Connections

The ICS School Magazine • Issue 33 | 2023-2024

ICS **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.

Welcome to
Connections

The ICS School Magazine • Issue 33 | 2023-2024

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Education Conversations

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

This September, our school hosted members of the Executive Leadership Team of the Anglo-Chinese School Singapore. Expressing interest in how we are designing our Strategic Roadmap, and how we are integrating innovation and wellbeing into this journey, we spent two hours discussing the challenges and the excitement that is education today.

It was a proud moment for me - to listen to my colleagues across the Primary, Middle, and Senior Schools talk with such passion, with such position, for the work that they have done and continue to do.

There were two key elements of this discussion that brought to the fore the imperative of designing a roadmap that prepares our young people for their future.

Innovation

Both schools presented views on how being innovative brought with it a certain expectation; that innovation and the cost associated with it required an overabundance of resourcing. We took the position, and have long held this position, that innovation is about our ideas, about implementing them, and creating value from them. The value for us is the richness of the learning experience for the child, not the products we purchase. Innovation, our ideas, must be considered deeply in the broader context of the needs of today's learners and the expectations incumbent upon them as they grow. We are excited that we have devoted significant space to this in our strategic planning, and as we work with our community to align this road, we are excited by what lies ahead.

Wellbeing

Both schools spoke to the necessity of designing a wellbeing framework that supported the whole child, that was understood by the child, and that enhanced their resilience, their character, and their confidence. Having completed my Master's degree with an analysis of Eastern perspectives on education, with a specific focus on China, and the traditional modes of instruction, it is known to often be difficult for schools in the East to find the equilibrium required to inject pastoral programmes effectively into their rigorous academic curricula. Many of the questions from our colleagues from Singapore centred on this challenge.

In both conversations, we discussed the importance of engaging our parent community and of sharing in the rationales, the philosophies, and the legacies that constitute the cultures we have created and are attempting to evolve.

We will continue to open our doors to such dialogue, to learn more from schools around the globe and to share our story as we begin to draft the strategic phase of our exceptional school and share in the successes of it.

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Embracing Internationalism and Multilingualism at ICS Inter-Community School Zurich

by **James Penstone**, Secondary Principal

From the picturesque landscapes that surround our school to the vibrant minds that inhabit our classrooms, we are a community bonded by a shared goal: to learn and to grow together. **Our school is more than a place of education; it is also a platform for cultural exchange and international friendship.** As we conclude the Autumn semester, we should pause to celebrate the very special blend of internationalism and multilingualism that helps define our school.

Arabic, Mandarin, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Turkish, Hindi, Korean, Swiss German, Polish, and Hebrew are amongst the 76 languages registered by our community. Our students bring to life a symphony of languages, bridging cultures and minds, and each language spoken carries a wealth of heritage and identity.

Our students currently represent a grand total of **64 nationalities**, all of which contribute to the rich tapestry of our community. But our international nature doesn't stop at borders; it extends to the **76 languages spoken by our students** – at least those that have been officially registered with the school.

Beyond the simple celebration of diversity which these facts invite, there are well-researched benefits to our students' collective learning. For example, exposure to different languages and cultures nurtures empathy, broadens perspectives, and cultivates cognitive skills.

On a bright early morning this week, as I stood outside the Diploma Studies Centre, I watched two Grade 11 students converse intensely with one another. I had no clue as to what they were discussing as I do not have their language, but I knew they were perfectly connected in that moment. Whether it's the laughter that resonates during lunchtime conversations or the range of languages heard in our corridors, we should cherish such daily moments that remind us why our school's name, the Inter-Community School, is so apt.

Here is to another year of growth, learning, and embracing the wonderful diversity that shapes us.

Building Towards an Exciting Future

by **Nathaniel Atherton**, Primary Principal

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As we build towards an exciting future with our next strategic plan, **Zum Mond Fliegen**, we began by capturing our communities' thinking on the past, present, and future of ICS. To do this, we scheduled six strategic community workshops held throughout September and October of this year.

As the school engages with the community in these events, we are trying to uncover insights into two questions:

What will an ICS graduate need in the future?

How might the school change to meet the needs of future graduates?

We kicked off our first workshop on Tuesday 12 September, with twenty-two members of our community joining us at ICS for this exciting session. Five more workshops followed, each with a variety of participants, insights, and ideas generated.

In each of the workshops, we outlined the importance of our next strategic plan, given the backdrop of societal change, and also helped frame these workshops within the larger strategic planning process.

As the workshop turned to focus on the two aforementioned questions, student representatives, parents, teachers, and school leaders worked collaboratively to envision the needs of the future. Participants engaged in a range of activities as they were asked to imagine the skills, mindsets, and competencies needed for a rapidly changing world as we built portraits of an 'ICS 2030+ Graduate'.

Once collaborative teams had completed the portraiture, we began the final section of the workshop, where we asked community members to re-envision the systems and structure of 'school' to meet the demands of our ICS 2030+ Graduate.

We look forward to sharing the findings of these sessions with you, and I would like to thank the student representatives, parents, teachers, and school leaders who took part in these extraordinary sessions. **Together we are building the future of education at ICS.**

The morning's rich discourse led to the creation of some wonderful products (portraits and suggested enhancements), which will begin to capture some of the thinking that will inform our future road map. We look forward to more engagement from community members as we build our next strategic plan.

Beginning With the End In Mind

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By **Tiffany Crook**, Alegría Lead Teacher, Intensive English Language Acquisition

Last spring, ICS Inter-Community School Zurich announced the creation of an intensive English language acquisition program - Alegría. In August 2023, we welcomed our first Alegria students. They have come to ICS from a variety of educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, seeking access to an IB education. Relatively new to English, these students are fundamentally linked by their desire to communicate, to share, and to understand.

Not only are they learning a new language, they are learning about a new language, and through a new language

(Halliday, 2004) .

However, this language acquisition journey is not just about learning words and syntax or how to conjugate verbs; it is about belonging. It is about envisioning a world where these students can connect with diverse cultures and perspectives. As our Alegría students learn in, about, and through a new language, they are opening doors to new worlds and ways of thinking. In the context of learning English as an Additional Language (EAL), the emphasis shifts from mere linguistic skills to the broader aim of intercultural fluency.

Learning a new language can be daunting, but "beginning with the end in mind" (Covey, 2013) can provide our Alegría students with the motivation they need to persevere. Each challenge faced and overcome along this journey will strengthen their sense of purpose and belonging.

By starting out with these clear end goals, I intend to help the Alegría students acquire a level of proficiency that will allow them to access the curriculum, while also celebrating the cultural richness they bring to the ICS community. The Alegría programme embraces multilingualism and encourages students to take pride in their diverse

language skills. The Alegría classroom is an inclusive and supportive environment. It is a safe space that aims to give our English language learners the freedom to harness their entire language repertoire, enabling them to feel empowered and poised to realise their potential. The very act of language acquisition, undertaken with a clear goal in sight, cultivates resilience, empathy, and adaptability. It is also pivotal in ensuring accessibility to an IB education for a diverse range of students.

As we come to the end of the first month of classes in Alegría, we are keeping the end in mind.

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Activating Thinking for MYP Language Acquisition Success

by **Anna Hasic**, Secondary French Language Acquisition Teacher

The Middle Years Programme (MYP) is designed as a framework of learning that encourages students to become creative, critical, and reflective thinkers. But what does this mean exactly for language acquisition students? How do we support our students to think critically about their language learning so they can succeed as competent communicators?

To answer these questions perhaps we should consider current theories that have been proven to activate thinking and contemplate how they can be tailored to language learners.

Glatthorn and Baron (1991) pointed out that thinking is activated when one is in a *state of doubt about what to do or believe*. In response to that doubt, a question arises. The process that ensues to answer the question is what determines a good thinker. They concluded, therefore, that the production of authentic questions for which students really want to know the answers is the foundation for good thinking.

Marzano (2001) echoed the importance of meaningful questioning to activate thinking by building on Bloom's Taxonomy. With the addition of competencies focused on thinking about thinking (metacognition) and the importance of learning to the individual (self-system), he concluded that if there were *no beliefs that would render a given task important, then the individual will not engage in the task or will engage with low motivation*.

The theories briefly outlined above suggest the following; students need to have important and meaningful questions they want answered for critical thinking to take place.

So how do we help our students ask questions? More specifically, how do we get our students to ask questions about language acquisition?

In MYP, students learn language, learn about language, and learn through language

(Halliday 1985).

Ideally, we would like our students to ask questions about these three facets of language learning in the language they are learning. Many linguistics and cognitive thinking theorists, such as Chomsky and Pinkler, have suggested that we verbalize thinking in our native language, and so asking someone to ask and answer questions in a foreign language is a monumental task. However, **recent research in bilingualism, specifically *compound* and composite bilinguals (people that learn a second language during their early childhood and adolescence respectively) has shown that they "often think in the language they are speaking, regardless of which one it is."** This is promising news for language teachers as it suggests that as learners become more competent in a language they can start to ask and answer questions in that language.

Thinking questions based on Marzano's taxonomy (2001)

How important is this to me?

What emotions do I feel when discussing this?

Me

What is clear and not clear to me when discussing this?

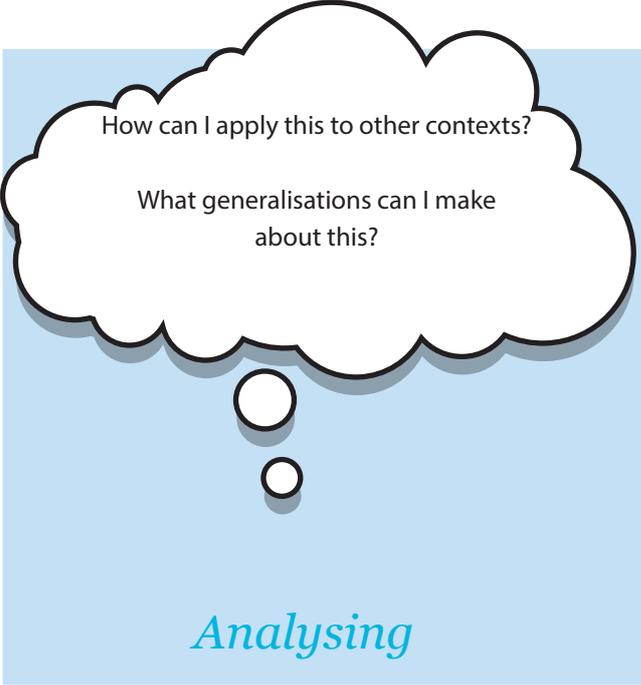How accurate is my understanding of this?

About thinking

How could I express this visually?

What is the main idea of this?

Understanding

What information have I seen or heard about this?

Retrieving

How does this
apply to real life?

What decisions or conclusions can I
make about this?

Using

How can I apply this to other contexts?

What generalisations can I make
about this?

Analysing

Language teachers should guide students through this process by providing opportunities for them to be curious and ask questions. For example, an ideal opportunity to do this is through MYP inquiry-based learning when introducing or planning units of inquiry. By discussing and reviewing factual, conceptual, and debatable inquiry questions and through Marzano-based questions, language acquisition thinking comes alive.

So, it is through the process of questioning that we can support our budding linguists to become thinkers of language and achieve language acquisition success.

Unlocking Tomorrow's Potential

by Integrating AI Literacy into school Curriculum: ICS initiatives and future directions

by **Zakir Hossain**, Secondary Librarian

The world is witnessing a technological revolution, unlike any other time in history. Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is at the forefront of this transformation. As in many other sectors, the application and adoption of GenAI to education can eliminate many challenges we face today and improve teaching, learning, and assessment practices, which many of us believe accelerate progress towards sustainable development goal 4. To me, adopting AI means adopting and addressing a multifaceted confluence of technological, organizational, cultural, and societal issues.

Indistinguishably, it is important for our education system to keep pace with the rapid change in technology in a world where technological advancements continue to reshape the way we learn, teach, and respond. As a result, our students need to be better prepared with artificial intelligence (AI) literacy - the ability to identify, understand, develop ideas, and critically evaluate AI technologies, their applications, and ethical implications.

However, the potential benefits of GenAI come with risks and challenges, including ethics, integrity, and intellectual property rights among others. Studies indicate that the education sector is largely unprepared for integrating these rapidly evolving tools ethically and pedagogically. According to a recent UNESCO survey[1] of over 450 schools and universities, less than 10% have formal policies and/or guidelines concerning using GenAI applications. In fact, UNESCO warned that GenAI was being implemented rapidly in schools without adequate scrutiny, checks, or regulations.

As part of its efforts to address ethical GenAI use at school, UNESCO published its first-ever K-12 Artificial Intelligence Curricula[2] mapping in 2022. The report recommends, among other things, that AI curricula be built that are agnostic to platforms and brands, which means the curriculum content is based on AI theory, allowing students to apply these principles across multiple technologies with multiple choices. A focus on fostering creativity in developing AI technologies and contextual ethics is also suggested in the report.

In light of this, schools should play a significant role in teaching AI literacy in pre-university years. To provide structured GenAI educational experiences, schools can align AI literacy as part of their existing information and digital literacy and/or academic integrity literacy spectrum that covers the basics of AI, its applications, and its ethical considerations including helping students become informed, responsible, and innovative users of AI technology.

1 https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-survey-less-10-schools-and-universities-have-formal-guidance-ai

2 https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-releases-report-mapping-k-12-artificial-intelligence-curricula

Since the release of ChatGPT, ICS has taken a number of initiatives to understand and to some extent integrate AI into teaching and learning in line with the IB guidelines.

- As part of our DP Core Curriculum, we introduced AI tools such as ChatGPT and Elicit to our Class 2024 in May 2023 with additional guidelines on how to cite and reference an AI- generated text, when to use them, and to what extent.

- In order to better understand and/or assess students' familiarity with AI tools, ICS Theory of Knowledge teachers collaborated with the Secondary Digital Coach and conducted a project that involved students exploring a multitude of emerging AI tools for generating texts, images, sounds, artwork, etc.

- Considering ChatGPT's proliferation, and the various opportunities and challenges it brings to education, a committee dedicated to ICS academic integrity policy discussed and added a section 'Guidance on the use of AI tools in the DP to address the ethical uses of AI-generated texts, acceptable and unacceptable practices in the DP.

- Current Grade 9 students just completed an inquiry project 'Making Sense of the 4th Industrial Revolution' as part of their Individual & Societies class. The student researchers explored an area of AI and its impact on human lives and work in response to the prompt "Innovation and technological development can change the way we live and work."

- Last but not least, a Professional Learning Community (PLC) was established for teachers who are AI enthusiasts who started to explore various usefulness of AI in 'teaching to learning to assessment' and the ethical implementation of AI at ICS.

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Moving forward: How can ICS make a difference?

Integrating AI Literacy with the existing Information Literacy and/or Digital Citizenship Curriculum: I feel that the introduction of AI literacy in schools should be gradual, with content that is age-appropriate. Making AI literacy part of ICS information literacy and digital citizenship curricula is essential rather than a standalone initiative. Students who are younger may begin by discussing basic AI concepts, while older students may explore more technical aspects. Among others, a number of things should be discussed in class, including bias, privacy concerns, ethical issues, and acknowledging the information sources via citation and referencing. Most ethical challenges related to GenAI usage can be addressed by an effective and dynamic academic integrity policy. This is an area where school library professionals can be of great assistance. Additionally, school librarians have been teaching information evaluation and analyzing bias for years; AI is just the latest tool.

Differentiated Assessment

A recent article "Employing the Interactive Oral to Mitigate Threats to Academic Integrity From ChatGPT" by Newell[3] (2023) discusses the potential risks of academic misconduct associated with ChatGPT. The article suggests that interactive oral assessments, which require students to engage in conversation and demonstrate their knowledge of a topic in real-time, can be used to mitigate these risks. By implementing interactive oral assessments, ICS educators can balance assessment security and academic integrity while providing students with opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of the material. Additionally, teachers should hold honest discussions about ChatGPT and modeling to promote integrity among students.

Staff Professional Development

As AI technology is still an emerging subject area, government agencies, schools and teachers have limited knowledge from which to develop AI competencies and curricula. Teachers need training and ongoing professional development to teach AI literacy effectively. Investing in teacher training programs and resources should be a priority for the ICS 2024-2029 strategic plan.

3 https://doi.org/10.1037/stl0000371

Grade 12 Biology Students Visit the UNESCO Biosphäre Entlebuch

By **Sean Healey**, Head of Department Secondary Science

On 06 September, the ICS Grade 12 Biology students visited the UNESCO Biosphäre Entlebuch. During the trip, students had the opportunity to learn about the pre-Alpine moor and karst landscapes in the global network of around 700 biosphere reserves. The UNESCO Biosphere Entlebuch are based on the principles of sustainable development. The Entlebuch region, encompassing seven municipalities, follows the ideals of the UNESCO "Man and the Biosphere" program. Through the pillars of preservation, development, education, and research, the UNESCO biosphere reserve is committed to safeguarding the well-being of both people and the environment, in the present and for generations to come.
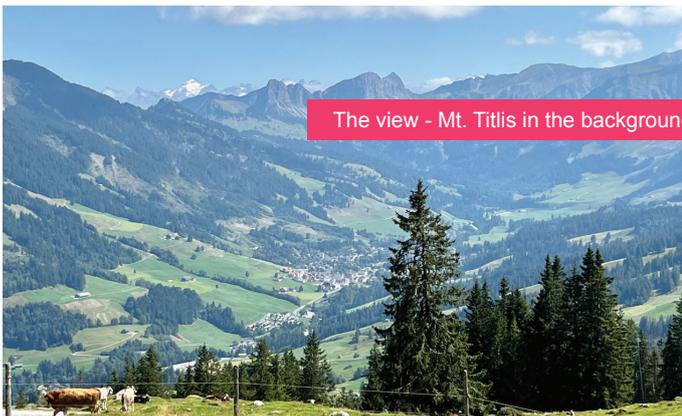

The view - Mt. Titlis in the background.
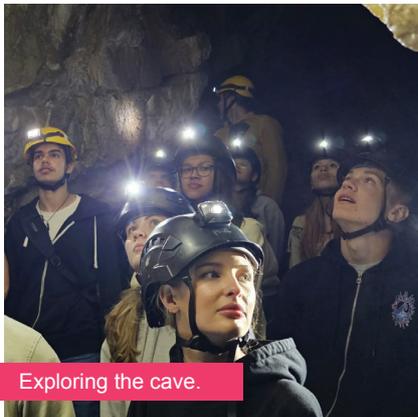
Exploring the cave.

This trip was part of the preparation for the upcoming Biology IAs. Students visited several different ecosystems including a raised bog, a limestone karst and a limestone cave. The biodiversity and the factors affecting each of the ecosystems were discussed, as well as how these could be measured and compared in an investigation.

The highlight of the trip for most students was descending 15m into a limestone cave, which at 7°C was quite cool compared to the 25°C sunshine outside. Inside the cave, the students saw stalactites, stalagmites, a tiny cave crab swimming in a puddle, and at one point were asked to turn off their headlamps and experience absolute darkness.
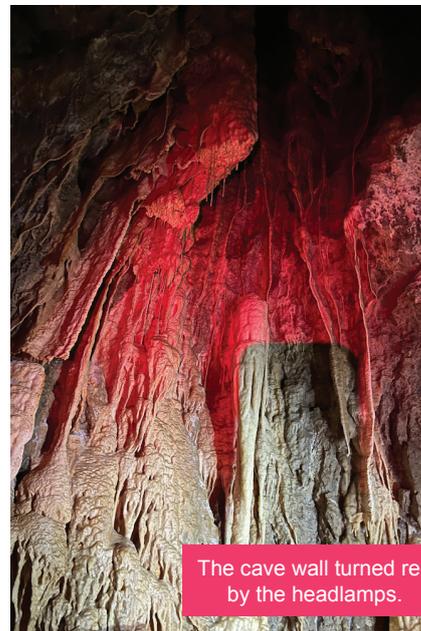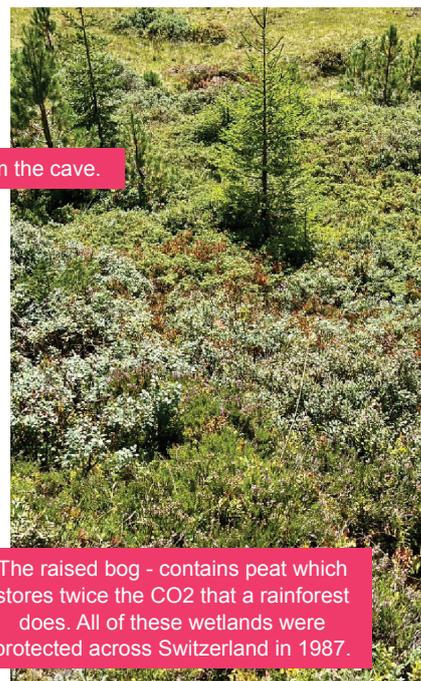

The cave wall turned red by the headlamps.

Mr.Underhill emerging from the cave.

Our guide explaining the properties of the bog.


The raised bog - contains peat which stores twice the CO2 that a rainforest does. All of these wetlands were protected across Switzerland in 1987.

Grade 12 Verona Trip

By **Simon Underhill**, Secondary Biology Teacher

This year's Grade 12 cohort were afforded an exciting opportunity to deepen their understanding of the Theory of Knowledge course by travelling to Verona, Italy, from the 01-03 October 2023. The rich cultural and historical attractions of this ancient city provided a wonderful context in which students could explore the purpose, production, sharing and interpretation of knowledge in the Arts, History and the Sciences.
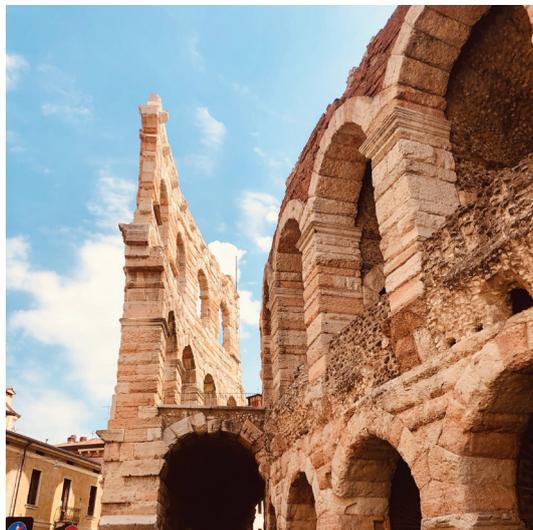
The students enjoyed a full itinerary over the two-and-a-half days, including visiting museums, city walking and historical tour, rafting the Adige River and being awe-struck by the Verona Amphitheatre, one of the best preserved Roman arenas in Italy. We also enjoyed an Italian meal together as a cohort (all 72 people!) and the students were able to explore the restaurants and cafés in the old town for their lunches and final dinner.

The arena itself provided the culmination of our exploration of the possible links between the history and culture of the city and the TOK Prescribed Title Essays. On our last morning, each TOK class took a different corner of the arena to discuss their assigned title. Two students from each class then rotated through the others to share insights and observations, allowing for rich discussion amidst the magnificent backdrop of the arena.

Students were then afforded some free time to explore the city on their own and to enjoy a final Italian meal, before we returned to Zurich on the evening train, exhausted but in good spirits.

Parents' Association

by **Christel Ahlawat**, PA Communications

The ICS Parents' Associations' primary objective is to build community within the ICS parent community, along with fostering Communication, supporting families in transition, and encouraging broad-based participation through volunteer opportunities across the year.

The start of the school year marks new beginnings and also welcomes new and existing families to ICS.

The **Transitions Team**, led by Angela Cochran, held a welcome coffee for new families in our community at Caffe Italia 2000 in Zumikon on the first day of school. Meeting with families in this small setting affords the opportunity to connect with ICS parent representatives and answer the many questions there are as a new arrival. In addition, Christina Fryer of New in Zurich offered a workshop for newcomers in September covering everything from public transport, recycling and shopping tips, to fun facts about Switzerland and driving licences.

During the **Welcome Back Coffee** that we organize at the beginning of each school year, we were happy to catch up with known faces post summer and discover new ones!

The ICS Parent Community offers many opportunities for building connections with fellow parents.

These opportunities include:

Parent Clubs, led by Marie Vlasek, are off to a great start. Close to 30 clubs are offered this year from the popular Hiking Club to Wine Club, Museum Club, and more. In addition, there are several Book Clubs to choose from and newly formed Floral arrangement club and Parents teach Parents club. Parent Clubs are a great way to meet fellow parents while pursuing one's interest.

Class and Grade Coffees kicked off in the middle of September to gather parents with children in each class (Primary) or grade (Secondary). This opportunity to connect with fellow parents in your childs' grade is always helpful, especially for new families.

The first **Parents' Association General Membership Meeting** was held at the end of September. In this meeting, parents were briefed on the PA events and financials, in addition to getting familiar with the newly created clubs and the Performing Arts Booster Program. Elinor Osborne, ICS Interim Director of Student Life, joined us to discuss how ICS considers Student Life and to answer parents' questions about this first term program and what's to come.

Around the same time, we also had our **Community Information and Services expo** where 40 local service providers were at school to present their services. This expo is an opportunity to get to know about a wide range of professional services (translators, decorators, party planners, tailors, tax advisors, etc.), after-school activities for the kids and much more!

Neighbourhood Coffees. Seven areas surrounding ICS comprise the Neighbourhood groups. Parents can join these groups based on the area in which they live.
The Neighbourhood groups are a great way to meet families in the same area and also discuss and share specifics of that area. Recycling protocols are always a popular topic at the first coffees of the year, which occurs in October.

For a few years now, the PA has been organizing some Parents/School conversations a few times a year. So far this year, we have had 2 conversations, one with our Head of School, Lucy Gowdie, who discussed her first year at ICS Zurich and talked us through her achievements and the plans for the future. We also had Allison Ochs, who is a returning external speaker who continued to educate the parents about digital safety.

The awaited **Halloween Trunk or Treat** party, one of the key events organized by the PA and our precious volunteers, returned this year once again and didn't disappoint! Fabulously decorated car trunks where kids could collect candies, enjoy games stands, an arts and crafts corner, a haunted house and treasure hunt, a costume contest and a wonderful spread of food were the highlights of this new edition!

Many more events are yet to come including our famous Winter Market, the newly created Spring party and the International Festival will be the main highlights of the coming months! We are looking orward to meeting all of you and sharing these great community events together!

Upcoming Events

2 December:	ICS Winter Market
11 January:	New In Zurich Welcome with Christina Fryer
15-19 January:	Class and Grade Coffees
25 January:	PA Parent/School Partnership Conversation

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