2023 IB Results

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Congratulations to each and every one of our exceptional graduating class! Your IB diploma results are a testament to your unwavering determination and relentless effort throughout the past two years. Your achievements inspire us all, and I have no doubt that you will continue to shine brightly as you embark on your future endeavours.

**James Penstone**, Secondary Principal

It has been an immense pleasure serving as your DP Coordinator this past year. Your cohort has displayed an undeniable maturity, in the respect that you showed each other and your teachers, the dedication to your studies and passion invested in your future plans. I wish you success in your future pursuits and a tremendous congratulations for your accomplishments.

**Alexandra Carlin**, IB DP Coordinator

# Introducing Alegría

*“Alegría, meaning joy, speaks to the place beyond happiness, a place we hope to lead all students to on this journey of English language acquisition.”*

By **Lucy M. Gowdie**, Head of School

The words our children think in, read in, and listen in, are shaped by the cultures into which they are born, the languages of their homes, and the multitude of countries that they journey through in their lives.

Our school has been an English-medium school since its inception. Cementing its place in Zurich as the only IB Continuum School in the region, ICS is a school renowned for the quality of our teachers, the depth of the learning experience, our exceptional Diploma Programme results, and our commitment to every individual.

As a truly international school, we celebrate the diversity of all learners in our environment, those who come into this school with a multitude of languages other than English, and who work with our exceptional teachers to advance their English proficiency in the current programmes enabling them to access the depth of the IB curriculum across the Primary, Middle, and Diploma years.

At ICS, we have recognised that there is a need to enhance our beginner English offering, in a space that allows for intensive instruction and the necessary support for students to succeed. Thus, it is with much excitement that I introduce to our community today, Alegría, the ICS Intensive English Acquisition Programme.

Commencing this August, Alegría is an exciting moment in the life of our school, one that celebrates our commitment to being a school where everyone belongs, and where our students feel safe to be themselves, to learn at their own pace, and to lead their learning.

Unique to the Inter-Community School and driven by a commitment to enabling students to learn in the English medium, the programme is designed to propel students' English language proficiency while working in conjunction with our Middle Years Programme, guided by our expert English as an Additional Language educators.

For prospective students interested in entering the School, but with a beginner standard of English that would usually preclude them, Alegría allows students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 to start their learning journey with ICS.

We are a proudly diverse school, a welcoming, and committed school, and Alegría speaks to our determination to extend the offering we provide while holding fast to the traditional medium of instruction in our school – English.

We look forward to enrolling our first students in this exciting new programme this school year.



# ALEGRÍA

English Language Programme

## Alumni Profile:

# *Julie Cwidak*

Finding Your Path, How Discovering  
Your Passions Can Lead to a New World  
of Possibilities



We checked in with class of 2019 ICS alumnus, Julie Cwidak, to learn about what she has been up to since graduation. During an internship in her gap year, Julie discovered a newfound love for the fascinating and fast-paced world of the food industry. Now pursuing a bachelor's degree in food technology, Julie explains why it is so important to forge your own unique path forward for your future.

After graduating from ICS with an IB Diploma in May of 2019, I took a gap year to allow me some time to determine what I wanted to study. I was fortunate to secure an internship at Midor AG (now known as Delica AG), which is a company in Meilen that produces biscuits, snacks, and ice cream for Migros.

Throughout this nine-month internship, I was able to gain many insights into the different departments and functionalities of the company. I had the opportunity to work with different production teams, the quality assurance and control department, and even learned how to use the packaging machine on the Blévíta production line.

During this time, I fell in love with the fascinating and fast-paced world of the food industry. As my internship came to an end, it was time for me to decide what I wanted to study at university. After conducting extensive research about the possibilities of studying food technology in the Zurich area, I discovered that I could pursue this at a University of Applied Sciences. However, at the time, I believed that a University of Applied Sciences was not the best choice for me, and with a degree of hesitancy, I applied to the University of Zurich to study Biology instead.

While at the University of Zurich, I could not stop thinking back to my internship at Midor and quickly realised that food technology was my true passion. One semester into my Biology degree, I decided to pursue a Bachelor's degree in food technology instead.

At the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences, work experience is deemed extremely important and is, in most cases, a prerequisite for beginning your studies. In my case, I needed 12 months of work experience in the food industry. Therefore, I headed back to Midor to fulfill the required 12 months of work experience. During this time, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to help with the fusion of five companies. My main task was to assist the quality team in Meilen to ensure that all of the documentation was correctly stored in the new technology systems. In addition, I also helped out in production as well as with daily quality control tasks.

In September of 2021, I started my Bachelor's degree programme in food technology at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences in Wädenswil (ZHAW) in the School of Life Sciences and Facility Management.

*I am thankful for the opportunities I had in learning on the job as an intern, and I would encourage anyone thinking of taking a gap year to pursue a role in an organization and area that they find interesting. You never know where your passions may lead you!*

I am incredibly grateful that I was able to make the switch early on and enroll at ZHAW. I have come to understand something about myself ... I learn best by doing, and I can fulfill this right where I am in Wädenswil. I have already been able to work on projects with different Swiss food companies which is learning by doing in its purest form.

My ICS degree has afforded me many opportunities in the food industry, and the possibility of continuing my academic studies if I choose to. I plan to pursue a Master's degree at Wädenswil or, potentially abroad. As I am currently very intrigued by the engineering and production optimisation aspect of the food industry, I am very keen to pursue either a Master's in life science with a specialisation in applied computational science or join the Master's programme in food technology at the Technical University of Berlin or the Technical University of Munich. While I have not yet made a firm decision regarding which field in particular to pursue my Master's studies, I have confirmed that the Bachelor's programmes at ZHAW offer a broader curriculum in food technology than the Master's programs I am interested in would require for incoming Master's students.

I am thankful for the opportunities I had in learning on the job as an intern, and I would encourage anyone thinking of taking a gap year to pursue a role in an organization and area that they find interesting. You never know where your passions may lead you!

# Alumni Interview with *Valérie* *Besanceney*

Learning to Thrive Through Challenging  
Transitions, One ICS Alumnus' Journey



We spoke with ICS alumnus Valérie Besanceney about what made her time at ICS so special. Originally Dutch, and Swiss by nationality, Valérie grew up changing schools and countries four times by the time she graduated high school. Her adventure started at ICS when she was just five years old and continued throughout her lifetime.

*“Security comes from being responded to sensitively when something difficult happens [...] where mobility unravels attachment, belonging rebuilds it.”*

When I look back at my time at ICS, I remember my first day of school in 1983. As a five-year-old, this was my first move from my little town in the Netherlands, my first international school experience, and my first day learning English. I found myself wandering the hallways of ICS Zürich as I desperately needed the bathroom, and I had no idea how to ask my teacher in English, so I snuck out of the classroom and went on an expedition.

I must have been scared and lonely, but I don't recall it as a bad memory. Why? Because my very lovely teacher at the time eventually found me (in the bathroom). She didn't scold me or shame me, but comforted me and gently brought me back to the classroom. I fondly recall my time there and firmly believe that the kindness shown by my teacher that day served as a stepping stone to my belief that anyone can thrive through a challenging transition when they feel “safe, supported, and seen”.

Today, when anyone speaks of ICS Zürich, forty-some years later, I remember how the kindness of others made my time there so special. I was made to feel welcome and cared for, and during my three years there, I felt a strong sense of belonging. It was essentially my first experience with positive transitions-care.

In international schools, the importance of positive transitions-care and attachment security is coming to the forefront through research and practice. Part of the reason is that even if our students are physically present, whether in-person or virtual, they will not be able to reap all the benefits of international education - or any education, for that matter- if unaddressed emotions are impeding their ability to learn.

*Setting up your students, staff and families for success in their transitions is key to a successful learning journey and will put them at an advantage wherever they will go in life.*

Setting up your students, staff and families for success in their transitions is key to a successful learning journey and will put them at an advantage wherever they will go in life.

When I became a teacher myself, the first thing I would cover on anyone's first day of school was where the bathrooms were. I would encourage parents to help prepare their children linguistically when moving (Support Your Child While You Move- Top 12 Tips). My priority has always been to support students in their transitions so that they are ready to learn, and my passion has always been positive transitions-care.

Today, I find myself in the fortunate position to serve as the Executive Director for Safe Passage Across Networks (SPAN), an organization that offers a home to anyone committed to healthy transitions and attachment security. Our organization connects, equips and refreshes transitions-care providers.

I believe that well-managed transitions can add significant value to a life and a learning journey. The work of well-managed transitions cannot be done in isolation and is best done in a team, one that includes all of the stakeholders at a school. It should support and empower students, parents and staff to effectively navigate transitions, whether they are Leavers, Stayers or Arrivers.



**Potential, Passion and Responsibility.**



# inter-community school zurich

EST. 1960

potential • passion • responsibility

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