

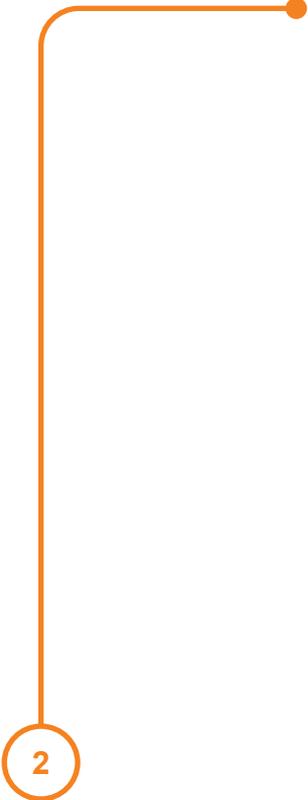
Connections

The ICS School Magazine • Issue 39 | 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.

Welcome to Connections

The ICS School Magazine • Issue 39 | 2024-2025

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Neurodiversity Celebration Week

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

The Neurodiversity Celebration Week paid homage to our community who have worked to bring this beautiful week to fruition.

For the workshops, the reflections, the activities, and the celebration, thank you.

In the most powerful moment of our week, our students from Grade 5 to Grade 12 talked to our community about their uniqueness and how this should be, must be, celebrated. From ADHD to Dyslexia, from GAD to Dyscalculia, they explored their journeys in the most powerful and purposeful of ways.

Courage looks like a 12-year-old standing in front of our families, and explaining how his diagnosis does not

denote who he is as a human, it does not define him, it adds to the uniqueness of him.

That he is a kind person, a caring person, a fun person, and should be seen for who he is in his entirety, not for his diagnosis.

In my opening remarks I reminded our community that neurodiversity speaks to humanities variety, to the uniqueness of every individual. That just like the garden, the flowers grow at different rates, in different colours, yet they all face towards the sun, all absorb the brilliance of our world in unique and different ways.

We must arrive at the place where as a community we understand and we accept that our children are born



without judgement, without prejudice, and how we colour their view of the world, and more importantly of the people within it, is for us to own.

What they learn, who they learn it from, and how they absorb this, is our work. To right the wrong, to dispel the myths, and to build a common humanity on the unique fabric of our community.

Empathy is our work, and we have to put this in a place of priority.

I take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to Elisabetta, Lindsay and Racquel, the mothers who drove the imperative of this week with a conviction born of their sons' experiences at our school, and

their fundamental right to learn and to grow and to be celebrated for who they are.

I express my deep gratitude to Kristin Moffit, Jonathan Mowjoudi and Frank Aarts, for the care and the counsel they provide our neurodiverse students, from Kindergarten through to Grade 12.

And to all those who gathered, who shared in, and who centred their thinking this week, on the magnificent uniqueness of every student in our school, thank you. We should not let this week stand alone as a silo within our school, every day should be a celebration of the diversity of our school, and we will hold fast to this as we step forward, with a renewed commitment to our culture, to our kind of education.

Education as Leadership

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By **Gabriel Di Mauro**, Secondary Principal

Recently, I had the pleasure of joining Grade 6 Individuals & Societies classes as a guest speaker on the topic of leadership. Their questions were brilliant, pertinent, and challenging. They had clearly internalised major concepts on the theme of leadership in their unit of study. At one point in my interview with them, however, I realised that some questions held a presupposition that leadership and education are distinct, separate entities. It was as if they were saying that what they and their teachers do in the classroom every day is not, in fact, leadership. In response to this, my teacher brain kicked into gear and I decided to offer them a provocation. I immediately asked, 'does anyone know the Latin root of the word *education*?'

Pregnant provocation pauses in the classroom are a powerful thing. One can almost hear brows furrowing, mental mechanisms churning. A few brave students ventured guesses, but before the discomfort of not knowing became too great, Mr Parker came to the rescue with the answer: *educare*. Derived from the Latin verbs *educare* and *educere*, education essentially means to lead out or to lead towards. We get the notion of from, out, or towards with the letter e (E pluribus unum, evade, evoke) and we get the lead concept from duc- (viaduct, conduct, duke). The etymologies of the words education and leadership are therefore inextricably intertwined. But what does this really mean in practice?



Every once in a while, and always from a place of genuine curiosity, I will get a question from someone untrained in the art and science of teaching such as this: 'What could be so interesting about teaching [x subject] every single year? Doesn't that get boring?' To begin with, what we know about each discipline is ever-evolving. That's what makes scholarship so exciting. Far more exciting, and vastly more fascinating, is the privilege of embarking upon the journey of transformation and self-discovery students experience when they embrace their own powers of reasoning, understanding, and application in a given area. Each child's journey will be unique because each child is unique. What does this have to do with leadership, then?

Everything.

True learning only happens when an individual is able to make sense of a new phenomenon for themselves, in their own way. No one can learn something for you. To be successful, learners must be led towards something new by skilled teachers, but they must also learn how to lead themselves. This means learning how to effectively deal with the discomfort of not knowing, suspending judgement, asking good questions, seeking help, reflecting on learning and sharing insights with others. This is how innovation

happens. Not by memorisation of received information (though this does have an important place in the learning process). Rather, innovation happens when empowered individuals grapple with concepts together in a completely unprecedented way.

If this is true, teachers have a tall order. They must attend to the social, emotional, cognitive, and logistical needs of their students. They must lead themselves as they lead their students on how to effectively lead themselves. In my role, I must ensure teachers and students in Secondary School have the conditions and resources they need in order to be successful. That's a lot of leadership. Thankfully, we do not do this work alone or in isolation. As a community, we have all the necessary ingredients to leverage learning of the highest quality. Our mission, values, resources, community members, and community partners make this learning/leadership journey possible. It is a profound privilege to learn and lead with one another towards exciting new horizons each and every day.

More Than a Game: The Impact of International School Sports



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By **Nathaniel Atherton**, Primary Principal

I had the privilege of traveling with our Middle School boys basketball team to Prague for a two-day tournament at the International School of Prague. The students competed exceptionally well, winning several games, some by large margins. But beyond their on-court performance, what stood out most was their behaviour off the court—the friendships they formed, the moments they shared, and the experiences they will carry with them for years to come.

One of the most rewarding aspects of these tournaments is watching how players, who arrive as competitors, leave as part of a larger international sporting community. SCIS—now in its second year at our school—has given our students the chance to connect with peers from around the world, fostering a sense of internationalism that extends well beyond the final score.

SCIS: More Than Just Sports

For those unfamiliar with SCIS (Sports Council of International Schools), it is an international league that brings together schools across different countries

to compete in various sports. But SCIS is about much more than just competition. These tournaments foster global citizenship, allowing students to experience different cultures, engage in meaningful exchanges, and develop friendships that last long after the tournament weekend.

Unlike local leagues, international sports programmes like SCIS create opportunities that shape students' worldviews, helping them develop cultural awareness, respect, and adaptability—all through the universal language of sport.

The Unique Value of International School Sports

Cultural Exchange Through Homestays & Travel-Based Tournaments: One of the most defining features of SCIS is its homestay programme. Instead of staying in hotels, students live with host families, offering a firsthand glimpse into daily life in another country.

They share meals, navigate different customs, and form meaningful connections that wouldn't be possible in a traditional tournament setting.

Beyond homestays, traveling for tournaments itself is an eye-opening experience. For many students, it's their first time navigating a new city or country independently. These experiences help them develop confidence, cultural competence, and adaptability, preparing them for an increasingly interconnected world.

Hosting is equally rewarding. Having hosted visiting students myself, I've seen firsthand how both the guest students and the host families benefit. It's a unique opportunity to build cultural bridges and deepen our school's international identity.

Building Global Friendships & Sportsmanship: Unlike in local leagues where teams may only interact during the game, SCIS intentionally fosters camaraderie between competitors. Schools meet repeatedly across multiple tournaments, allowing students to develop real connections over time.

This was evident in Prague. Players from different schools exchanged words of encouragement, sat together between games, and genuinely enjoyed the shared experience of international competition. The spirit of sportsmanship and respect that SCIS promotes is unique, reinforcing that these tournaments aren't just about winning—they're about learning from each other.

Live-Streaming: Keeping Families Connected Across Borders: Given the global nature of our school community, many of our athletes have family members living in different countries. SCIS schools do a fantastic job of live-streaming games, allowing parents, grandparents, and friends from around the world to cheer on their children.

This small but powerful feature ensures that, no matter where they are, our families remain part of the experience—whether they're watching from Zurich, Tokyo, or New York. It's another way international sports leagues bring people together across borders, reinforcing a sense of belonging even for those cheering from afar.

Reflecting on our experience in Prague, it's clear that SCIS is more than just a sports league—it's an extension of our international mission. Through travel, homestays, and global competition, our students gain experiences that shape their perspectives, build lifelong friendships, and develop an appreciation for the world beyond their own.

As our school continues its journey in SCIS, I look forward to seeing more of our students step onto the court—not just to play, but to learn, connect, and grow as global citizens.



PYPx: Changemakers in the Making

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By Nathaniel Atherton, Primary Principal





This article focuses on the Primary Years Programme Exhibition, a shining example of “action,” as we call it in the PYP, and its alignment with Pillar 3 of our new strategic plan. Service learning is crucial because it empowers students to apply their knowledge to real-world contexts, fostering empathy, responsibility, and a sense of agency. In the PYP, action evolves from teacher-led to student-initiated, and this year, it was student-initiated and student-led.

First, the Gender Equality Sports Football League combined students’ passion for sports with advocacy by creating a mixed-gender league that promoted inclusion and equal opportunity. Supported by the Physical Education Department, students took the lead in organising the games and writing the rules to ensure fairness and equal participation. Their goal was to challenge gender stereotypes and make sport a space for everyone. (SDG 5: Gender Equality)

In the Arts, students used Visual Art, Design, and Music to evoke emotions and advocate for their chosen issues. A standout piece was an immersive installation,

where visitors entered a dimly lit space filled with plastic bottles and ocean sounds, highlighting the impact of plastic pollution. (SDG 14: Life Below Water)

Another great example of student-initiated action was a Clothing Swap, where students brought in gently used clothes and accessories from home and invited others to do the same. Their message—“Why shop when you can swap?”—highlighted sustainability and conscious consumerism. One classroom was transformed into a cosy, second-hand boutique, encouraging reuse and reducing waste in a fun, meaningful way. (SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production)

Currently, the Kindness Club, led by Grade 5 students and joined by younger peers, continues to explore empathy through meaningful acts of kindness. The group crafted their mission statement and identified two key next steps: to learn more about what kindness looks like in different contexts, and to begin generating small but impactful acts of kindness within our school community. It will be exciting to see how their mission evolves and the difference they’ll make. (SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being)





Food for Thought

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By **Matthew Febrey**, Head of Physical and Health Education



We are thrilled to shine a spotlight on our Grade 8 Physical Education team and their recent Nutrition Unit. In this unit, the PE team took an innovative and comprehensive approach to understanding diet, health, and the broader implications of our food choices.

In line with our commitment to providing a holistic education that prepares our students for the complexities of the modern world, the team has reimagined our nutrition curriculum to go beyond traditional dietary education. The goal was to empower the students with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their health and the health of the planet.

Commencing with the foundations of nutrition, our students explored macronutrients and micronutrients. Some students were surprised to learn that foods like spinach, broccoli, and tofu can be excellent sources of protein. They also delved into the science of calories, understanding how our bodies use energy for basic functions and physical activities.

A key feature of this unit is the focus on service as action. Throughout the unit, students engaged in written reflections considering the ethical implications of their diet. These reflections encouraged students to critically examine their food choices and contemplate how they might adjust their eating habits to positively impact their health and the environment. This approach fosters a sense of global citizenship and responsibility, encouraging students to become advocates for sustainable nutrition within our community and beyond.

The highlight of the unit was when students were asked to apply their knowledge and understanding in a plant-based cooking challenge, judged by our very own Chef Aaron. Despite having to cook outdoors on a camping stove, many of them surprised themselves with the quality of the meals they were able to produce. The winning recipes will soon be featured in our school cafeteria.

We are grateful for the involvement of Chef Aaron, who shared invaluable insights about running a school cafeteria and the considerations involved in menu planning. This real-world perspective brings the curriculum to life for our students.



Arts at ICS Semester Two in Review

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By **Holly Sullivan**, Department Head - Performance Studies & The Arts Coordinator

As the school year wraps up, we're looking back on another packed and inspiring term for the arts at ICS. From theatre to visual art to music, students across all ages have had the chance to get involved, try something new, and share their creative voices—and they've done so with energy, imagination, and a real sense of community.



On Stage and Behind the Scenes

The Middle School Production of *Alice in Wonderland* was a real highlight. With bold characters, inventive set design, and plenty of teamwork behind the scenes, it brought together students with all sorts of talents—not just actors, but designers, technicians, and stage crew too.

ArtsAlive returned this semester as our after-school live lounge, and once again it proved to be a firm favourite. Students performed original songs, covers, and more in a relaxed setting, and for many, it was their first time in front of a live audience. We even had our first stand up comic! The honesty and creativity on display made it a special evening.

Our Pop-Up Performances kept things lively throughout the term—unexpected moments of music at lunchtime that reminded us how much creativity is woven into our everyday life at school.



This semester also saw ICS represented beyond our campus. ICS string ensemble took part in the SGIS Symphony Orchestra, joining students from across Switzerland for a weekend of intensive rehearsals and high-level collaboration. A highlight of the experience was a Q&A session with world-renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma, who spoke about music's power to connect people and cultures. It concluded with a stunning performance at the prestigious Rosey Concert Hall, giving our students the rare opportunity to perform in a world-class venue. It was a challenging and inspiring experience that pushed their musicianship and left a lasting impression.

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At the inaugural SGIS Theatre Festival, our students worked with peers from other schools and professional UK theatre company The Paper Birds, exploring collaborative, issue-based performance.

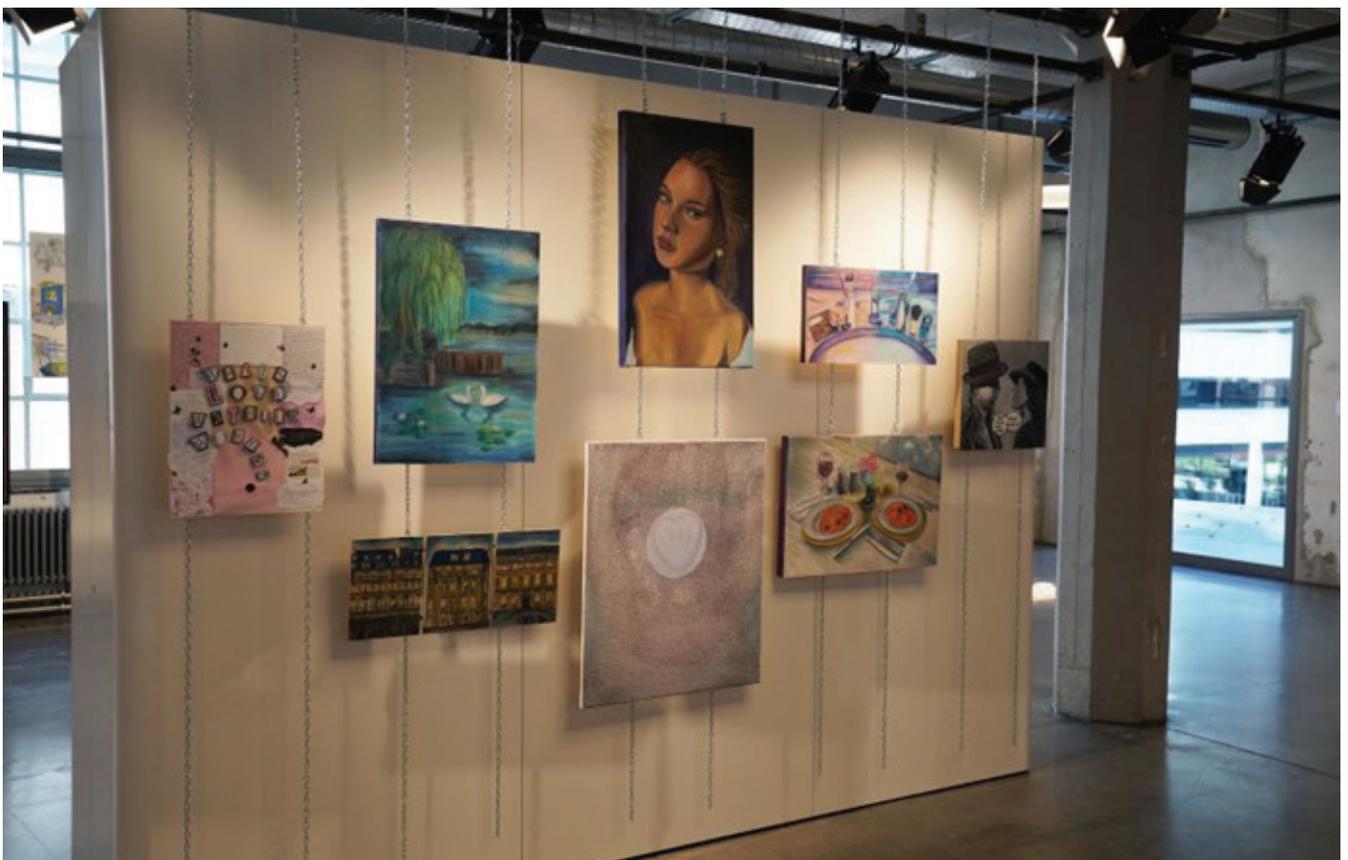
We also brought The Paper Birds into school to run a workshop with our Grade 8 Theatre students, who created powerful verbatim pieces using real interviews—an inspiring experience that deepened their understanding of theatre as a tool for social storytelling.

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In the Gallery and Studio

In the Visual Arts, our DP students presented their final exhibition through a carefully curated vernissage—a formal opening that offered families, staff, and peers the chance to engage with their work in an intimate gallery setting. The exhibition reflected a wide range of media, themes, and personal perspectives, showcasing the depth of thought and creativity developed over the two-year course.

On the Primary side, creativity was in full swing at the PYP Exhibition and the Primary Arts Night. Whether through song, paint, sculpture or storytelling, students confidently shared the results of their inquiry and imagination with friends, families, and teachers.



Music and Performance All Around

A standout moment this term was SongFest at ISZL, where—for the first time—our Primary and Middle School choirs came together. Each group performed individually before joining forces for a combined piece, creating a powerful moment of musical unity.

Closer to home, all of Grade 5 and 6 had the chance to experience *The Villains on Their Way to Umbidu* at the Tonhalle—a vibrant classical concert that followed four quirky instruments on a journey of teamwork and self-discovery. Through music by composers like Bach, Purcell, and Ligeti, students explored how collaboration and creativity can bring even the most unlikely characters together.

Back at ICS, our Primary “Perform a Play” ECA group closed the semester with a joyful sharing of their work—reminding us that theatre truly begins with play.



Looking Ahead

This term has shown just how many ways students can get involved in the arts at ICS—whether it’s their first time picking up a paintbrush or their tenth time on stage. There’s space here for trial, for risk-taking, for polish, and for pride.

Thanks to all the students, staff, and families who made these moments possible. We’re excited to see where the arts take us next.

The European League for Middle Level Education (EMLE)

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By **Jags Myanger**, Event Assessment Coordinator

The annual ELMLE conference is an invaluable opportunity for educators to collaborate, learn and share best practices tailored to middle level education.

This year's theme "**Navigate the way: Explore, Discover and Experience**" highlighted the importance of creating meaningful journeys for the Middle School students.

In my presentation, I focused on the role of the key stakeholders - teachers, students and parents - in making the **Middle School experience** memorable. By fostering collaboration and shared responsibilities we create an environment where students feel supported, inspired and engaged.



Here are some ideas to **help ease the transition from Primary to Secondary School** while fostering confidence, collaboration, and leadership skills among students.

For example, to ease the transition from Primary to Secondary School, we could organise a **Q&A session and a tour** of the Secondary School led by students. This would help the younger students feel more confident and excited about the move.

Another approach could be organising a **project-based learning day**, where Grade 5 and Grade 6 students work together on a shared theme, such as sustainability and protecting the environment. This allows students to explore real-world topics, develop teamwork skills and learn from teachers at both levels.

A further example could include **peer mentoring programmes**, where older Middle School students support younger ones by sharing advice, strategies and personal experiences. This not only builds confidence for younger students transitioning into Middle School but also provides leadership opportunities for the older Middle School students.

These are just a few ways we can create leadership opportunities, collaboration and shared experience to ensure the Middle School journey is engaging, supportive, and memorable for all students.



Growing Together: A Year of Learning and Connection at Hof Narr Farm

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By **Alice Ford**, Grade 2 Teacher

This year, our Grade 2 students have grown socially, emotionally, and academically through their monthly visits to the Hof Narr Farm in Egg. These visits began as an opportunity to learn about our local community and a Swiss livelihood, while also allowing our students to connect with the farm's animals and grow more comfortable in new situations as they embraced being risk-takers.

The students encouraged themselves to overcome hesitations and enjoyed petting various animals, including pigs, goats, chickens, sheep, and miniature ponies. They also learned how to care for the animals and even had the chance to feed some of them.

The experience has been so inspiring that a few students have even shared dreams of living on a farm someday — with plans to make space for pigs to sleep in their rooms!

At this point in the year, we are learning about the farm's ethos: to provide a safe haven for animals that have been mistreated or abandoned. We are also learning about why the Hof Narr employees choose to work there and the lifestyle choices they make, such as adopting a vegan diet.

These visits connect with our How We Organise Ourselves unit by recognising how organisations within a community work to provide services to address community needs, and we are recognising that we can take steps to support our community as well.



Parents' Association

By **Christel Ahlawat**, PA Communications

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As we approach the end of another remarkable school year, the Parents' Association would like to celebrate the incredible events and achievements of the past few months.

Our second edition of the Spring Party was a vibrant gathering that brought everyone together in a spirit of joy and togetherness at the Lakeside Restaurant, at the end of April. We especially enjoyed our special celebration of India—many of our parents embraced the theme by wearing beautiful Indian outfits, and we were treated to lively dancing. A highlight of the event was the live auction held during the party. Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of our community, we raised significant funds that will enable 10 students from the SMD school, our sister school in Nepal, to pursue their higher education for four years at the University of Kathmandu. This initiative will not only transform the lives of these students but also uplift their entire communities.

Once again, last May, the International Festival was truly the highlight of the year. Blessed with sunny skies, the event was a colorful showcase of our community's diversity and cultural richness. We savoured delicious foods from nearly 30 countries, enjoyed sports and games for the kids, a book fair, a dunk tank, and musical performances performed by local and school talents. It was a fantastic day of fun, laughter, and community.

Last but not least, this year, we made our festival more sustainable by selling reusable cups, plates, and containers for food, setting up clear recycling zones, reducing paper tickets, and limiting plastic bottles. These steps helped cut waste and showed our commitment to eco-friendly events.

To close the year, the Parents' Association organized the Appreciation Apéro for our teaching and non-teaching ICS staff. With delicious food generously donated by many, we created a wonderful spread to express our heartfelt gratitude. Our dedicated staff members provide exceptional care and high-level education for our children, and it was a privilege to celebrate their hard work and commitment.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the entire ICS community for your support, enthusiasm, and participation throughout the year. None of these events would have been possible without the help of our incredible volunteers—parents who stepped up to organize, set up, and support every activity. Your dedication makes our school a truly special place, and we are deeply grateful for all that you do.

Now, as the summer break approaches, we wish all of you a relaxing and fantastic summer. We look forward to welcoming you back next year for more wonderful moments and shared experiences.



Potential, Passion, Responsibility

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ICS Inter-Community School Zurich
Strubenacher 3
8126 Zumikon
Switzerland

Website: www.icsz.ch
Email: contact@icsz.ch
Tel: +41 (0)44 919 83 00