



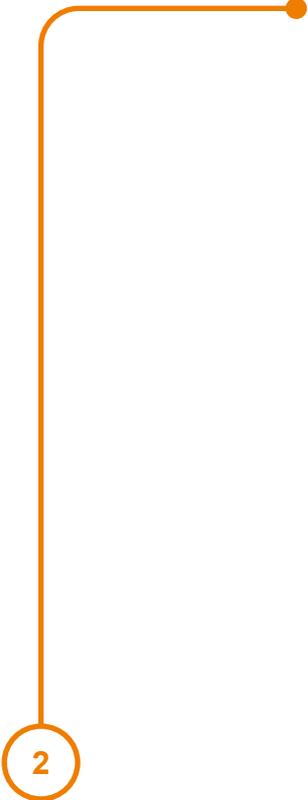
Connections

The ICS School Magazine • Issue 36 | 2024-2025



**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 36 | 2024-2025

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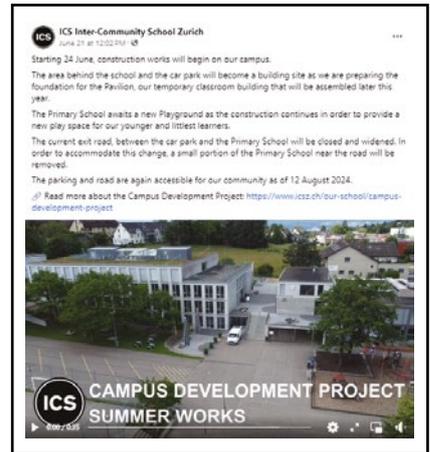
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ICS Inter-Community School Zurich



ICS Inter-Community School Zurich

One, but Many.

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

Sunday 26 May was one like no other in the story of our school.

The sun shone, the sales soared and the community centred itself on what we are renowned for, our togetherness.

A hallmark of who we are as people, the International Festival is a tradition, a ritual, a moment in time that celebrates the uniqueness of us.

I was reminded the other day by a colleague that one of the more powerful elements of our school is not that we are 'international' but that we are 'community.' What a powerful statement to make, what a truth we should continue to tell.

Our kind of education centres on the foundation laid some sixty years ago, the bedrock of our formation, and our identity. To see this so alive in our culture is truly joyful.

We are a microcosm of society, a melting pot of languages, of life lessons; we are the place of gathering in an increasingly secular society when triumph or tribulation abounds.

On Sunday 26 May, as was the case decades ago, our Parents' Association and our volunteers planned, prepared and produced a resounding success story.

It would be remiss of me not to extend my deep and sincere thanks to Nienke Sijbring, hard to miss in her orange hat, but here for weeks on end before



hand preparing and planning, we are ever so grateful Nienke, for the energy and the enthusiasm you brought to this tradition. And in keeping with one of the most successful years in our story, the Parents' Association, and their unwavering belief in the power of community have brought us together with positivity and with pride.

As we prepared for the final weeks of school, with so much to look forward to, we are excited to share with you our strategic direction, our 2024 success stories and our Six Steps of Summer – the beginning of our building project.

There is much to look forward to, but today, we look back on the weekend that was, with nothing but pride in who we are, what we believe in and the thing that unites us – Learning.

TOP SECRET

community school

zurich

community school

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

There are moments in leadership where you are put under enormous pressure, where you feel you are prepared for what may come your way but, in education, a leader must remind themselves that they are working with the people, for the people, that one must do what is right, not what is popular, and this can at times, be unpredictable.

In my most challenging meeting in the second week of June, subject: The Six Steps of Summer, I met with my Top Secret Staffers, in preparation for the launch of our Campus Development Project. Each Staffer representing a key area of the build, and providing (rather direct and very constructive) feedback.

With articulate and challenging questions, representations made on behalf of their peers, and a colour scheme that would put Gaudi to shame, it was an intense thirty minutes in my calendar.

Despite the high expectations, the meeting went well, and each staffer was introduced to their summer mission:

- Widen the Road,
- Build a new Playground,
- Start the Pavilion,
- Build Green Steps,
- Repair the Black top, and
- Return to School

It is clear that, from 24 June, much has been changing at the school. Now, upon their return from the summer break, our students will step into a new and exciting time in the life of the school. When I asked, in the meeting, how the students felt about the changes, they wrote, happy, excited, ready, and nervous. I must say, I share the last emotion earnestly, but if we were not nervous, it would mean we did not care, and so I am content to sit with this feeling over the coming months.

It is my hope that you, their parents, have accessed the updated website, and taken note of the Memorandum provided that highlights logistical changes that you could see over the past month. We keep updating this information at the beginning of each month, and keep our community informed of changes to the campus as we begin to write the next chapter of our story.

The involvement of our young people in the development and design of our school is about to commence, as they consider how we plan for a sustainable school that respects the environment and stands tall in our village for decades to come. We are a humble school, not an ostentatious one, and so we are preparing to honour our history in a way that builds upon our current design and the considerations for how learners learn today, and tomorrow.

We updated our social media platforms over summer, giving our families insight into what is happening at school while you were away. Some two decades in the making, this is the most exciting time for us all, and should you have any questions about what is occurring over the break, do not hesitate to reach out to the Top Secret Staffers, who know exactly what they can anticipate upon their return to their school.

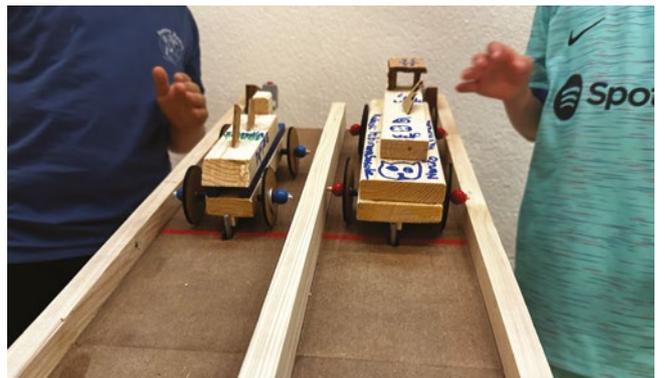
Building Essential Skills Through Intentional Social Design

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By **Nathaniel Atherton**, Primary Principal

At ICS, the development of essential skills is not just a goal; it is an intrinsic part of our educational DNA. The International Baccalaureate (IB) framework guides us, emphasising five key Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills: Social, Thinking, Research, Self-Management, and Communication.

In primary education, these foundational skills are more than just a part of the curriculum; they are the bedrock of a child's learning journey, shaping an ecosystem that transcends traditional classroom boundaries.



Lev Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist, had a profound insight: learning is inherently social. We absorb knowledge through our interactions and communications with others. These theories became even more clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time that underscored the human desire to learn together, particularly when physically apart. Not surprisingly given Aristotle, who was referred to by mediaeval Muslim scholars as “The First Teacher”, famously stated that humans are by nature social animals. This perspective, revolutionary in its simplicity, emphasises our educational philosophy at ICS. At ICS, our methods ensure that students are constantly interacting and learning from one another through group work, discussion-based learning, and collaborative projects.

Consider the Grade 4-5 social event that took place in May. It was more than just a night of movies, pizza, and popcorn; it was a microcosm of social learning in action. Students navigated new friendship groups and danced away their nerves, each interaction a step in building positive interpersonal relationships and social-emotional intelligence. This event encapsulated the essence of what we strive to achieve: an environment where learning and social interaction are seamlessly integrated.

Then there was the Grade 2 “Gravity Glide” event, a highlight that exemplified critical and creative thinking in a highly engaging format. Students raced their handmade wooden cars in a thrilling competition, their enthusiasm palpable as they cheered each other on. The sportsmanship displayed, the respect shared, and the strategies discussed all reinforced the importance of collaboration and communication. It was a vivid demonstration of learning through doing, a cornerstone of our educational philosophy.



And who could forget the school assembly some months ago? Grade 3 students took the stage to present projects focused on building empathy. Their thoughtful and compassionate presentations were a testament to the deep, reflective learning that takes place at ICS. These projects weren't just assignments; they were exercises in developing empathy and understanding, crucial components of social and self-management skills.

At ICS, the development of IB Approaches to Learning skills is not just at the core of our educational philosophy; it is the core. As educators we plan with what Guy Claxton calls a split screen approach planning equally for a traditional academic curriculum outcome (content knowledge) alongside specific ATL skills (and or dispositions). Through the intentional design of engagements that extend beyond the classroom, we ensure that students are constantly building these skills. We create a learning environment that emphasises social interactions and collaborative learning, preparing our students with the skills to thrive in a connected and dynamic world.

In the end, these experiences highlight a simple truth: at ICS, learning is about more than academic excellence. It is about developing well-rounded individuals capable of meaningful and respectful interactions with others. This, perhaps, is the ultimate goal of education – not just to fill minds with knowledge, but to shape hearts and souls for a better, more interconnected world.



The Vital Role of Exercise in Enhancing Wellbeing and Cognitive Strength

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By James Penstone, Secondary Principal

As an educator constantly seeking ways to improve the learning experiences of our students, I often find myself reflecting on my own school years, now over three decades ago. When I look back, I realise that one of the best foundations for my academic journey was my commitment to physical fitness.



Throughout my secondary school years, I was deeply involved in physical activities, particularly running. I vividly remember a routine checkup at age 15 when the school nurse took my heart rate and remarked that it was the lowest she had seen among the students at our school. I felt especially validated by that comment, perhaps more so than any grade or piece of academic feedback I received.

Today, as a self-confessed 'data-head' who closely monitors various physical metrics through my Garmin smartwatch, I still strive to maintain a low resting heart rate. I now see my commitment to physical fitness as an important investment in my future health.

The reason I share this personal story is to underscore a truth that is increasingly supported by sophisticated scientific research: the profound benefits of physical activity for both adults and children. At ICS, we incorporate Physical and Health Education into our curriculum, offering classes twice a week up until the diploma years when all students receive 90 minutes of PE with special emphasis on activity. Many schools abandon PE in the final two years, but I am proud that we continue to prioritise it.

However, it's crucial that our students engage in physical activity beyond the school schedule. Just as reading outside of school hours significantly enhances learning, regular physical activity offers remarkable benefits for our children's ongoing development.



Here are some key advantages:

- **Enhanced Brain Function:** Exercise increases blood flow to the brain, promoting the growth of new neurons and improving overall brain function.
- **Cognitive Performance:** Regular physical activity is linked to better memory, attention, and processing speed.
- **Mental Health Benefits:** Exercise reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety by releasing endorphins and improving mood.
- **Stress Reduction:** Physical activity helps lower stress hormones like cortisol, contributing to better stress management.
- **Improved Sleep:** Regular exercise promotes better sleep quality and duration, crucial for cognitive function and overall well-being.
- **Enhanced Learning:** Physical activity improves learning and academic performance in children and adolescents.

We are fortunate to offer a wide range of athletic and sports activities across all age groups at ICS, and I am particularly proud of how inclusive our programme is - we welcome participants of all abilities.

In our partnership with parents, I cannot emphasise enough the importance of supporting your child's commitment to physical activity. Whether it's a brisk walk, cycling, running, or participating in a sports club, there are numerous ways for students to stay active with family support. This should never be neglected. Thank you for your continued support in fostering a healthy, active lifestyle for our students.

TEDxICS Zurich Youth 2024: “Question the World”

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By **Aksel S.** and **Varun B.** (ICS Grade 11 students)

In April, ICS had the privilege of hosting TEDxICS Zurich Youth 2024 “Question the World”, an entirely student-led endeavour that tested our leadership, perseverance, and teamwork to the fullest.

The event was recorded and uploaded to the TEDx YouTube channel.



The idea for the event began in 2023 when two (now graduated) 12th graders hosted the first-ever TEDx event at ICS as part of their CAS portfolio. The event was extremely successful with six speakers and talks ranging from music to quantum physics.

Aksel S. who spoke at the event in 2023, loved the experience and teamed up with Varun B. to co-organise the next event. This year, the organising duo worked hard to give students the same opportunity to share their Ideas Worth Spreading and ensure the long-term sustainability of the event at ICS, with a focus on meeting TED's tight guidelines to ensure the talks get published.

"The first challenge we faced was assembling a team. It was crucial to find the right mix of passionate students willing to invest their time and energy. Eventually, we formed a dedicated group of mentors to guide our speakers through the process. Mentoring was both rewarding and challenging. The speakers, though extremely talented, needed help refining their ideas and presentation skills. We organised group sessions, as well as many one-on-one sessions, providing feedback and encouragement to our speakers.

In the end, the amazing talks ranged from discussing the future of the automotive industry, and dealing with tragedy, to explaining potentially world-changing quantum mechanics."

"Organising the event logistics was another significant challenge that we faced. From securing the venue to managing audio-visual requirements, every detail required meticulous planning as we wanted this event to be the best it could be for the students. We still faced several obstacles, including last-minute technical issues, however, as a team we worked together and ensured everything ran smoothly throughout the event.

One of our goals for the event was for it to be a recurring production at ICS as a student-led initiative. We have already begun to brainstorm ideas and ways of improving the event, to pass on the legacy to the next group of organisers as part of the CAS programme. We hope that TEDx becomes a student-run ICS tradition for years to come, with each event even better than the last.

Looking back, TEDxICS Zurich Youth was a monumental achievement. It is an amazing feeling to look back and see what you have accomplished, and for others to

appreciate the passion, teamwork, and determination that went into the event. We are immensely proud of our speakers and the entire team for bringing this vision to life. Here's to sharing many more ideas worth sharing in the future!"

You can watch the recordings from this event on the TEDx YouTube channel under TEDxICS Zurich Youth 2024.

"We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all students who demonstrated remarkable Student Agency in hosting TEDxICS Zurich Youth and orchestrating every detail of the event. The enthusiasm and dedication were truly awe-inspiring, resulting in a resounding success. The initiative in bringing together diverse ideas and voices showcases the incredible potential within our student body. We are extremely proud of your achievements and the impact you have made through this event. The commitment exemplifies the spirit of our community. We look forward to your contributions in shaping a brighter future. Well done!"

SGIS Pride Conference

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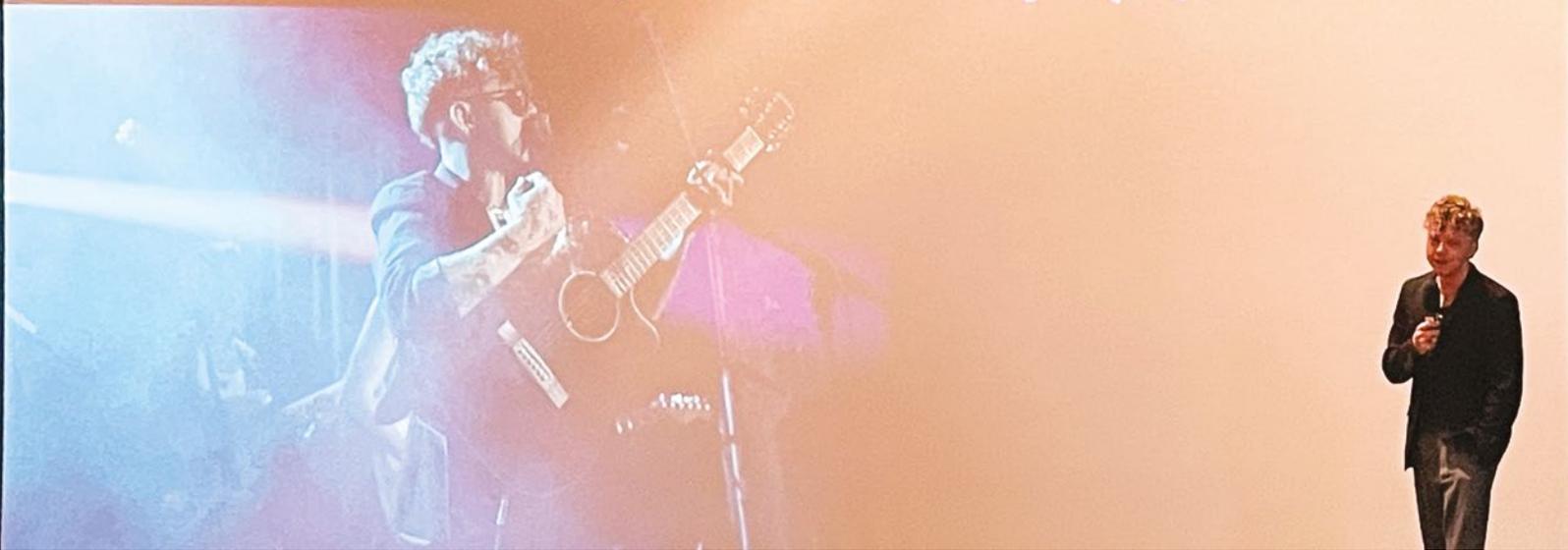
By **Gilles Collong**, Teacher of French, SGIS Pride Educator

On Thursday 30 May, the Phoenix Club (LGBTQ club) attended the annual SGIS Pride Conference organised by the SGIS Pride Educators at ISZL. Around 85 students from 10 different international schools in Switzerland gathered to celebrate the Queer identity of students and educators, just in time for Pride Month.



DYLAN HOLLOWAY

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING YOU



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This year's theme was "Finding your voice". We had the privilege to be in the company of the fantastic artist Dylan Holloway. Dylan made history as the first trans winner of a singing competition in the UK with his Project Icon victory. While Dylan's identity doesn't define his music, his experience transitioning does inspire it: "I have a few songs that talk about that journey."

Dylan's keynote opening was authentic, raw, honest, and an inspiration to the students and the staff present in the room. He then led a workshop with the students and a Q&A session with the staff. We were also fortunate to hear Dylan sing a few of his latest songs, including an incredible duet with his old self.

The whole day was a day of celebration, where students had the full sense of what authenticity means. We could all feel that we truly belonged to a united, open and empathetic community, made even more wonderful by the warm welcome from ISZL's Deputy Director Maria Voutos and School Director Barry Dequanne.

One of our students described the experience as "impactful", and said they "learnt a lot but it was also very fun".



Student Leadership as the Cornerstone of Sport at ICS

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By **Andrew McLennaghan**, Sports Administrator

In the Athletics Department, we have embarked on a journey. One where we put student leadership at the centre of our competitive sports programme and the department as a whole.

This year, we have started providing hands-on experience in running events, refereeing, and coaching. These experiences have provided the students with the development of leadership skills and provided key examples of the power of student-led initiatives.

As mentioned by the Head of School Lucy M. Gowdie in her Spotlight Studentenleben earlier this year, "Our commitment to athletics and to sport as cornerstones of wellbeing and of enhancing the physical, social and emotional fitness of our young people, through the opportunities we provide both at school and beyond." By putting student leadership at the centre, we strive to create opportunities for our students to not only enhance their wellbeing but grow into young leaders.

One of the biggest successes was the Sports Awards evenings that were student run. The students worked extremely hard on a short timeline to create an incredible event. This event required the students to coordinate, plan, manage and effectively communicate what was a new concept for the evening. The success of this event was a testament to the dedication and hard work that student committee members put into it.

This year has been a year full of success for our sports teams. From the top step on the podium to smashing SCIS records, ICS is a force to be reckoned with in all of our sports conferences. Our coaches, our athletes and our community can be proud of our accomplishments in competitions but also in our manner. ICS sports teams



have been awarded multiple Sportsmanship and Fair Play awards recognising that we are not just out to win but to compete in the right way.

As we look forward to the next year, we are excited to see even more students take the initiative to contribute to and enhance the ICS athletics experience. We encourage all students to consider how they can get involved, develop their skills, and make a lasting impact.

Through leadership in sports, our students will continue to grow into confident, capable, and compassionate leaders both on and off the field.



Alumni /ə'ɪlʌmnaɪ/

Alumni /ə'ɪlʌmnaɪ/

plural noun

A graduate or former student of a particular school, college, or university.

There is something powerful in one specific connection that all of us who have graduated from a school, have had children graduate from an institution, or have been employed at a school or organisation share. We are all members of a special group, or club, if you will.

We are all alumni.

Oxford Languages defines the noun 'alumni' as "a graduate or former student of a particular school, college, or university." This definition only scratches the surface of the present-day understanding and purpose of the term.

At ICS, we have been working to develop our connection with our alumni. As an international school of almost 65 years, we have alumni spread all over the world. As with most institutions, we have an Alumni Association.

But, what is really meant by this? What is its purpose?

Let's take the term 'alumni' as a 'former student' as an example. We earned our education, we graduated, and have perhaps asked ourselves, "now what?" We are not alone. And our Alumni Association is here to prove that we do not stand alone.

As we all know, our school has the word 'community' in it. This is a perfect word, as it transcends time. It not only blends together current students, families, and staff, but also our alumni.

We have an incredible community network available to each and every one of us that can help support and build the life that we want.

Most schools now have an Alumni Association; entire teams devoted to working alongside and supporting

their graduates as well as their current students. They organise events, support alumni in sharing their stories, help support school career fairs, act as intermediaries between University counsellors and current students by supporting internships with alumni, and keeping up-to-date with best practices, and alumni department colleagues around the world.

The Alumni Association offers opportunities to contribute to the sustainability of our school community, to give back, and to support those students who look up to their fellow graduates, parents, and staff who are all connected to ICS.

The ICS Engagement Team is working on curating our strategy in this space, in order to best connect with our alumni, and keep the two-way 'street' active and strong.

On Saturday 27 April, Ms Lucy Gowdie, our Head of School, Mr James Penstone, our Secondary Principal, Mr Nathaniel Atherton, our Primary Principal, Mr Cristian Garcia, our Chief Financial Officer and I hosted our first alumni event in London since 2019!

It was a wonderful evening of connections, networking, introductions, community-building, and reminiscing. We even had our own ICS pub-quiz, complete with prizes! It was quite a remarkable evening, getting to know alumni students and graduates from 1984 through to 2021. We learned about what these wonderful people were doing with their lives, living out the ICS mission. Secondary Principal, Mr James Penstone noted that

there was something special that our ICS alumni in particular share. They connect with so many types of people of differing ages and backgrounds. From business professionals, to doctors, to IT strategists to PhD candidates, to film students and professionals, the stories they told and memories they shared were fascinating. We all could not wait for the next reunion!



A special connection was re-established with former ICS teacher from 1973-1987, Ms Helen Howat, who took two trains and a bus to attend our event. Helen particularly made an impression on all of us, especially our Head of School, Ms Lucy Gowdie, as Helen brought with her and showed us old ICS magazines typed on a typewriter, the oldest one from 1981.

In May, we welcomed our alumni near Zurich at the Alumni Booth at the International Festival, with many fun activities and games. Alumni stopped by, walked down memory lane with us, and had a chance to win alumni prizes. The Engagement Team is working on several alumni events for the 2024-2025 academic year, such as the Alumni Reunion on ICS campus on 21 September.

Our Alumni Association is working to walk on the journey with all of our alumni, and keep the shared connections active and purposeful. Let's build the life we want with its support.



Busy Town. It all Began with a Few Little Roads...

By **Lisa Rosado-Darham**, Pre-Kindergarten / Kindergarten 1 Teacher

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The PreK-K1 children loved to play in the construction area with small wooden cars and roads. In one of our morning meetings, the children discussed that they would like to have more roads to play with and this is how it all started.



The children made their roads out of recycled cardboard, and, as they worked on their creations, they discussed their journeys to and from school, the transportation they used, what types of buildings they passed and green areas. After much dialogue that was full of inspiration and excitement, the children wanted to build all of the things they saw on their travels.

Through their explorations and observations they discovered which recycled materials worked best for their different buildings and constructions. During this enquiry the children have actively used research skills, thinking skills and fine motor skills to guide their learning. The children talked together and shared ideas on a name for their beautiful creation, they decided on 'Busy Town'.



WELCOME TO BUSY TOWN



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They constructed roads, houses, shops, traffic lights, trees, parks, flowers, cars, planes, boats, and many more colourful beautiful places. They added people, mainly their own families, and signs so that the Busy Town Community could find their way around the town. They all chose to work together on creating our school and spoke about how they wanted their school to be full of colour and be surrounded by trees and parks.

Everyone worked so hard for over 6 months and took such great care when they played with their town! They treated it with love because they understood how much time and work each and everyone of them had taken to create Busy Town.

They enjoyed setting up their Busy Town in the Atrium, planning, discussing and collaborating together as a team. The children wrote and sent out invitations for their families and friends to come and visit. They very carefully went around and checked that the Busy Town was set up exactly as they wanted it to be before their guests arrived. The children were all so excited and proud to share their Busy Town with their families and friends.

I just want to share a quote from one of the students, they said, "all the roads should lead to ICS as that is where we all get together".

The Beautiful Resilience within our Farewells



On 1 June, we celebrated the graduation ceremony for our Grade 12 students, marking a momentous occasion for our school community. This day, while filled with joy and celebration, was also deeply emotional for the students and their families, many of whom have been with us for many years. This school has been their community, and saying goodbye is never easy.

On 7 June we celebrated the Grade 10 closure of the Middle Years Programme, featuring guest speaker Alex Staniforth who spoke about resilience. Like the Grade 12 ceremony, we presented awards and shared in the achievements of our students. A particularly special moment was when six students, who were leaving, were honoured with heartfelt words from their peers. The atmosphere was highly charged with the inevitable sadness of parting from dear friends.

A week later, we will also bid farewell to more of our departing students and their families, as well as some of our colleagues, as we do every year. This includes those who have been with us for a short while and those who have been part of our community for many years.

As I mentioned to the Grade 10 students in June, international schools are places where people arrive and depart regularly. This brings the wonderful benefit of meeting new people with diverse and interesting backgrounds, but also the pain of saying goodbye.

The connections forged within our community — whether between students, colleagues, or families — are profoundly authentic. These connections have the potential to thrive and flourish long after we say our goodbyes. Learning to part with grace and dignity is a valuable life skill, and I am highly impressed by the way our students learn to navigate these difficult inevitabilities, as do the adults around them.





Navigating The World with Empathy.

Belkis Wille's speech, in full, delivered especially for the Grade 12 Graduation 2024.

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BY **Belkis Wille**, ICS Alumna Class of 2004

Good afternoon, for those of you who don't know me, I was a student at ICS. I arrived in Zumikon in 1991, at the age of four, and I graduated twenty years ago, in 2004.

What I would like to share with you today is that the most important thing I learned during my time at the school was not what I learned in the classroom. It is what I learned from my classmates.

As you all have, I learned how to engage with and relate to students who had lived in multiple countries, spoke 2 or 3 different languages, and had different belief systems.

Those differences didn't divide us into groups; they enriched us as a class, as a community. This is a mindset that an international education like the one you have just completed develops in you and leaves with you for the rest of your life.

The ability to engage with people no matter our differences really is the most valuable lesson I learned at ICS, and it was the key that opened the door to everything I have done in life since, removing from me the fear of the unknown.

The diversity within our school community taught me the importance of intercultural competence, which is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures. This skill has been crucial in my personal and professional life- it has allowed me to build meaningful connections across cultural boundaries.

During the summer between 11th and 12th grade, as part of the CAS programme, I flew to Kabul, Afghanistan, and spent the summer working with a woman who had spent years running secret schools for girls under the Taliban. I taught English in the mornings at a vocational school for homeless children and in exchange for a free place to sleep.

Yes, this was as adventurous as it sounds.

And at no point was I afraid of traveling to a country I knew little about and engaging with a community of women and girls who had faced severe repression. I wanted to engage. I wanted to ask questions. I wanted to empathise.

This is the same mindset I took when partnering with a lawyer in Libya in 2012 to develop a torture prevention strategy for the country, using his own experiences of abuse to push for an end to the suffering of others.

This is the mindset I took when working with a doctor in Yemen in 2013 to engage with the country's constitutional drafting committee to prohibit child marriage in the new constitution.

This is the mindset I also took when listening to a teenage boy in prison in northern Iraq in 2017 who had joined a militant group. He shared with me his insights into how communities could prevent other boys from being radicalised.

This is the mindset I took when speaking to rescue workers in Idlib, northern Syria in 2020, who continued to risk their own lives to save others during ongoing attacks and help communities to develop ways to better protect themselves from harm.

This is the mindset I bring to conversations I am currently having with volunteers in Ukraine risking their lives to evacuate families from areas that have become too unsafe to live in.

I have been able to work with all of the people I have just mentioned because of those skills I learned at ICS. I have been able to meet them where they are, listen to them, understand the needs of their communities, and offer whatever support it is that they need, and establish a lasting partnership. These skills have also helped me to provide these partners with emotional support during times of distress, and at times when they are most resilient.

This work has always been my calling—to give a platform for victims to speak about what they lived through and to foster empathy based on our shared human experience. Through my work, I strive to bring these stories to the forefront, encouraging others to empathize and take action to bring about change.

It is this empathy for others, no matter their differences, that has given me strength. The lessons I have learned beginning with my time at ICS have equipped me with the intercultural understanding needed to navigate complex global issues and to approach each situation with a sense of hope and determination, and never to bring politicised views into my work. Sitting next to classmates with diverse backgrounds and learning to relate to my friends regardless of any differences was a powerful lesson I learned in school.

Sometimes this work is difficult. Over the last year, I have sat with families from Darfur, part of a group of over half a million people that had to flee acute violence across the border into Chad. Remarkably, they are already trying to rebuild their life, though they have lost everything.

Last October, I interviewed a kibbutz member in Israel who had experienced extreme loss and had a relative in captivity and was still calling for peace. His unwavering hope amidst personal tragedy was a testament to the enduring human spirit.

And in April of this year, I interviewed a woman sitting in hospital in northern Egypt who had just been evacuated from Gaza. She had lost family members and herself was injured in an attack. Yet she spoke with kindness and compassion.

Empathy for others no matter your differences is something you have all learned from each other.

If you harness this skill well, the whole world will be open to you. The international mindset you have developed here will serve as a foundation for building bridges and fostering understanding in a world that often feels divided.

So don't waste it. Use it in your journey forward, use it to help you get to where you want to go. Embrace the challenges and opportunities that come your way, and always remember the power of hope, collective resilience, and deep empathy.

Thank you for listening, and I wish you all the very best upon your graduation!



Finishing the Year on a High Note as a Community

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by **Christel Ahlawat**, PA Communications

Our International Festival, the biggest event of the year organised by the Parents' Association, was back on a sunny Sunday at the end of May this year. As the Parents' Association, one of our main goals is to build our Community, and the International Festival is a critical event in that endeavour.



Twenty-seven countries had food stalls displaying their culinary and cultural richness, and the day was filled with a fantastic line-up of musical and dance acts performed by talents from our School and the Zumikon Community, organised by the Performing Arts Parents Booster together with the Performing Arts School Department, who surpassed themselves. We also offered many activities for children of all ages and their parents, whether it was the Dunk Tank stand, the Second-Hand Book Sale, an obstacle course, tattoos and face painting organised by the Round Square team and students for the little ones, or many sports such as Lacrosse, Soccer, and Chess, to name a few, which external providers animated throughout the day. Last but not least, we had a Sensory Room for the first time this year, providing a bit of quiet amid the Festival's craziness for whoever needed it, and it was greatly appreciated!

This year, we also aimed to make the event as sustainable as possible and encouraged people to take away food in their own containers to limit food waste and waste in general. We also incentivised people to come to the event by bike by offering free maintenance check-ups and sessions to learn how to repair their bikes themselves.

The International Festival is not only a lot of fun but also for a good cause, as all the profits from the event go to charity. This year, we reached a record profit of CHF 34'000, which was split between four charities that we support as a Community:

- SMD, our sister school in Nepal (<https://himalayanchildren.org/>)
- Street Kids Direct (<https://www.streetkidsdirect.org.uk/>)
- Sozialwerk Pfarrer Sieber (<https://www.swsieber.ch/wie-sie-helfen/als-organisation/>)
- The Sparkle Foundation (<https://www.thesparklefoundation.org/>)

The Festival was a day filled with joy and generosity that symbolises the great spirit of our Community. However, this event couldn't have been a success, or even organised, without a wonderful group of parent volunteers, ICS Staff, and external providers who supported us tirelessly throughout the year; we are so grateful to all of you and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

We look forward to seeing many of you at the International Festival next year, as well as at the many other events before that! Until then, enjoy the summer!





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