

COMMUNITAS



The Power of Rigor

Rooted in **INQUIRY**,
Powered by **CARE**,
Made possible by a
**GLOBAL LEARNING
COMMUNITY.**

PAFA NEWS

SCIS has parent organizations called the Parents and Friends Association (PAFA) on each campus. PAFA serves as a way that parents can communicate ideas for the betterment of the school to the administration and Board. SCIS is proud of the high level of parent participation in their schools and values their partnership with the parent community. PAFA conducts various activities, from community events to charity fundraisers to volunteer support for teachers and students. Each campus has a PAFA board who works closely with each campus' administrations to plan events that help to make SCIS Campuses a unique experience for families, faculty, and students alike. We are always welcoming new members!

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communitas

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Do you have a story to tell, a project to share, or art to be displayed? Let Communitas be a platform for your voice.

Communitas is about community and we rely on contributions from the SCIS community.

Should you have any comments, observations, wish to submit articles, or inquire as to ways to collaborate, feel free to send all inquiries or correspondence to the Communitas editor via email at communications@scis-china.org

Communitas is published three times per year for the SCIS community, our friends, and the larger Shanghai community.

We are social! Feel free to visit us on the web at www.scis-china.org and follow us!



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Book Recommendations for All Ages





The Power of Rigor



Rigor is one of those words that can make parents pause. For some, it recalls long nights of memorization, difficult exams, and the idea that “harder” somehow equates to “better.” At SCIS, we know that true rigor is not about the volume of work, but about the value of learning.

In our classrooms, rigor means depth over difficulty. It is the moment when a student connects a new idea to a larger concept, when they move beyond recalling information and begin questioning, applying, and creating. Rigor is curiosity in motion.

Rigor challenges, but it also supports. It pushes a student to think critically yet allows them to feel safe enough to take that risk in the first place. That is where belonging comes in.

Belonging is the heartbeat of rigorous learning. When a student feels known, respected, and encouraged, they are more likely to stretch themselves. They will take on the essay that intimidates them, the design project that might fail the first time, or the debate that pushes them beyond

their comfort zone. At SCIS, it is that combination of challenge and care and of depth and connection where we find the magic happens.

You see this throughout our campuses: in the laughter of students in the makerspace as they build out their designs; in the calm determination of a Diploma Programme student refining a research question; and in the proud smiles of our Grade 5 students sharing discoveries during their PYP Exhibition. Rigor at SCIS is alive, and it is never rigid.

Our teachers make this possible. They design lessons that spark curiosity and encourage ownership. They ask questions that do not have one right answer. They personalize learning, knowing that each student’s pathway to excellence looks slightly different. And they do all of this while reminding students that hard work and joy are not opposites; they are partners in learning.

The power of rigor, as we see it at SCIS, lies in what it develops beyond the classroom. It builds independence, resilience, and confidence. It equips

students not only with knowledge, but with the skills to navigate a complex and changing world. It is why our alumni so often tell us that they felt ready, not only for university, but for life.

As we look forward, our purpose remains clear: to ensure that every student experiences both the challenge of rigorous learning and the warmth of true belonging. Together, these form the foundation of excellence at SCIS, not as competing forces, but as complementary strengths.

Because when rigor is done right, it does not harden a student. It strengthens them. It builds thinkers, creators, collaborators, and most importantly, compassionate young people who are ready to make a difference in the world.

And that is the real power of rigor.



*By Daniel Eschtruth,
Director of Schools
at SCIS*



Fostering Rigorous and Compassionate Learning at SCIS

Committed to a vision of rigorous, inclusive, and holistic education, we are dedicated to cultivating a learning environment where every student is empowered to grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally. We invited our Deputy Director of Schools, Barclay Lelievre, to share insights on the school's philosophy, the role of the IB continuum, and how students are prepared to succeed from early childhood through high school.

1. How would you describe SCIS's approach to learning?

At SCIS, we try to avoid making assumptions, in particular the assumption that if something is taught, it is necessarily learned. We spend a lot of time understanding each student's individual needs, asking fundamental questions: how do we engage and motivate students?

How can we design experiences that will remove barriers to learning and ensure deep understanding?

Rather than waiting until the test or final assessments, we monitor progress continuously and check for understanding throughout the learning process.

Most importantly, we focus on the essential skills required for learning. Before we even get started teaching, we ask: What skills does a student need to effectively learn? If a student struggles with productive group work, self-advocacy, research skills, asking challenging questions, resilience, focus, or organization, then traditional teaching alone will not suffice. We dedicate considerable effort to developing these learning skills—and that is what sets SCIS apart.

2. How does the IB Continuum framework influence students' growth from the Early Years through High School?

There is sometimes a misconception about the IB, where people focus only on the endpoint—IB scores, university placements, and the rigor of the Diploma Programme.

I understand that parents invest in their children, and while everyone wants them to be happy and healthy, they also hope for academic success. It shouldn't have to be one or the other.

The IB has always been about the 'why' and 'how' of learning as much as the 'what'. I have seen many educational programs and trends over the years, and there is a reason I chose to put all three of my children through IB schools.

The IB is the only framework truly designed to guide a learner from nursery through high school graduation. Many educational buzzwords—differentiation, student agency, service learning, project-based learning, STEM, collaborative learning, learning skills, have been integral to the IB from the beginning. Unlike other programs that layer these elements on top as afterthoughts, the IB weaves them into the very fabric of learning.

3. What do SCIS teachers do to ensure every child is both challenged and supported appropriately?

We approach this by looking at the whole learning journey. For example, starting from Nursery, we consider what students will need to know and be able to do when they graduate, and then work backwards through key transition points—such as from Elementary to Middle School and then to the Diploma Programme. It gives us a clearer roadmap. At the same time, we know every student is different, so we invest heavily in student and learning support, making sure that if there are deficits in learning and roadblocks to growth, we have the people and the expertise in place to make sure they are still progressing.

What has really set us apart is the idea of being data-inspired. We don't just collect data; we use it intentionally to focus on growth for every student, not just those who are struggling. This is

exemplified by our WIN (What I Need) time initiative in the Lower School. It's a specific time set aside every day to look at student performance indicators in key areas of language and mathematics, where a team of educators works with groups of students on specific areas for improvement, with the goal of seeing growth everywhere. It truly reflects the belief that a rising tide lifts all boats.

4. SCIS focuses on developing the whole child. How does this shape students' experiences?

Developing the whole child is something we take seriously at SCIS, and there are aspects we do particularly well because it's what we believe in—and that is social and emotional well-being.

We call it being "Available for Learning". Did you get enough sleep? Do you have a group of friends who support you? Do you know your teachers and trust them? When you are not at your best, how can we help work on those issues or roadblocks so you can do the hard work of being a kid and navigating all milestones from Nursery to Kindergarten, Elementary, Middle, and High school, and still be growing as a learner?

We have tremendous support both with staff and the socio-emotional learning

we promote, and the time we invest. It makes such a huge difference. It makes for better learners, but it also makes us better teachers, and a better school, and a better community.

5. Beyond academics, what qualities or skills do you hope SCIS students take away when they graduate?

If you look at surveys published by organizations and industry leaders about the top skills and attributes they seek in prospective employees, subject knowledge rarely ranks first. In fact, it barely makes the top ten, unless you include computer skills.

What they really want are people who can collaborate effectively, have strong communication skills—especially in the age of artificial intelligence—and who can think critically and creatively. Adaptability, organizational skills, and self-management are also high on the list. These are literally the categories of the IB approaches to learning skills that we teach students all the way from the early years up to graduation.

And I've seen it in my three children, who have all graduated from SCIS, who have thrived at university because they possess these skills beyond the subject knowledge required to complete the Diploma Programme.

Many graduates return to tell us how well prepared they were for university and college, especially compared to their peers who often lack these foundational skills and fall behind.

And I also think we can't forget about our IB mission statement, which aligns closely with our school mission: contributing positively to communities and making the world a better and more peaceful place. I know it sounds like a big idea, but we work hard to ensure our students are globally minded and have a strong intercultural understanding. That, to me, is the future of the planet, and I feel really good about sending these students out into the world. It makes me optimistic about the future.

Through Barclay Lelievre's insights, it is clear that SCIS's commitment to rigor goes hand in hand with a deep dedication to nurturing the whole child. At SCIS, academic challenge is balanced with personalized support, social-emotional growth, and the development of essential skills. This holistic approach fosters a true sense of community, where every learner is seen, valued, and equipped to thrive in an ever-changing, interconnected world. Such a foundation prepares SCIS students not only for academic success but for meaningful contributions to the future.



Watch the full interview with Barclay Lelievre here



Barclay Lelievre,
Deputy Director of Schools,
Director of Teaching and
Learning at SCIS

Laying Strong Foundations How the PYP Cultivates Deep Thinkers



At SCIS, we believe that belonging and rigor go hand in hand. When children feel connected, supported, and valued, they are more willing to take risks in their learning, persevere through challenges, and achieve at high levels. Rigor is not about more homework or memorization, it is about engaging students deeply, expecting them to think critically, and supporting them to reach their highest potential.

What Rigor Means in the PYP

The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP) is a framework that enables this, helping us to nurture inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring learners who can contribute positively to the world around them. Rigor in the PYP is embedded in the learning process itself. Students are challenged to:

- Engage with big ideas through transdisciplinary units of inquiry.
- Transfer thinking across contexts using concepts such as causation, perspective, and responsibility.
- Demonstrate efficacy by planning inquiries, setting goals, and reflecting on progress.
- Act meaningfully by applying their learning to real-world situations and sharing it with others.

This process develops not only knowledge but also the attitudes and dispositions needed for lifelong learning.

PYP Exhibition

The clearest example of rigor in action is the PYP Exhibition, the culminating experience for our Grade 5 learners. Over several weeks, students identify global opportunities or issues they care about, ranging from diverse topics as sustainability, equity in education, inclusion, responsible consumption and design inquiries that combine research, collaboration, and action.

The Exhibition demands higher-order thinking where students must analyze multiple perspectives, evaluate sources, and make connections across subjects. Just as importantly, they must communicate their findings to an audience through presentations, group performances and interactive experiences.

Alongside academic growth, students develop essential skills in research, communication, and critical thinking, that establishes a strong foundation for success in the MYP and beyond. As they reflect on their PYP journey and anticipate the challenges and opportunities of the MYP, students embrace the process of inquiry, intercultural understanding, and global engagement that underpins the IB framework. This demonstrates the powerful impact of empowering students with voice, choice, and ownership, enabling them to take meaningful action that reveals the purpose behind their learning.

Laying Strong Foundations

Through inquiry, reflection, and action, the PYP cultivates students who think critically, care deeply, and act responsibly. From their first learning celebration to their culminating Exhibition, our students are laying the foundations for a lifetime of curiosity, contribution and collaboration.

This is the true power of rigor in the PYP - helping children grow into thoughtful individuals who are ready to contribute to a better future.



*Vincent Lehane,
PYP Coordinator
at SCIS Hongqiao*





Personalized Paths to Success: The Middle School Experience at SCIS

At Shanghai Community International School (SCIS), the middle school experience is a vibrant blend of diverse academic abilities and interests within a multilingual, multicultural community of over 40 nationalities. As students begin their educational journeys, a commitment to rigor is vital, ensuring every learner is challenged, supported, and empowered to reach their potential.

Understanding Rigor

Rigor in education often suggests only challenging coursework and high grades. At SCIS, we view rigor as a multifaceted approach that embraces each student's unique learning style and ability. Our middle school curriculum encourages high standards while offering personalized learning pathways that promote growth and resilience.

Rigor transcends mere difficulty; it cultivates deeper conceptual understanding and critical thinking skills. Teachers engage students through inquiry-based learning,

encouraging them to ask questions, explore ideas, and apply knowledge to real-world situations. A recent English project had students synthesize historical texts about China's Song Dynasty, connect them to a teenage romance novel from that era, and reflect on their subsequent insights related to life today in Shanghai. This exemplifies the academic risk-taking possible when students are genuinely engaged.

Personalized Learning Pathways

Recognizing each student's unique talents and challenges, SCIS has implemented personalized learning strategies based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Families collaborate with teachers and student support teams within a flexible framework to create tailored pathways that extend through middle school and into high school and beyond. Currently, students pursue custom pathways in Languages, Mathematics, Design, and the Arts, learning to appreciate their classmates' talents while embracing their own learning journeys.

We believe every student can succeed, and our celebration of diversity means that challenges are viewed as opportunities to tailor teaching to individual needs and maximize achievement. Recent graduate Andrew ‘The Professor’ Ni’s enrolment in Astronomy at the University of Hawaii illustrates how an adaptive approach empowers students to take charge of their education.

A Supportive Learning Environment

A rigorous learning environment relies on robust support systems and a unified structure. At SCIS, middle school students are guided by teachers and supported by peers, parents, and a pastoral care team. Collaboration among all parties is essential, along with consistent behavioural expectations and a rigorous socio-emotional program led by the school counsellor. This network provides academic and emotional support, helping students navigate the pressures of rigorous assessments while maintaining well-being during

adolescence. All students are encouraged to participate in various co-curricular activities, from fan dance to fantasy football. This nurturing environment fosters peer learning, builds essential social skills, and establishes a sense of belonging amid the transience of international schooling.

A Future of Rigorous Learning

As we look ahead, SCIS remains committed to providing a rigorous yet personalized educational experience. By fostering an environment where every student is challenged and supported, we prepare them for academic success and lifelong growth.



Robert Staples, Middle Years Programme Coordinator at SCIS Pudong



TOK in the Diploma: The Fuel that Powers Rigorous Critical Thinking

As we enter a new 'AI Age' (Layden) in which distinguishing fact from fiction becomes increasingly challenging, technological developments such as algorithms, misinformation, deepfakes, and 'AI slop' content have increased the urgency for students and adults alike to tackle the question, "What counts as knowledge and truth?". For over a decade, global society has already moved into what many now call a 'post-truth' media landscape (OUP), driven by increasingly fractured information and creating 'echo

chambers' of knowledge and interactions that erode the ability to reach common agreement on seemingly rudimentary facts. While no academic course could fairly claim to completely prepare learners for the complex trajectory ahead, it is fair to say that the aims of Theory of Knowledge (TOK) across the Diploma Programme remain more relevant than ever and central to the continual process of rigorous critical thinking for their academic and personal lives.

Of its many aims, TOK is meant to "equip students to effectively navigate and make sense of the world and help prepare them to encounter novel and complex situations" (IBO). The course equally empowers learners "to be more aware of their own perspectives and to reflect critically on their own beliefs and assumptions." (IBO *TOK Subject Guide*). While less familiar observers might assume that such reflection is relegated to Individuals and Societies or the Arts, all Science subjects are overtly underpinned by the questions of "How are scientific knowledge claims generated, tested, communicated, evaluated, and used?" and "What issues arise from these actions?" (IBO *Science Subject Guides*). With this approach, students are guided to consider various aspects of real-world application in which models, theories, patterns, and trends generate new knowledge or refine previously held understandings of the natural world. Furthermore, learners are encouraged to consider the collaborative process of science and its global impact in a way that requires critical thought about the concepts that surround knowledge production. Students in all mathematics subjects are required to develop inquiry skills in which they investigate unfamiliar situations - both abstract and from the real world - involving organizing and analyzing





information, making conjectures, drawing conclusions, and testing their validity. Ultimately, all disciplines of the Diploma embed inquiry that allows students to critically evaluate where knowledge comes from, how it is communicated, and what methods we can use to validate claims we make about the real world.

As students are guided in their TOK classes to draw from their subjects and their lived experiences, they have an opportunity to engage in critical reflection, discussion, and evaluation of how to distinguish between facts, opinions, and beliefs. While DP students are in a transition phase of their lives towards young adulthood, engagement in such critical thought provides a solid foundation for the kind of rigor that requires higher-order thinking rather than a focus on recall and memorization. Ideally, they build more confidence in discerning their own tools and methods, not only as producers of new knowledge in the future, but also as consumers of information in a rapidly evolving landscape that nobody can perfectly predict.

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**By Dominic St-Pierre,
IB Diploma Coordinator,
TOK and Language
Teacher at SCIS Hongqiao**

The Language of the Vibes Acquisition.

What is the first thing that you experience when you join a school, which you also bring in your heart when you graduate?
Please let's pause for a moment to see if the answer emerges...

I think the answer is: the atmosphere. The atmosphere of a place is invisible, and yet, the most important artwork composed by everyone in the school.

Today, under the Language Acquisition section, I would like to talk about the acquisition of the language of vibrations, feelings, attitudes and energy. Because that too, is a language, and that too, can be acquired, learnt.

Maya Angelou wrote: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you

made them feel".
...and SCIS is great at it.

The language of the invisible, the language of the eyes, the positive feelings, that is the fuel to make a school cooperate and flow. Think about any great memory that you have. Was it about anything material? Or do you smile when you remember it because you remember how you felt?

We have seen how sometimes it's enough to have a small bunch of students or teachers showing a negative/positive attitude... it spreads, and suddenly they call it a "bad/good school". But what if this process could be consciously reversed? How does that work? For many years, we have had Mindfulness groups of students and teachers generating this invisible service. We have had Mindfulness as ASA, as Flextime activity, and even workshops

for teachers. One of the many things that we explore is how to create an internal wellbeing and how to irradiate it to change a negative into a positive atmosphere.

Have you ever left or stayed in a class, school, job, café, meeting or party because there was a bad vibe/atmosphere in it? Are we going to let one or two negative people rule our life decisions? Don't make the villain the main character of your film.

I am not being biased, it's true that SCIS already has a really positive community feeling. We call it a bubble, surrounded by a not so nice world out there. Our campus is a factory of ambassadors of the art of life and good vibes, and, wherever they go, they have an impact. We tell students that they should be leaders, but we maybe don't always tell them that they cannot change other



people, that we can change ourselves only. Then that positive influence of our own change influences others... and that is being a leader. When a room is dark, do we fight darkness (which is what movies often teach us to do), or do we switch the lights on?

Homework: next time that you are in a place, classroom, lesson or home, change the atmosphere with the power of your silent pure thoughts, vibes and happiness.

Be the one who leads the silent change with your positive feelings.

Sorry I am a language teacher, but my Chinese is still *bù hǎo*. But I have worked out that I can have Chinese friends who don't speak English and with whom I share a good vibe connection. We have guitar jam sessions and we understand

each other through the language of the nice feelings.

I still keep trying, and this is my last Chinese favorite saying: 出淤泥而不染 (it literally means "to grow out of the mud unsullied"). It comes from poet Zhou Dunyi's work 'On the Love of Lotus'. It refers to the lotus flower, which grows from the mud but is not affected by it. That's our students. They have learnt to shine wherever they go after they graduate, and make a better world.



Andres Lopez, Head of Languages Department at SCIS Pudong



"My last Taobao pin!"



Mindfulness Activities at SCIS Pudong

Languages as Pathways: Opening Minds and Expanding Horizons

What if speaking another language didn't just allow you to talk to more people, but to think in entirely new ways? This is the powerful idea behind Benjamin Lee Whorf's hypothesis that 'Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about.' In our diverse SCIS community, we see this principle in action every day, as students learn languages to navigate multiple linguistic worlds.

Language Profiles as a Lens

In essence, each person's unique language profile acts as a lens through which they view the world (Emike et al., 2021). However, this lens is not fixed. The more languages we learn, the more easily we

can understand and communicate about our experiences to the people around us.

At SCIS, students develop their English skills for both everyday life and academic pursuits. Their starting points are diverse: some arrive with strong proficiency, ready to master the nuances of academic English, while others are just beginning their journey, skillfully using their home languages to access a challenging curriculum. Both are growing not only in their ability to learn and communicate, but in the very way that they think about the world around them.

What is Love?

Modern linguists say that every language,

even sign languages, can express any idea that humans can conceive (Perlin, 2014). In other words, if people have the ability to think about something, any given language in the world has a way of expressing that concept. For example, Ancient Greek had four different words for love. Each one expressed a different type of love, depending on whether that love was emphasized to be directed toward a family member, a lover, or a friend, or if it was a selfless, unconditional type (for example, one that was religious). While English can express these same concepts (as I just did here), one might argue that the ancient Greeks would have had an even easier time doing so.





and other languages for a diploma or college entrance. They are being given the keys to diverse worldviews, allowing them to combine their own cultural understandings with those from around the globe. Linguistic diversity is not just important for communicating with people from different countries. Speaking multiple languages expands our ability to think, enabling us to conceive of ideas beyond the horizons of what was previously possible.

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**Brooks Tait, PYP
English as an Additional
Language Teacher at
SCIS Hongqiao**

But even the Ancient Greeks (if they didn't learn other languages) were limited in their expressions about love. A cross-cultural study of other languages across the globe revealed 609 words for love that could be grouped into 14 categories (Lomas, 2018). Even the Greeks would have had to use more words and sentences to communicate about the concepts of self-love, momentary love, or rational love, which they could express, but not with the same level of ease as other languages.

Sign Languages as an Example

Another example is sign languages. Spoken languages are limited by the

combinations of sounds we can make with our tongue, teeth, and lips. Sign languages, however, have at their disposal a whole range of shapes that can be made by human hands. They can borrow from the alphabet of spoken languages, and even use 3-D space to show movement or position in a more layered way. Simply because of the structure, people who use sign languages potentially think about the world around them in a way that is different from those who do not.

Imagining the World in New Ways

What does that mean for students at SCIS? They are not just learning English





Why Putting on

Socks and Shoes Leads to Academic Success

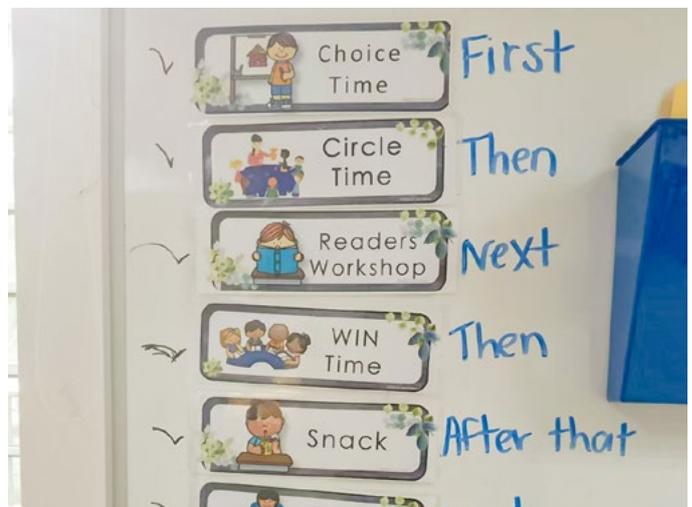
Early childhood is a critical period for developing social and emotional skills (SES), which form the foundation for future academic and life success. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) begins as children build their executive functioning skills through everyday routines—packing backpacks, tidying up after play, and navigating challenges during playtime. These activities help children cultivate essential abilities such as focus, task persistence, cognitive flexibility, and problem-solving. SEL also develops as children learn to regulate emotions when faced with disappointments or setbacks, such as not being picked first in a game, a favorite toy being unavailable, or having to wait patiently for an activity. Though these scenarios happen frequently in early childhood education (ECE) classrooms, each instance provides valuable opportunities for children to acquire SEL, practice skills with guidance from adults and peers, and eventually apply these skills independently.

Children grow socially and emotionally when teachers, parents, and peers model appropriate behaviors and offer ample chances to practice. While it may feel kinder or faster for a parent to put a child's socks on, this approach

prevents the child from mastering this important skill. Instead, when time allows, parents can encourage their child to hold the sock open and guide their foot inside, offering gentle support rather than doing it for them. Repeated practice of daily living tasks like putting on socks helps children develop fluency and automaticity, boosting their motor skills, self-confidence, and executive functioning.

Research consistently shows a strong connection between early SES and later academic success. Social and emotional skills influence how children interact with peers and caregivers, helping them understand and manage their feelings, make thoughtful choices, and resolve conflicts effectively. These capabilities allow children to navigate social and learning challenges more competently, promoting positive relationships and enhanced learning outcomes.

Parents play a vital role in supporting SEL at home through simple yet powerful strategies:



Talking About Emotions: Help your child recognize and name their feelings. Developing emotional awareness allows children to understand what’s happening inside their bodies and minds. As they mature, they learn to identify triggers for emotions and explore solutions. For example, parents can comment on observed feelings: “You look happy playing with your dinosaurs,” or gently inquire, “You seem sad that we’re leaving grandma’s house—am I right?” ECE teachers also support children by acknowledging their emotions and asking what they might need, whether a hug or a quiet moment. At home, reassuring your child that others share their feelings or offering comforting gestures can help them feel understood and supported.

Problem-Solving: Working through conflicts during play builds executive functioning skills critical for emotional regulation and social interaction. Children learn to accept “no” from others and develop non-aggressive ways to solve disagreements, such as trading toys, choosing alternative activities, or playing cooperatively. Teachers often model these prosocial behaviors

in classrooms, setting an example for children to emulate. At home, if certain conflicts recur, parents and children can collaborate to identify problems and agree on preferred solutions, creating a shared reference point for managing future challenges.

Seemingly simple tasks like putting on socks and shoes provide much more than keeping feet warm; they foster foundational skills critical for social, emotional, and academic growth. By giving children time and support to practice these daily routines and helping them navigate emotions and problem-solving, adults nurture confident, capable learners ready to thrive in school and beyond.



By Sarah Harkin, Counselor and Student Support Team Lead at SCIS Hongqiao ECE



Guiding Ambition: Preparing Students for High Standards and High Impact

In today's rapidly evolving global landscape, the role of education extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge. At an international school in Shanghai, "Guiding Ambition" embodies a commitment to cultivating individuals who meet the highest standards of academic and personal excellence while contributing meaningfully to society. This guiding principle reflects the school's dedication to shaping graduates who are prepared not only to succeed in university and professional contexts but also to serve as responsible and impactful global citizens.

The pursuit of high standards provides the foundation for an education that is both rigorous

and transformative. Academic expectations are carefully structured to develop intellectual depth, analytical capacity, and effective communication skills. These benchmarks are designed to ensure that students graduate with the competencies necessary to thrive in competitive and diverse international environments. Equally important, the school's definition of high standards encompasses personal conduct, resilience, and ethical awareness. Students are encouraged to set ambitious goals, reflect critically on their progress, and approach challenges with determination. In this context, ambition is guided not by external pressures but by an intrinsic desire for growth and achievement.





The second dimension of this philosophy emphasizes high impact, the capacity of students to apply their learning in ways that positively influence their communities and the wider world. Living in Shanghai, a city where global innovation intersects with rich cultural traditions, provides students with unique opportunities to engage meaningfully with issues of international significance. Through service-learning projects, sustainability initiatives, and cross-cultural collaborations, students learn to integrate academic knowledge with civic responsibility. Such experiences foster empathy, leadership, and adaptability. By linking classroom learning to real-world applications, the school equips its graduates to act as agents of positive change well beyond the school environment.

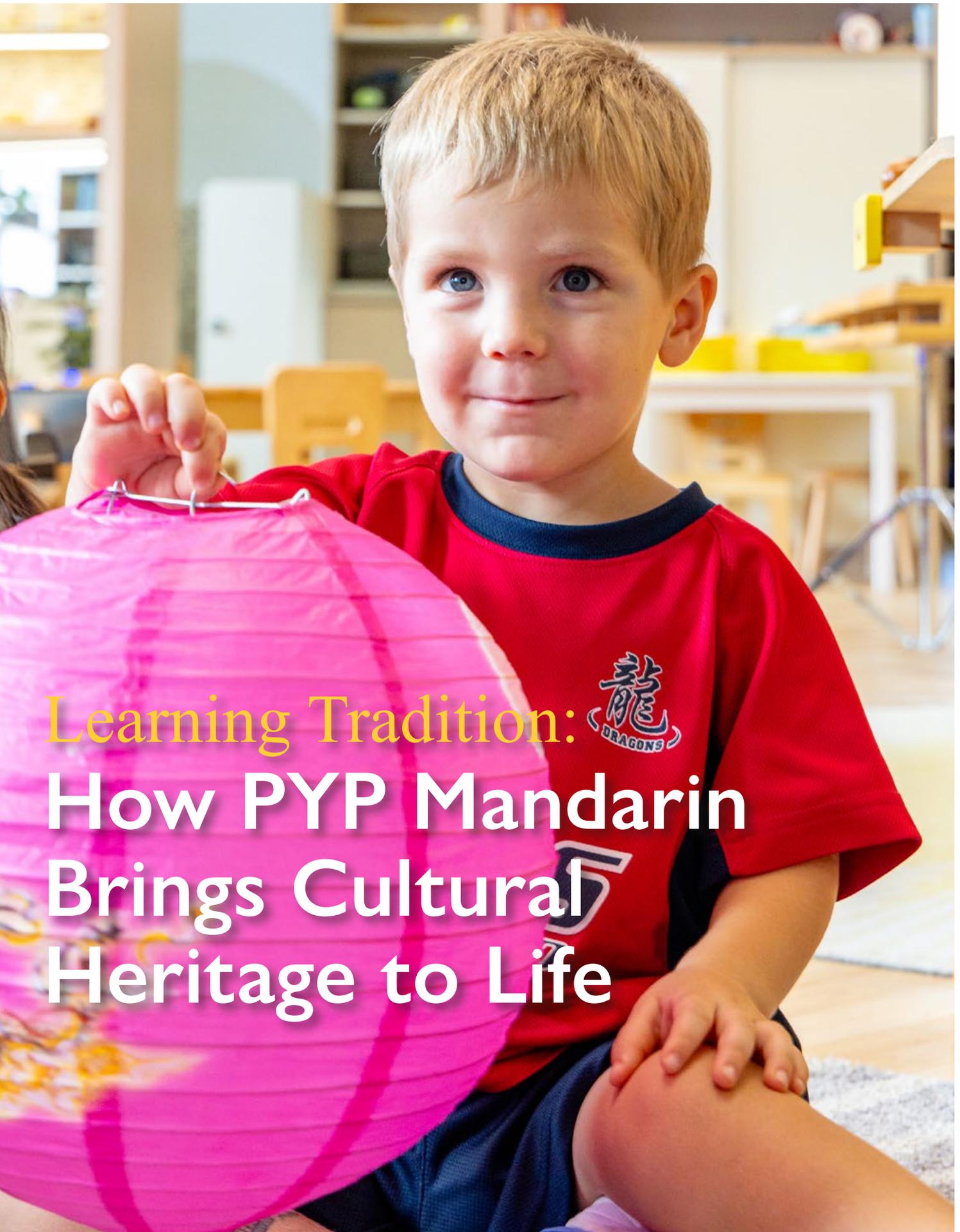
Ambition, when guided thoughtfully, becomes a powerful force for constructive development. Educators, counselors, and mentors play a central role in ensuring that students' aspirations are balanced with perspective and well-being. This careful balance prevents ambition from manifesting as undue stress and instead frames it as purposeful motivation. Equally, the school recognizes parents as essential partners in this process. Ongoing communication between school

and home establishes a support network that enables students to navigate challenges with confidence and resilience. The shared commitment of educators and families ensures that students remain firmly anchored as they strive toward ambitious goals.

To prepare students for high standards and high impact is not to pursue perfection, but to nurture individuals who are intellectually curious, ethically grounded, and globally minded. This approach reflects an understanding that education is not measured solely by immediate academic results, but also by the long-term contributions students make to society. In embracing the principle of "Guiding Ambition," the school reaffirms its mission to develop graduates who embody both excellence and purpose. Such individuals will not only excel in their chosen fields but also shape the future with integrity and vision.



By Hamila Asil, Upper School and College Counselor at SCIS Pudong



Learning Tradition:
How PYP Mandarin
Brings Cultural
Heritage to Life



At SCIS, the Lower School Mandarin program is designed with both heart and academic rigor—cultivating language proficiency while nurturing an appreciation for Chinese culture and heritage. Within the PYP framework, Mandarin is more than a language course; it is a bridge that connects students to cultural identity, creative expression, and global-mindedness.

Our program emphasizes the power of rigor through a clear and sustainable learning pathway that aligns from PYP through MYP and DP. Students are placed thoughtfully based on their language ability, ensuring that every learner, whether a beginner or a native speaker, is challenged and supported appropriately. This approach helps students develop confidence in communicating in Mandarin and understanding the deeper meaning of language as a tool for connection and inquiry.

Across grade levels, Mandarin teachers design learning experiences that bring Chinese traditions to life. In the Mandarin Exploration & Culture (MEC) track, students experience cultural inquiry through hands-on activities, practicing calligraphy, celebrating festivals, and exploring traditional arts that reflect values of respect and community. The Mandarin Acquisition (MAC) and Mandarin as Home Language (MHL) courses deepen language and literacy through authentic

communication and storytelling, while the Mandarin Language & Literature (MLL) track challenges advanced learners to analyze classical and contemporary texts using a workshop model that builds critical thinking.

Throughout the program, rigor is reflected not only in academic standards but also in relationships. Mandarin teachers model care, patience, and high expectations, encouraging students to take ownership

of their learning and persevere through challenges. Lessons are immersive, interactive, and inquiry-driven, allowing students to explore language through meaningful contexts, from daily school life to global issues.

In doing so, our students learn much more than words. They discover how language carries tradition, emotion, and perspective. They practice empathy as they explore cultural symbols and idioms that reveal how people express identity and belonging. And they come to see Mandarin as a living, evolving expression of Chinese culture—one they can use to connect across generations and communities.

At SCIS, the rigor of the Mandarin program lies not only in its structure and alignment but in the joy and depth of its learning experiences. By weaving cultural heritage into every lesson, the program truly brings tradition to life, empowering students to become confident communicators and globally minded inquirers.



**Sophia Zeng, PYP
Mandarin Coordinator
at SCIS Hongqiao**





Rigor in Action Through WIN Time

At SCIS, we believe that every student is capable of remarkable growth when provided with the right balance of challenge and support. This belief aligns with a definition of academic rigor that has guided my own professional philosophy since my time at Baylor University: creating an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels, each student is supported so they can learn at high levels, and each student demonstrates learning at high levels. In the Upper School at SCIS, this understanding of rigor is more than an idea; it is an intentional practice that shapes how we help students grow each day.

One of the most impactful ways we bring this philosophy to life is through our Tuesday advisory block with Grade 6 students, known as What I Need Time, or WIN Time. WIN Time is designed to ensure that every student receives targeted instruction based on their individual learning profile. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, we use a data-informed model that includes WIDA Model results, NWEA MAP growth measures, and teacher feedback. These data points work together to help us create small groups of eight to eleven learners who share similar instructional needs.

By grouping students strategically, we can personalize learning in a way that is both responsive and rigorous. Our teachers, who bring a wealth of international experience and expertise, design purposeful lessons that strengthen vocabulary decoding strategies, a foundational skill across all subject areas. Students engage with a combination of teacher-designed tasks and customized practice, allowing them to explore topics and strategies to unlock prefixes, suffixes, and word roots in meaningful and interactive ways. In this small-

group context, students receive the focused attention that helps them build confidence, stretch their abilities, and develop lasting transfer skills.

This structure supports rigor in two important ways. First, it ensures that expectations are high for every learner, whether they are developing foundational skills or extending into more advanced applications. Second, it provides each student with the kind of targeted support that makes high expectations achievable. When students understand that their learning path is personalized and that teachers are intentionally guiding them, they approach academic challenges with greater motivation and persistence.

Just as importantly, WIN Time also strengthens our school community. Small groups foster a sense of belonging, as students work closely with peers they may not encounter in their regular classes. They learn to share strategies, ask questions, and celebrate each other's progress. These moments help students see that rigor is not about pressure—it is about growth, curiosity, and shared success.

As a highly regarded international school serving students from diverse linguistic and academic backgrounds, SCIS is committed to practices that empower students to reach higher than they thought possible. WIN Time is one of the

many ways we honor that commitment. By combining strong data practices, expert teaching, and a supportive learning environment, we ensure that each student not only meets high expectations, but truly thrives within them.



Scott Simmons, Upper School Vice Principal at SCIS Hongqiao





The **Depth of Rigor** in the **Early Years**

When we hear the word rigor, we often associate it with challenge, discipline, or demanding standards. Rigor is not simply about making learning harder. Instead, it is about making learning deeper, more meaningful, and more connected to the child. Rigor emerges not through worksheets or tests, but through the thoughtful, sustained, and joyful pursuit of ideas alongside children.

At the heart of this perspective lies the image of the teacher as a researcher. Teachers are not just transmitters of knowledge, but active co-learners who study children's thinking with curiosity and respect. Rigor, in this sense, comes from the discipline of observing closely, asking questions, and documenting learning as it unfolds. When teachers adopt this stance, they demonstrate to children that inquiry is a lifelong process, not a box to be checked.

Listening plays a central role in this process. To listen is not only to hear a child's words but to pay attention to all the different ways

in which they communicate—their gestures, drawings, play, silences, and questions. Listening requires patience, humility, and presence. It is a rigorous act because it asks us to slow down and notice what is often invisible at first glance. When we truly listen, we uncover children's theories, connections, and ways of making sense of the world.

From listening, we move into co-construction of knowledge. Learning is not something given to children but something built together—children, teachers, and families working in partnership. This demands rigor because it challenges us to be mindful of the widely held expectations for each stage of development and follow the emergent directions of children's thinking. It requires teachers to continually reflect: What do the children see that I do not? How can I design an environment that provokes their curiosity further? How do we make space for their ideas to grow in complexity?

Rigor is not about speed or efficiency, but about depth and authenticity. It is about sustaining an investigation long enough for children to revisit, revise, and refine their understandings. For example, when children become fascinated with shadows, a rigorous response is not to move quickly on to the next topic but to provide light

sources, screens, stories, and artistic media that allow them to test their theories and expand their thinking. Over time, the children's questions deepen, and their capacity to think critically, collaborate, and express themselves grows.

In this way, rigor is intimately tied to joy. When children are invited into meaningful learning—when their voices are honoured and their ideas taken seriously—they respond with energy, persistence, and creativity. Rigor engages the whole child: intellectual, emotional, social, and creative.

Embracing rigor involves valuing process over product, listening before speaking, and co-constructing knowledge that matters. It means trusting children as capable thinkers and ourselves as reflective educators. In doing so, we cultivate not only rigorous learning but also a culture of respect, wonder, and possibility.



By Clair Wain, Early Years Coordinator at SCIS Hongqiao ECE





The Invisible Threads of Rigor

How purpose, play, and pedagogy weave deep learning in early childhood classrooms



When we hear the word rigor, many picture stacks of worksheets and neat rows of handwriting. But rigor isn't about quantity, it's about quality. In my approach to teaching, rigor takes shape through layers of overlapping ideas that connect, evolve, and lead toward one overarching goal: meaningful understanding. It's a process of layering, revisiting, and refining, where teachers weave meaning into every experience, making complex learning look seamless through purposeful play.

Building Bridges

Rigor thrives in collaboration, especially with families. Our role as educators is to help parents see that rigor isn't about pressure or perfection, it's about purposeful growth.

Early in my career, I asked parents to make puppets with their children related

to our theme. One mother giggled as she handed me an elaborate creation:

"Teachers always give us the toughest challenges! I'm not crafty, but I did my best."

Her words stayed with me. I realized that while her effort made the experience meaningful, the task itself wasn't fully purposeful. It wasn't thoughtfully designed to fully leverage the parent's role in supporting both the child and the classroom.

That moment reshaped how I view family engagement. Parent participation must be purposeful, intentional, and mutually meaningful, designed so that children are learning, parents are empowered, and teachers gain insight and connection. True rigor extends beyond the classroom; it thrives when family involvement forms a

triangle of engagement, where all three parties contribute to and benefit from the experience.

During our unit on Who We Are, we explored how we grow and change, and invited parents and children to look back at their baby clothes and attempt to try them on. It opened the door to stories from their earlier days, reminding families how far they've come.

"My clothes are too small now!"
"I grew, but my clothes didn't!"

Curiosity became inquiry, and inquiry evolved into identity. Beyond the suggested activity from the teacher, families initiated conversations that surpassed expectations, sharing photos, keepsakes, and reflections that went far beyond simply "growing." These discussions were guided by

parents' memories, allowing dialogue to flow naturally toward the learning goals. Parents felt empowered, and children engaged in deeper thinking, richer conversations, expanding their understanding of self, others, and their place in the world.

Connecting the Dots

Excitement filled the corridors as children returned, eager to share about their weekend, trying on clothes they could barely fit into. Waiting for them in class was a collection of school uniforms laid out, from the tiniest sizes to the largest, inviting curious eyes and laughter as they tried them on. The children eagerly compared each one, identifying which sizes fit them now and imagining the ones they might wear when they're older. "That one is for big kids like my brother!" one child exclaimed. This vivid, hands-

on comparison made the concept of growth tangible and connected beautifully to the experiences they had shared at home.

To reinforce that growth isn't just physical, we later invited older students to share with our little ones by reading stories they had written themselves. This created a meaningful bridge across ages, showing that growth also comes in skills, confidence, and capability. "I want to learn my letters so I can read when I go to kindergarten!" one child declared. That spark of self-driven learning, that's the essence of rigor: children reaching for growth because they want to, not because they have to.

Ultimately, rigor is amplified when teachers intentionally branch out, building bridges with families, colleagues, and the wider community, to create

authentic experiences that nurture every child's growth.

The Heart of Rigor

At its core, rigor is a commitment to curiosity, to challenge, and to connection. It asks teachers to plan intentionally, think deeply, and trust the process of play. It calls for collaboration between educators, parents, and children, each adding a layer that strengthens the whole.

When purpose aligns with joy, and play is infused with intention, rigor stops being an expectation and becomes a living experience, one that empowers children not just to learn, but to love learning.



Denise Lee,
Pre-Kindergarten Teacher,
at SCIS Pudong





The Canvas of the Mind

Cultivating Creativity in the IB Diploma



When students enter SCIS Upper School, they are faced with a variety of course choices, specifically in the Arts. In Middle School (Grades 6-8), all students engage with Visual Art, Music, and Theatre. Once students enter High School, students are able to choose two year-long courses from Theatre, Music, Media Arts, and Visual Art. Throughout the MYP, students are highly engaged in the Arts. And then the fateful day arrives when students make their course selections for the Diploma. Many families and students spend a great deal of time debating course selections and how these will connect to their university goals and future careers.

The IB recommends students choose one of each of the six subject groups (Group 1: Studies in Language and Literature, Group 2: Language Acquisition, Group 3: Individuals and Societies, Group 4:

Sciences, Group 5: Mathematics, and Group 6: The Arts). But there are diverging pathways in the Diploma. While there are many pathways in selecting DP subjects, there are several in which students can opt out entirely from the Group 6 courses. We have many students who choose this path. But what underlies this choice? How do we weigh the value of the Arts in a well-rounded education? Are the Sciences and Humanities the primary drivers for preparing students for their futures and university educations? What compelling reasons might there be to include an Arts course?

The truth of the matter is that evidence continues to prove that students who engage in Arts Education develop discipline, self-regulatory behaviours, creativity, collaboration skills, and help prepare students to engage with open-ended problem solving. Studies

consistently show that Arts education provides students with abilities in these skills far above their non-arts studying peers. A 2018 study by Oreck, Baum, and Owen found that students who engaged in performing arts study saw increased academic performance, particularly correlating to higher achievement on standardized Math and Reading tests. A 2024 study by Samaniego, Usca, Salguero, and Quevedo found that students engaging in Arts, Maths, and Sciences equally were more successful creative thinkers, developing skills to prepare them for the challenges of the 21st century and the ever-changing nature of careers and skills. A 2021 study by González-Zamar and Abad-Segura found that students engaging in arts education were able to demonstrate higher emotional intelligence, and they made connections to psychological development and wellbeing. This is just a scratch of the surface; there are countless other studies that continue to prove the positive influence of arts education in preparing students for the future.

So the question remains, why do families still opt to pull their students out of arts courses?

Here at SCIS, our DP Arts programs have seen high levels of success. Students gain valuable skills in developing time management, collaboration, critical and creative thinking. Many of our DP Arts students have gone on to study Arts around the world in programs for Art History, Musical Theatre, Film Production, Illustration, Animation, Contemporary Music Composition, Studio Art, Sound Design and Engineering, to name a few. We have also had our DP Arts students go on to study Medicine, Psychology, Pharmacology, Civil Engineering, Computer Science, and more.

Choosing to study the arts in the DP does not mean that you are choosing to study Arts at the University level, nor does it mean that you are destined to continue on to a career in the Arts. What choosing to study the arts does mean is

that you are choosing to further your discipline, self-management and collaboration skills, problem-solving and creativity. It means that you are better prepared to engage in a society that is ever-changing, and you will be better equipped to contribute and make your mark on the world around you.



Cara Whiteside,
Head of Arts and
Design at SCIS Pudong



Why Balance Matters: **Healthy Tech Habits for Kids**

It's easy to see how quickly technology captures children's attention. With a colorful screen, a quick game, or a funny video, it's no wonder that children are so fascinated. However, as educators, our role is not to stop students from using technology, but to help them build healthy habits around it.

Balance matters because we live in a digital age where technology is not only a helpful companion for completing tasks efficiently, but also an engaging tool for learning. When used intentionally, technology can spark creativity, curiosity, and confidence. Instead of focusing only on the negatives, we can choose to highlight the positives it brings to our classrooms and homes.

At SCIS, students use technology in meaningful ways, they use it to create digital art, learn to touch type, code, write emails, and organise their computers. These are important foundational skills that help them become confident and capable digital citizens.





to learn, communicate, or create, they begin to understand that screens are tools, not toys. Modelling balance, such as putting phones away during meals or prioritising conversation over scrolling, reinforces the idea that mindful tech use starts with the adults around them.

To support balance at home, families can set simple routines. Encourage children to avoid screens during mindful moments such as meals or before bedtime. Limiting screen time on school nights to a set amount, for example, 60 minutes, helps create healthy habits.

Making tech use intentional also makes a big difference: spend time using apps together, discuss what your child is watching or creating, and celebrate their learning online. These small steps nurture both connection and digital responsibility.

Of course, too much screen time can have its downsides. Overstimulation, distraction, and reduced physical play are common challenges when balance isn't maintained. That's why it's essential to distinguish between purposeful screen use, for learning or creativity, and free-time use, such as gaming or watching videos. Equally important is recognising when it's time to put screens away and re-engage with the world offline.

medium. Across all of these, teachers model how technology should be used and clarify the purpose of each activity. This helps students develop awareness of why technology is being used and for how long.

Adults play a key role in shaping how children interact with technology. When students see teachers or parents using devices purposefully, whether



Petra Akinsola,
Technology Integrator
at SCIS

At SCIS, we use technology to encourage students to dive deeper into learning. This might include completing IXL tasks, conducting research using PebbleGo or Britannica, or creating books in Book Creator. Students also code in Scratch, use Toddle to access learning tools, or enjoy math challenges on Prodigy. Creative projects using Procreate help them learn new artistic techniques in a digital



Active Learners in Action: Building Our SCIS Community



In Grade 2 at SCIS Pudong, the first Unit of Inquiry of the year was titled “We Are Active Learners.” Through this unit, students explored the central idea that our choices and actions impact the success of the community. They engaged in a variety of learning experiences to deepen their understanding of what community means and how to work together harmoniously.

During the unit, our young learners engaged in a range of hands-on learning experiences. They designed and constructed cardboard houses, castles, and

dog houses, sharing their ideas openly with teammates and then deciding together on the best plan.

To broaden their understanding of community roles, the students interviewed members of the SCIS community, including Grade 3 students, cafeteria staff, school guards, and cleaning staff. With support from their Mandarin and Grade 3 homeroom teachers, Grade 2 gained insight into how many people contribute to creating a positive and supportive environment.

Through their learning journey, they discovered that teamwork makes challenges easier and more fulfilling because everyone shares the workload. They also learned to be caring and reflective learners—understanding that when individuals focus only on themselves or argue, it hinders the community from completing tasks and prevents everyone from feeling comfortable and valued.

To hear more about their experiences, we asked Grade 2 students to reflect on what they had learned and share their thoughts:

Ms. Martha: Who are some people in our school, and what do they do to help? Can you tell me about a job you find interesting and why?

Bella, Zunruo, and Marcelo: The guards (bao’ans). They work all day in the sun keeping unknown cars out. It is interesting because they know all about the big gate. They work hard and never leave from outside protecting us. They even stay outside after school for many hours, and we never see them take a lunch break.

Ms. Martha: How do teachers, helpers, and students work together to make our school a happy and safe place? Can you share a time when someone in our school helped you or your friends?

Jayden: Being kind.

Rayan: When I needed help to spell a word.

Ameliia: Teachers help us to figure out problems makes us happy because everyone gets advice and everyone is safe at recess.

Lucas: When I am sad my friend Benji said he would play with me and include me.

Ms. Martha: What did you like most about learning about our school community?

Yoonseo: Group projects, because building together made us share and take turns.

Munene: Creating our calm-down space, because it taught me how to calm down and also about community—it shows us what is in the ocean, which is a community. All of us cut decorations together and we all stuck up our pictures on the wall, taking turns to decorate together our calm-down space.

Leo: Making cardboard houses, because we learned about each other and what everyone can do.

Ms. Martha: How did working with others during this unit make you feel?

Jayden, Ian, and Mayu: The unit made us feel challenged. It was our first time to build a cardboard house it was challenging because we have to talk with our team about what to create.

Mayu and Ian: We had to keep practicing and practicing, repeating many times to make the cardboard houses. We had to learn from Ms. Martha—she taught us to learn from our mistakes and help people.

Ms. Martha: Do you feel proud of what you did? Why?

Arlo: We built a Dragon Puzzle and that makes me feel proud because I thought, "Oh I just built my first puzzle!" My friends and I completed it together. I felt brave!

Rosie: Working together with new people—building and cutting cardboard to make the cardboard houses and create something new was so challenging. It felt good after finishing.

Mari: I'm proud because I made new friends with Leo and Evelyn.

Ms. Martha: If 'teamwork' were a color, what color would it be?

Ian: Yellow, because it is bright and makes everyone feel happy. The sun is bright and happy.

Zunruo: Green, because the color is calm. Blue is calm too.

Mayu, Jayden and Marcelo: Rainbow because everyone is good. Every color in the rainbow shows that we are all a team.

Bella: Blue, because it is the color of peace. Also rainbow colors—yellow and pink—because they are happy. When you draw a rainbow, it's happy, and happiness is teamwork, like filling buckets as bucket fillers.

Ms. Martha: If our class were an animal, what animal would we be?

Rayan: A dragon because we are SCIS Dragons. We work together to beat the other team and we work together to find things out.

Ameliia: A fish because we are a school of fish. We work together.

Lucas: Jellyfish because we work together to protect each other and we eat together.

Ms. Martha: If you could be 'Principal for a Day,' what is one new rule or activity you would create to make our school even better?

Leo: Create a big card to SCIS community to celebrate to get happy.

Yoonseo: Lower School can join Upper School in more learning activities to build community.

Arlo: Inviting new people to come and talk to Upper School and Lower School to help us talk more and to solve problems.

Rosie and Evelyn: Every Friday make cookies because then we would practice teamwork and it would be yummy!

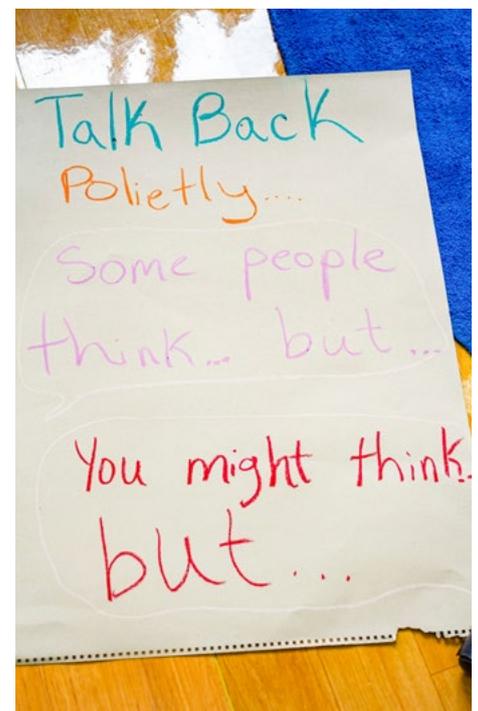
Mari: No shoes in class and yes shoes outside!

The unit concluded with a Giving Back Celebration where students made cookies, Thank You cards, and art projects to share with the entire SCIS community. They began by giving their creations to the people they had interviewed and gradually included more teachers and support staff—recognizing that everyone plays a vital role in making their school a happy and welcoming place.

Grade 2 students are still developing their skills in collaboration, problem-solving, responsibility, and considering others' perspectives. Their thoughtful reflections in the interviews clearly show how much they have grown, demonstrating that even at this young age, they are already making meaningful contributions to their school community.



Martha Young, Grade 2 Teacher at SCIS Pudong



Empowering Every Learner Through W.I.N. Time

Yiyi Wei, our Lower School Learning Support Coordinator at SCIS Pudong, has always been drawn to helping students discover their strengths and overcome challenges. Now in her fourth year at SCIS, she has dedicated herself to creating learning experiences where every child feels valued, supported, and empowered. Growing up in a family of educators, Yiyi says she naturally developed a love for education and a curiosity about how children learn and thrive.

A Passion For Teaching

With a degree in psychology and a master's in education from Columbia University, and holding licenses in both General and Special Education, Yiyi brings a rich blend of academic expertise and practical experience. She has worked in classrooms and clinics across the U.S. and China, supporting students with Autism, ADHD, and other learning differences.

Her early exposure to different education systems also shaped her commitment to inclusive education. She understands the importance of tailoring support to each student's individual needs, and her holistic perspective informs everything she does at SCIS.

"I've always loved being a teacher," Yiyi shares. "Seeing students grow, discovering their strengths, and helping them overcome challenges, that's what makes this work meaningful."

W.I.N. (What I Need) Time: Personalized Learning in Action

At the heart of Yiyi's work is the innovative W.I.N. (What I Need) Time program, designed to ensure every student from Kindergarten through Grade 5 receives support that truly meets

their individual needs. Recognizing that inclusive education isn't just about access, Yiyi and the Learning Support team—working closely with homeroom teachers, who play a central role in planning and delivering the sessions—have built a system that responds thoughtfully to each learner's identity, strengths, and challenges.

The program begins long before students step into the classroom. The team collects assessment data, consults with homeroom and subject teachers, analyzes trends, and confirms groupings to create purposeful, mixed-grade learning groups. Each group has clearly defined goals, carefully prepared materials, and a plan tailored to the students' needs. Support from the leadership team ensures alignment and fosters collaboration across the entire Lower School.

Twice a week, students participate in 40-minute W.I.N. sessions. Each grade is divided into eight groups, with each cycle lasting eight weeks and three cycles running across the school year. At the end of every cycle, the team reviews student progress and adjusts groupings and instructional strategies to maintain growth and engagement.

"Our goal is to make support routine, targeted, and empowering," Yiyi explains. "We want every child to experience success, and every teacher to feel confident in supporting them."

Because the program is thoughtfully designed and embedded within existing structures, it enhances learning while recognizing the time, preparation, and expertise that homeroom teachers,



Mandarin teachers, and assistants dedicate to making each session meaningful. Over time, data shows that students in W.I.N. Time make noticeable progress, not just in academic achievement but also in confidence and engagement.

Recently, the approach received recognition beyond SCIS: at the SISA Learning Support Connect event, Yiyi shared W.I.N. Time with more than 70 educators from Shanghai and Suzhou international schools, highlighting its collaborative, evidence-based model and its impact on student outcomes. This progress reflects a truly collective effort—especially the commitment of the homeroom teachers, whose partnership is essential in bringing the program to life.

Fostering Trust and Connection

Yiyi places great importance on the small, everyday moments that help students feel supported and understood. Whether it's noticing a student's emotions, celebrating a small achievement, or engaging in a brief conversation, these interactions build trust and strengthen her relationship with each learner.

"We would like every student to know their strengths, overcome challenges, feel proud of what they can achieve, and truly see that they are supported every step of the way," Yiyi explains.

Personal Passions that Inspire Teaching

Beyond the classroom, Yiyi's adventurous spirit is evident in her love for rock climbing, skiing, and scuba diving. Her

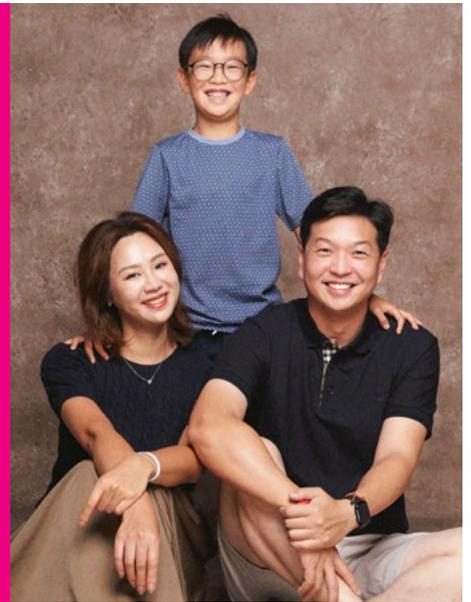
curiosity and enthusiasm for exploring new experiences shape how she engages with students, encouraging them to take risks, embrace challenges, and discover their own potential. She believes that the lessons learned through adventure, perseverance, problem-solving, and resilience are just as important as academic skills.

Through W.I.N. Time and her holistic approach to learning, Yiyi continues to make a meaningful impact on students' learning journeys. Her dedication empowers students to take ownership of their learning, inspires thoughtful, targeted support within the school, and reinforces the belief that every learner, regardless of their starting point, can thrive, succeed, and make a positive difference.



Grounded & Soaring: Nurturing Wonder, Building Bonds

Lucky, our Parents and Friends Association (PAFA) President at SCIS Hongqiao, has been weaving her family's story into the life of the school ever since her son Wilson joined Nursery in 2020. Now in his sixth year at SCIS, Wilson has grown up alongside a mother whose energy, creativity, and dedication help shape not only her child's experiences but also the rhythm of the school community. From volunteering as a room parent to leading PAFA, Lucky has brought her 15 years of professional experience in media communication, personal passions, and warm curiosity to every corner of school life.



Roots of Engagement: Sparking Community Spirit

Lucky's enthusiasm and organizational skills soon made her a familiar face at school events, where she found joy in connecting families and supporting teachers. What began as a way to be closer to school life and her child gradually became a meaningful commitment to the wider community, leading her to take on larger roles and eventually, the position of PAFA President.

Q: How did your involvement in PAFA evolve over time?

A: In Wilson's first year at SCIS, I volunteered to be a room parent, which allowed me to get to know teachers and families more closely. Later, I officially joined PAFA and became the ECE representative, where I began to see how parent involvement could enhance student experiences and strengthen our community spirit. Meanwhile, I also have a hobby and entrepreneurial endeavor as an event planner, which has helped me bring creativity and structure to every event. Over time, this combination of passion and experience naturally led me to take on the role of PAFA President—a position that carries both challenges and excitement.

Q: Which PAFA activities have been especially meaningful for you and your son?

A: The ECE Charity Art Auction is unforgettable. It has been held for ten years now, and every year, each ECE class collaborates to create an artwork that is

auctioned off to raise funds for children in need of heart surgery. These pieces aren't professional, but you can see the children's love and enthusiasm, and the generosity of the parents who bid. When my son learned the significance behind their artwork, he was so proud. To me, that's the true SCIS spirit.

Q: What do you hope to bring to the PAFA community as President?

A: PAFA plays a vital role as a bridge between families and the school. On one hand, we advocate for parents, making sure their voices and needs are heard by the school. On the other hand, we help communicate the school's educational philosophy and community spirit to all families. As PAFA President, I look forward to working with such a great team to bring more parents together, to help our diverse community feel even more connected and close-knit, and to create a welcoming environment where every family feels they belong.

Beyond her leadership in PAFA, Lucky's most meaningful contribution is perhaps seen through Wilson's own journey, a reflection of how the SCIS experience shapes not only students but families as well.

Curiosity and Global Connections: Growing and Exploring Together

Wilson's journey at SCIS is a continuous unfolding of curiosity, creativity, and independence. Starting as a young learner exploring the world around him, SCIS encourages him not only to absorb

facts but to ask questions, experiment, and think critically at every stage of his development.

Q: How has SCIS nurtured Wilson's curiosity and critical thinking as he's grown?

A: From his early days in Pre-K, he's been encouraged to ask questions and explore ideas independently. For example, during a Pre-K theme on plant growth cycles, rather than simply telling the children that 'seeds grow into flowers,' Wilson was asked to plant beans, observe daily changes, and consider why some beans sprouted more slowly. This hands-on approach sparked his natural curiosity and the habit of asking 'why.' As he progressed through the grades, teachers continued to foster this curiosity by posing thoughtful questions, encouraging predictions, and supporting his exploration.

Q: Can you share how teachers balance challenge and support to help Wilson thrive?

A: The teachers at SCIS excel at meeting each child where they are. During read-aloud time, for example, they pause to ask, 'What do you think will happen next? Why?' This invites children to think ahead and reason through the story, rather than just listen passively. Wilson feels challenged but never overwhelmed, thanks to the supportive environment where mistakes are embraced as part of learning. This balance helps him build both confidence and resilience, knowing that it's okay to make errors while trying new ideas.

Q: How have you seen Wilson grow beyond curiosity into other important qualities?

A: I've watched Wilson develop not only academically but also socially and emotionally. He has become more confident in expressing his opinions and more comfortable engaging with others. One aspect I truly appreciate is his growing awareness and care for the world around him. He shows genuine concern for the environment and for people's well-being, which I believe are foundational for becoming a thoughtful global citizen.

This developing sense of empathy and global awareness naturally extends as Wilson interacts with our diverse community. At SCIS, the multicultural environment offers rich opportunities for him to explore different cultures, traditions, and perspectives, broadening his understanding and respect for the world.

Q: How has Wilson experienced global perspectives at SCIS?

A: He has developed a real openness to differences. Events like UN Day, where students wear traditional clothes and share cultural stories, and learning songs like the '7 Continents Song' have helped him understand and appreciate many countries. He can talk excitedly about Diwali celebrations, describing the lamps and sweets—things we couldn't have taught him at home alone.

The International Food Fair and Cultural Craft Fair, both organized by PAFA, are also standout experiences. Parents and children come together to share traditional foods and crafts from around 20 countries. These events not only spark Wilson's curiosity but also deepen his respect and appreciation for other cultures, fostering a genuine sense of global community.

Family Explorations: Home as a Laboratory

At home, Wilson's growth is shaped by a rich blend of exploration, family bonding, and developing independence. On Sunday mornings, Wilson prepares pancakes for the family, a simple yet meaningful routine that combines responsibility with care. After breakfast, the family sits together to share stories from their week, creating moments for connection and reflection. Weekends often include quality time with family, where Wilson enjoys playing Chinese chess with his grandpa or poker with the whole family.

Q: How do you encourage persistence, independence, and resilience at home?

A: We combine practical experiences with meaningful conversations. Wilson loves reading books about African animals, the universe, and planets, which fuel his endless curiosity. We often take him to museums and exhibitions—his favorite is the Natural History Museum, where he enjoys simulated fossil digs and hands-on learning.

To build resilience and discipline, Wilson follows daily routines including reading in both Chinese and English, practicing Math, and playing the violin. These habits instill perseverance. Additionally, Wilson has practiced Brazilian jiu-jitsu for over three years, a sport that teaches him to face challenges calmly, learn from setbacks, and prepare for the next attempt.

Q: What values do you hope Wilson carries with him as he grows?

A: We don't set fixed plans for his career or education. Instead, we hope he embraces three core values: curiosity—never stop asking "why" and loving to learn; kindness—always care for others and the environment; and resilience—understand that failure is part of growth and it's important to get back up and try again. Most of all, we want Wilson to grow up happy with who he is and inspired to make a positive difference in the world.

In many ways, Lucky serves as the bridge between home and school—showing how strong partnerships create lasting impact on children's growth. Through her active role in PAFA and her nurturing presence at home, Lucky fosters a space where learning happens naturally—in the kitchen, at the chessboard, or during weekend adventures. Wilson's journey, shaped by both family and school, reflects how exploration and connection nurture lifelong curiosity.





A Season of Triumph: Dragon Volleyball Soars to New Heights

In a fall season defined by grit, growth, and spectacular performances, the SCIS Pudong Volleyball Program has cemented its place as a powerhouse, with both the Girls' and Boys' teams delivering unforgettable campaigns that culminated in thrilling postseason runs.

The journey for the Girls' team was one of remarkable improvement. Starting the season with a fresh lineup, the team dedicated themselves to refining their skills and building chemistry. Their hard work paid off in a thrilling conclusion to the ACAMIS tournament, where they clinched a decisive victory over a tough opponent to secure 3rd Place. The win was a fitting end to a season of tremendous growth, cementing their status as one of the top teams in the region.

Their success was fueled by dynamic play across the court. In the front row, Aada was a formidable force, delivering powerful spikes and crucial blocks that energized the team. Anchoring the defense in the back row was Lorena, whose relentless digs and incredible court coverage kept countless rallies alive. At the heart of it all was Captain Beatriz, whose season-long performance at setter was nothing short of unbelievable. Her precise hands and leadership on the court directed the offense and inspired her teammates to new heights.

To seal the deal in the 3rd place match, Bella stood tall in the face of adversity. Down 8-4 in the third set, she rattled off 5 aces in a row to give the Dragons a lead they would not relinquish.



The story of the Boys' season was one of pure heart and resilience. In an almost unheard-of display of endurance and teamwork, the Dragons competed in the entire ACAMIS tournament with only six players on their roster—no substitutes to offer respite. Despite this monumental challenge, they battled through fatigue and adversity, winning game after game to advance all the way to the championship match, where they ultimately finished as runners-up. This incredible feat, following their runner-up finish at the prestigious SISAC Tournament, showcased a level of determination that defined their season. Their new name is, "The Iron Six".

The engine of this success was the phenomenal Eino, who established himself as the most dominant player in both tournaments. His all-around excellence—featuring thunderous kills, impenetrable blocks, and strategic serves—made him an unstoppable force. For his stellar performances, Eino was deservedly named to the All-Tournament team. Gunit was also named to the All-Tournament team for his incredible serves and timely sets. Lucas showed unbelievable cool as his return of serve was impeccable versus some of the top jump servers in ACAMIS.

The success of both teams underscores the strength and vitality of SCIS's volleyball program. A massive vote of thanks is extended to Coaches Joel Taylor and Jessie Doster, whose tireless dedication, strategic guidance, and unwavering support were instrumental in shaping these amazing teams.

As the nets come down and the knee pads are stored away, one thing is clear: the future of Dragons volleyball is blazingly bright, built on a foundation of success, sportsmanship, and undeniable team spirit.



By Eric Rodine, Athletics, Aquatics, & ASA Coordinator at SCIS Pudong

SCIS Hongqiao



DI Boys Volleyball team

Our DI Boys Volleyball season was a journey of growth, resilience, and teamwork. We began as a group of talented athletes who hadn't yet learned how to play as one unit. Early in the season, we faced a few tough losses and moments of frustration as we worked to understand each other's strengths, communication styles, and roles on the court. However, rather than allowing those challenges to define us, the boys committed to improving—showing up, pushing one another, and choosing to grow together rather than individually.

As the season progressed, everything began to click. Our serve-receive became cleaner, our defense more unified, and our attacking more dynamic. The team's chemistry developed naturally, built on trust and shared belief. This transformation was on full display at the ACAMIS Green Division Volleyball Tournament, where the boys played their best volleyball of the year and earned the ACAMIS Green Division Gold. Being able to do this at home, in front of our own crowd—with the support of our parents, teachers, and students—made it unforgettable. This season will be remembered for how we became a true team in every sense of the word. Go dragons!



*By Coach: Justin Corvers,
Athletic Coordinator, MYP Physical and
Health Education at SCIS Hongqiao*



*By Coach: Chantelle Ho,
MYP Physical and Health
Education at SCIS Hongqiao*

DI Girls Volleyball team

This year's DI Girls Volleyball season was nothing short of inspiring. From the first serve to the final match, our players showed remarkable growth in skill, confidence, and teamwork. Each game brought new challenges, but through determination, communication, and trust, the team transformed obstacles into opportunities for success. The season reached an unforgettable peak as our girls proudly claimed the ACAMIS Green Division Championship title once again!

Beyond the victories, what truly stood out was the incredible support from our school community—students, staff, and families who filled the stands and cheered every step of the way. Their energy lifted the team and reminded us what school spirit truly means. This season has been a powerful reminder that teamwork, perseverance, and unity—both on and off the court—are the keys to success.



Volleyball Recap



D2 Boys Volleyball team

The D2 Boys Volleyball Team entered the season with high expectations and truly did not disappoint. They finished the SISAC regular season with a remarkable 5-0 record, only losing one due to a coaching error, and proudly claimed the West Division title. Additionally, they secured a spot in the higher league for next season, an amazing accomplishment!

During the SISAC Championships, the team demonstrated incredible resilience. After a challenging start, dropping the first set 25-8, they rallied back with tremendous grit, winning the next two sets 25-20, 15-11 to reach the finals. In the championship match, the boys secured two close victories over Dulwich Pudong, ultimately winning the SISAC Volleyball Title.

This season has been our most successful D2 season in several years, and I believe all the team members deserve recognition for their hard work, dedication, and unwavering commitment to one another.



*By Coach: Kirk Thomas,
MYP Physical and
Health Education
at SCIS Hongqiao*

D2 Girls Volleyball team

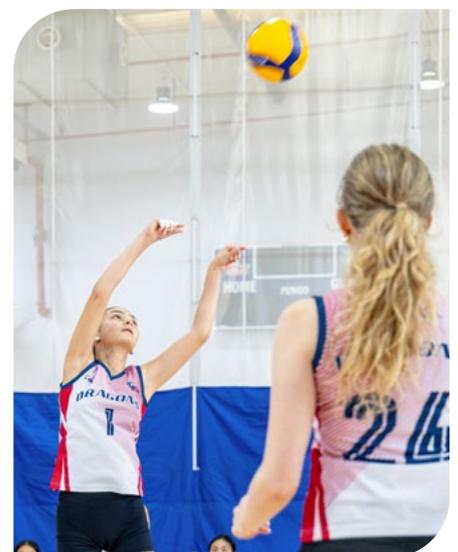
This volleyball season was a tough but meaningful journey for our team. We faced strong, higher-ranked opponents who challenged us every step of the way. Although we didn't always come out on top, we improved our game and came close to victory on several occasions. Our serves became more consistent, our defense sharper, and our confidence stronger as the season went on. While we weren't always fully united on the court, these experiences showed us how powerful teamwork can be.

If we continue to build trust, communication, and collaboration,

there's no doubt we'll become a truly successful team in the future. Every player showed dedication and persistence, always giving their best and showing up for each game and practice. Thank you to everyone for your effort and commitment—it's the foundation that will help us grow and reach even greater achievements next season!



*By Coach: Luke
Patterson, MYP Design
at SCIS Hongqiao*





Through the Lens of Keith: Discovering Stories, Shaping Self

Cameras were always within reach for Keith Leung (Class of 2019, SCIS Pudong). His father, a hobbyist photographer, surrounded him with images and the tools of the trade from an early age. What began as playful recordings of family trips soon grew into a fascination with capturing moments, emotions, and the small stories unfolding around him. When his family relocated from Hong Kong to Shanghai in 2014, Keith brought this curiosity with him. At SCIS, he discovered not only access to equipment and resources but also a community that encouraged experimentation, creative risk-taking, and the development of his own unique voice as a storyteller.

SCIS as a Creative Playground

"SCIS really encourages students to 'learn by doing,'" Keith recalls. Unlimited access to laptops and camera equipment allowed him to film projects whenever inspiration struck. The school's open environment encouraged students to explore multiple interests without fear of judgment, whether joining the jazz band, trying out a sport, or diving into a creative project. Keith reflects, "Being able to try anything and everything gave me the confidence to take risks and pursue what I loved."

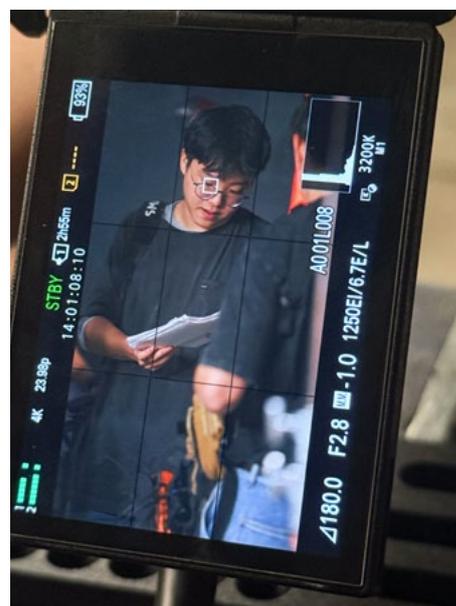
During High School, Keith made short films and entered competitions such as the SCIS Oscars and the Shanghai Student Film Festival. Looking at the films his peers were creating, he noticed a common pattern: many tried to tackle ambitious, thematic stories about politics or relationships, but lacked the life experience to make them resonate. "High schoolers often want to tell deep stories, but we just didn't have the lived experience to pull that off yet," he says. This insight shaped his approach, encouraging him to focus on storytelling that connected with audiences while still experimenting freely.

From University to Professional Filmmaking

Keith continued his studies at Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, where he refined his craft and explored the broader potential of film as a medium. His short film, *I, Chinese*, confronts issues of cultural identity and appropriation through the story of an influencer whose commodification of his heritage leads to unexpected consequences. The film received the Jury Prize at the DGA Student Film Awards and screened at festivals including the Durban International Film Festival, the Asian American International Film Festival, and the Chicago International Film Festival's CineYouth program.

Reflecting on his journey, Keith says, "I now see that film is such a strong conduit for spreading messages and changing perspectives. Film, by nature of being an audio-visual medium, has such a special way of immersing an audience in a story and its emotions, to the point where even Superman can convince a disassociated Gen Alpha teen to become a positive, healthy member of society."

Keith's experiences, from exploring short films to navigating the professional world, have been guided by curiosity, risk-taking, and reflection. He believes confidence is key, "A director's job is to dream big and to capture their audience. Every artist is their own worst enemy. Self-doubt and peer pressure can tank your production. Confidence is something I'm working on myself."



Beyond technical skills, Keith has thought deeply about purpose and calling. He recalls a lesson from his university days: there is a difference between a job, a career, and a calling. A job is something that earns you money, a career is a path you build over time, but a calling is what drives your passion and gives your work meaning. For Keith, that calling is storytelling: making people experience emotions and having them learn things.

Looking ahead, Keith aims to direct his first feature film, a dream he has carried since his childhood. "I've been making short films for years, but the next step is creating something that people go to see in theaters," he shares. Yet for Keith, filmmaking has always been more than a pursuit of the big screen; it's a way to understand people, places, and himself. As his stories evolve, so does his perspective, with each frame reflecting both the world he observes and the person he's becoming.



Cadrago ARRI Alexa 35 | 4.6K 3:2 Open Gate | 3:2 50mm 1/27 22° 150'

THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Alumni Mission:

The SCIS Alumni Association has been established in order to foster the continued cordial relations of the SCIS community. Its goal was, and continues to be, to link alumni with the School and with each other, and to support and maintain such forged relationships. It strives to provide ample avenues and opportunities to encourage alumni to participate actively in the SCIS community.

Alumni Contact:

alumni@scis-china.org

Alumni Requirements:

1. Graduated from a SCIS Campus

OR

2. Went to school here for at least one year AND be over 18

Social Media



Facebook site:
<https://www.facebook.com/alumniSCIS/>



LinkedIn site:
<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4757677>



Flavors of Rigor

The Power of Community at the International Food Fair





Parent Representative:
Özümlü Durgun



At SCIS, rigor extends far beyond the classroom walls. It lives in the dedication, collaboration, and community spirit that define events like the International Food Fair (IFF), one of Parent and Friends Association's (PAFA) most anticipated and celebrated traditions. For nearly 30 years, SCIS has encouraged a culture where students, parents, and staff unite in purpose, demonstrating that the power of rigor is not just about hard work, but about heart, preparation, and shared values.

This year's IFF brought together 16 country booths, each offering an authentic taste of home - from Italy's lasagna and Turkey's semolina halva to Brazil's sweet brigadeiros and Japan's colorful treats. The fair also proudly welcomed new additions, offering beautifully crafted traditional dishes and a vibrant celebration of cultures. Many new families joined long-standing participants this year, enriching the event with fresh energy, creativity, and flavors that celebrated SCIS's truly international community.

For parent Özümlü Durgun, originally from Turkey and now a proud member of the SCIS community, the IFF is more than a food festival; it's a learning

experience for adults and children alike. "Participating in school events like the IFF offers a great opportunity to model positive characteristics and behaviors for our children," she says. "These events are the result of teamwork and shared responsibility. They teach communication, respect, and inclusivity; values that help our children develop leadership and social responsibility in their own lives."

Özümlü, who represented both Turkey and Sweden this year, shares that balancing personal commitments with volunteering is not without challenges. "Preparing dishes for two countries while caring for my 4-year-old daughter required a lot of organization," she admits with a smile. "But thanks to the support of fellow volunteers and my husband, it all came together beautifully. That teamwork - that mutual support - is exactly what makes our community so special."

Italian parent Deborah Manca, whose daughter is in Grade 11, echoes the same sentiment. For her, the IFF captures what she calls fare gruppo - "building a group spirit."

"When our children see us dedicating time and passion to community projects,

it sends a strong message about commitment and caring for others," she explains. "Every event is a wonderful opportunity to meet kids, teachers, and parents in a different, more personal setting. It strengthens our bonds and teaches our children that they belong to a supportive, multicultural family."

Deborah believes that volunteering is not only about giving but also about growing. "It's about *condividere tempo e passione*, sharing time and passion. You always get back more than you give - a stronger community, new friendships, and a deeper understanding of the world."

The International Food Fair, powered by PAFA and parent volunteers, continues to reflect the SCIS legacy of nearly three decades. A legacy built on rigorous dedication, cultural exchange, and collective joy. In every dish prepared, every booth decorated, and every smile shared, the SCIS community proves that the Power of Rigor truly comes alive when we come together.



By May Botha,
PAFA Communications
at SCIS Hongqiao



Parent Representative:
Deborah Manca



Book Recommendations for All Ages

Books are a handy resource packed with information, insights into a happy life, life lessons, love, fear, and lots of advantageous instruction. Books open doors to a world of ingenuity, creativity, and resourcefulness. And stories are an integral part of our lives. They talk about history, mythology, our beliefs, our inspirations, and the possibilities for our future – the list is endless. Read the book recommendations below for all ages from our very own SCIS librarians:



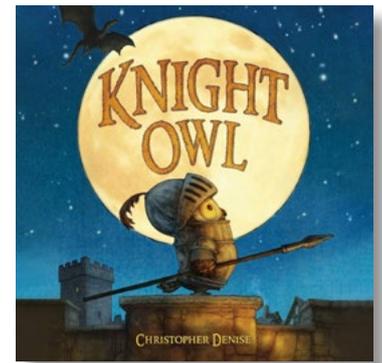
Ashley Simmons, Media Specialist at SCIS

The Power of Rigor can be found in stories that challenge us to think deeply, question boldly, and grow through persistence and courage. Each of these books invites readers—young and old alike—to grapple with complex ideas, explore new perspectives, and discover the strength that comes from curiosity and perseverance.

Knight Owl

By Christopher Denise
Early Childhood (Age 3-6)

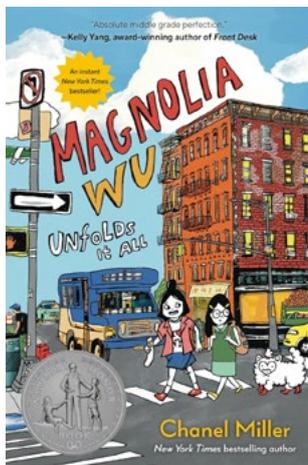
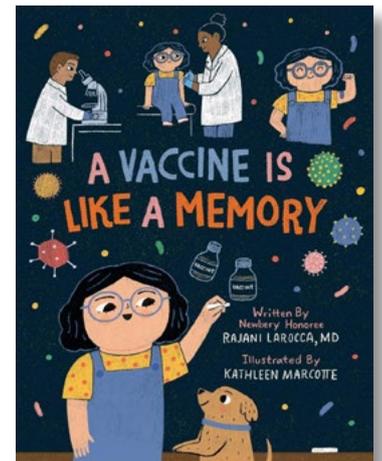
This whimsical tale follows a determined young owl who dreams of becoming a knight. Despite being smaller than his classmates and prone to daytime dozing, Owl perseveres through Knight School and earns a post on the Night Watch. When a hungry dragon appears, Owl must rely on clever thinking rather than strength, proving that courage and intelligence can outmatch brute force. Denise's warm, dramatic illustrations heighten both the humor and suspense, while subtle hints about the fate of missing knights invite readers to think more deeply about Owl's choices. Charming and heartfelt, the story celebrates the rigor of persistence, problem-solving, and believing in one's own abilities—no matter one's size.



A Vaccine Is Like a Memory

By Rajani LaRocca
Lower Primary (Age 6-8)

This creative nonfiction picture book introduces the history and benefits of vaccines in language that is simple but never simplistic. "A vaccine," writes LaRocca, a physician, "is like a memory of a disease you never had." She explains how vaccines partner with the immune system to prevent illness and traces their development from early inoculations to modern mRNA breakthroughs. The narrative highlights key figures—Edward Jenner and Onesimus—and celebrates centuries of scientific curiosity, rigor, and collaboration. Engaging illustrations by Marcotte feature a racially diverse cast of children and families, reinforcing that vaccines are both safe and effective. The detailed backmatter deepens understanding with explanations of germs, vaccine types, and preventable diseases. Altogether, the book invites young readers to stretch their thinking and appreciate the careful science and global cooperation that keep communities healthy.



Magnolia Wu Unfolds It All

By Chanel Miller
Upper Primary (Age 8-11)

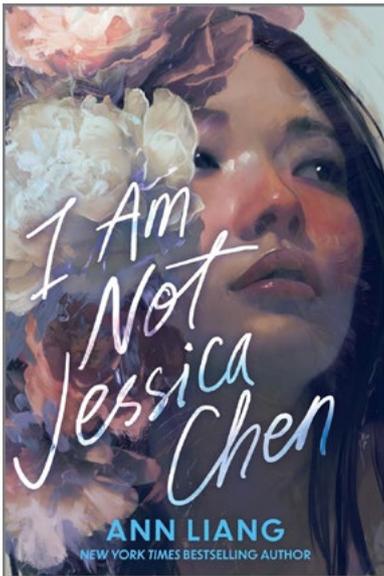
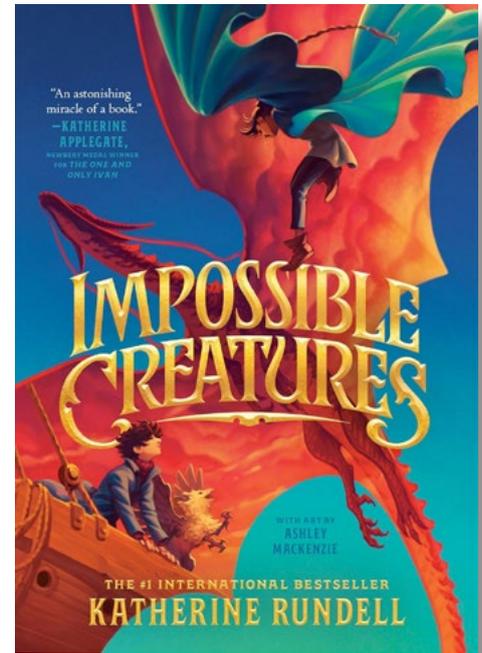
In her middle-grade debut, Miller introduces Magnolia Wu, a creative but lonely 10-year-old spending the summer in her parents' New York City laundromat—until she meets Iris Lam, a newly arrived Vietnamese American girl who quickly becomes a kindred spirit. Together, they launch a whimsical mission to reunite the laundromat's collection of single socks with their owners, a quest that leads them to crossword champions, child actors, and pancake chefs across the city. As Magnolia and Iris navigate friendship, community, and moments of racism faced by their immigrant families, the story balances humor with emotional honesty. Magnolia learns that strength can be quiet, empathy grows through connection, and small acts of care can create big change. Warm, thoughtful, and imaginative, the novel highlights the rigor of paying attention, seeking understanding, and bravely engaging with the world.

Impossible Creatures

By Katherine Rundell

Middle Grades (Age 11-14)

When Christopher Forrester visits his grandfather in Scotland, he stumbles upon a forbidden hill and uncovers magical creatures—and the secret that his family is guardians of the “way through” to the Archipelago, where the Glimourie Tree sustains the world’s magic. Mal Arvorian, an Archipelago girl pursued by a murderer, recruits him for a perilous mission: to stop the magic from draining away. Joined by a ragtag group—including a part-mermaid woman, a dragon, a ratatoska, and a Berserker—they embark on an odyssey fraught with danger, guided by enchanted tools and fierce determination. As they face trials worthy of myth, Christopher and Mal learn that true courage demands sacrifice, and that protecting what you love can give you the strength to fight when hope is fading. Challenging, lyrical, and full of wonder, the novel champions the rigor of conviction, responsibility, and deep friendship.

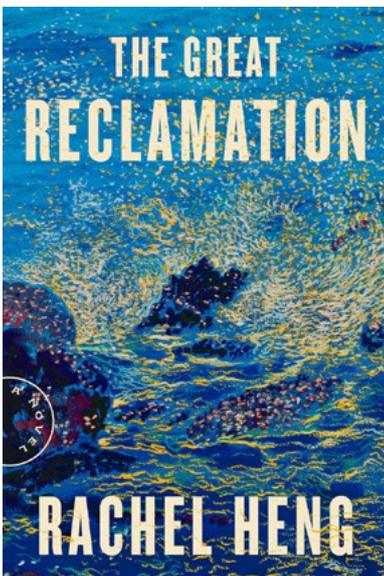


I Am Not Jessica Chen

By Ann Liang

Young Adult (Age 15-18)

Seventeen-year-old Jenna Chen, tired of falling short at the elite Havenwood Academy, makes a desperate wish to become her perfect high-achieving cousin, Jessica—and wakes up in Jessica’s body. At first, stepping into Jessica’s world feels like success at last, but Jenna quickly discovers the crushing pressure beneath her cousin’s flawless façade. As classmates forget who she truly is, only childhood friend Aaron Cai seems to notice the person she used to be. Through Jenna’s vulnerable, artistic narration, Liang explores the emotional and mental toll of perfectionism, the dangers of comparison, and the ways identity can be erased by expectations. Honest and compelling, the novel highlights the rigor of self-reflection, the courage it takes to resist external pressures, and the importance of being seen for who you are.



The Great Reclamation

By Rachel Heng

Adult

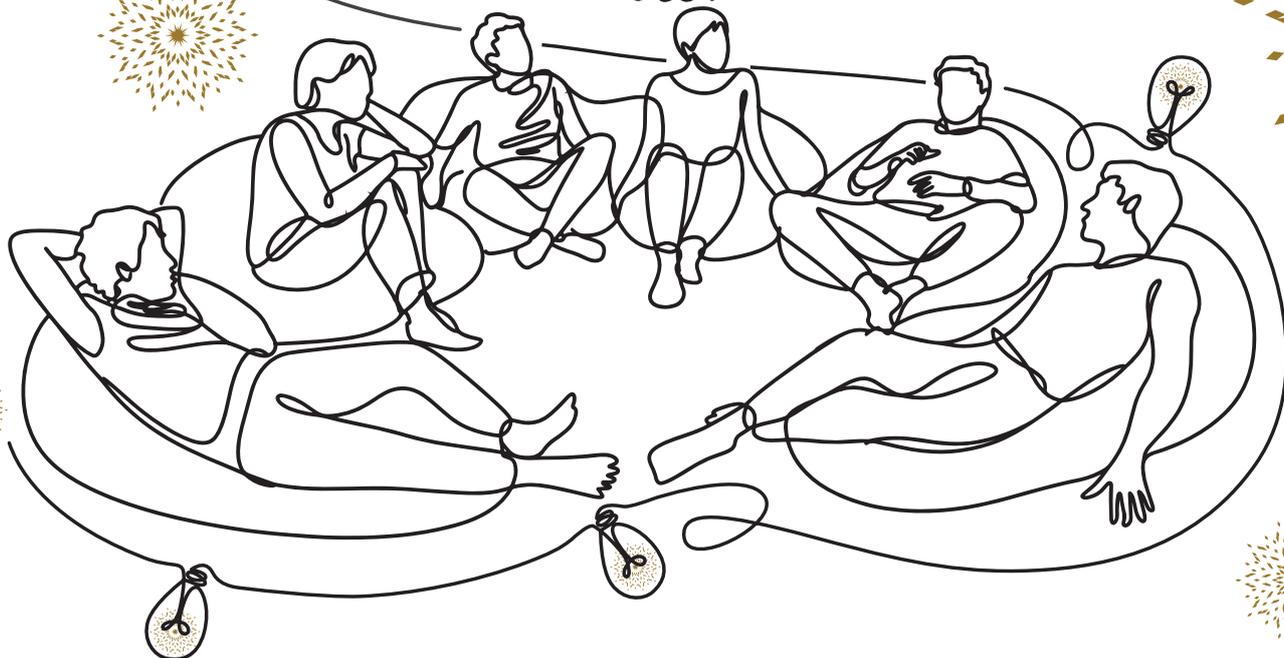
Set in a Singapore fishing village in the 1940s, this sweeping yet intimate novel follows Ah Boon, a quiet, tender boy whose uncanny gift for finding a mysterious, fish-rich island forever links his fate to that of his community. As childhood days with his brilliant friend Siok Mei give way to the upheavals of war, occupation, and rapid postwar development, Ah Boon’s bond with the land becomes both burden and compass. Heng evokes decades of transformation—colonial rule, the Japanese occupation, modernization—without heavy exposition, letting history appear in the lives of ordinary people. Through luminous prose and emotionally precise storytelling, the novel explores identity, belonging, and the costs of progress. Reflective and powerful, it highlights the rigor of navigating loyalty, change, and the moral complexities that shape a nation and an individual.

Stories of Us. Gathered Today.

SCIS
Community
VOICE

Together We Shine

For a Better Tomorrow



What you see here is the latest chapter in an ongoing story - one that grows with every voice: students, families, teachers, partners, and yes - even strangers. We *listen* with curiosity. We *learn* what it means to be ourselves - and to *belong*. When we *share* our stories, we see how small moments can not only spark collective *understanding*, but also lead to *positive change*. Each reflection is a reminder: *your story matters*. And *together*, our stories light the way.



Submit Your Story

Read. Reflect. Reach for a pen.
Pick a prompt and leave a little of you



Join Our Story

Scan the code. Share your gift.
Strengthen our community

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Hongqiao ECE Campus
2212 Hongqiao Road
Shanghai, China 200336
Tel.: 86-21-6295-1222

Pudong Campus
198 Hengqiao Road
Zhoupu Town, Pudong
Shanghai, China 201318
Tel.: 86-21-5812-9888

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