Winter 2025

DragonNews

Grease is the word!
photos on p.14

Traditional Calling p.24

From Beijing Opera novice to starring on the London stage

In With the Old p.32

Forget fast fashion and embrace sustainability

Sail, Don't Drift p.91

Why the strongest storms make the best sailors

Happy Holidays!





We are HIS

Community Diversity **Opportunity** Engagement **Excellence** Purpose

Contents

006 **Welcome**
- 06 From the Superintendent
- 08 Important Contacts

010 **Community**
- 11 Events Roundup
- 22 Lighting the Past
- 24 Traditional Calling
- 27 Behind the Lens
- 32 In with the Old
- 38 Inktober
- 44 Piece of Cake
- 46 World Beyond Language
- 52 Alumni: Daniel Branham

056 **Lower School**
- 57 Navigating the Boy Code
- 59 From Home to School
- 62 Empowering Young Learners

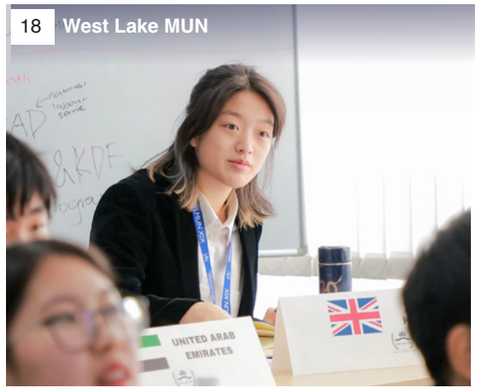
066 **Upper School**
- 67 Finding My Voice
- 69 Learning Through Time
- 72 Gleaming the Cube
- 75 Bowled Over
- 77 Small but Mighty
- 79 Leaders of Tomorrow
- 81 United We Stand
- 83 Top Ten

086 **Sports**
- 87 The Quiet Star
- 89 Running Up that Hill
- 91 Sail, Don't Drift

096 **Essentials**
- 96 Know Your HIS Acronyms
- 97 School Calendar 2025-2026
- 98 Connect with Us







At HIS, Early Childhood is about embracing collaboration, friendship and exploring new opportunities.

Follow us on WeChat to discover why HIS is ranked the best international school in Hangzhou and Zhejiang

HIS
Hangzhou International School

Welcome from the Superintendent

Dear HIS Community and Friends,

Welcome to this edition of *DragonNews,* where we celebrate the second pillar of our school motto: *Opportunity*. Earlier this year, we reflected on *Community*, the foundation of who we are at Hangzhou International School.

With over 1,020 students representing 50 nationalities, our community is more vibrant and diverse than ever. It is this sense of belonging, this shared commitment to one another, that makes opportunity not only possible, but robust and abundant.

At HIS, opportunity is not an abstract idea. It is lived every day in classrooms, studios, laboratories, athletic fields, and community spaces across our campus.

Our mission states that we "provide international learners with opportunities to pursue academic and personal excellence within a caring community." That mission comes alive when students feel known, supported, and inspired by the people around them. Community creates the conditions; opportunity is what grows from it.

Our vision calls for a system where every student has equal opportunities for success, where learning adapts to the individual, not the other way around.

This year, we continue to expand pathways that honor each student's potential, interests, and aspirations. Whether through creative approaches to the General Learning Targets (GLTs), innovative programs, university guidance, or partnerships within the Hangzhou community, we strive to ensure that every learner can see a future that feels both exciting and attainable.

Opportunity also extends beyond students. Our faculty engage in meaningful professional growth, our parents participate in forums and workshops, and our staff contribute to a culture of purpose and pride. When each member of our community grows, the entire school rises.

As we look ahead, we remain grounded in the belief that excellence is not a destination but a habit, one shaped by repeated actions, resilient mindsets, and the courage to try, fail, and try again. Opportunity is the bridge between community and excellence.

When students feel they belong, they are willing to take risks. When they take risks, they discover strengths. And when they discover strengths, excellence can be achieved.
Thank you for being part of a community that makes opportunity possible.

We hope this edition of *DragonNews* highlights the many ways our students, faculty, and families embrace the opportunities before them. Community, Opportunity, Excellence.

As always… GoooOOO Dragons!!!

Jeffry R. Stubbs
Superintendent



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At HIS, High School is about challenging boundaries, learning new skills, and embracing the future.

Follow us on WeChat to discover why HIS is ranked the best international school in Hangzhou and Zhejiang

HIS
Hangzhou International School



COMMUNITY

New Staff Learn Mandarin

As part of our continuing focus on successful transitions, Mandarin lessons were held for foreign staff from October through November – six lively sessions filled with energy and excitement. It was a joy to see everyone actively engaged as they explored practical language skills essential for everyday life in China. From the basics of pinyin and greetings to navigating the thrills of ordering food and transport, each session was brimming with enthusiasm.





IBDP Retreat

This year's IBDP retreat in September was a fantastic opportunity for our Grade 11 and 12 students to bond, reflect, and engage in meaningful activities that promote personal and academic growth. The activities featured team-building, where students created catapults, fostering teamwork and creativity. They also participated in a variety of engaging sessions, including CAS and college preparation workshops, wellbeing activities, and reflective journaling, followed by a BBQ dinner and fun team games.

Mid-Autumn Festival

After careful planning and preparation, the 'Mid-Autumn Moon Appreciation Party', led by the HIS Longyin Club, was successfully held on September 26th. The event featured a variety of immersive experience sessions for students, staff and parents, ranging from tasting mooncakes of various flavors, making auspicious lanterns by hand, DIY traditional mooncakes, sitting around and enjoying tea, to experiencing interesting mahjong and appreciating classic Peking Opera excerpts. Each activity was filled with festive charm.







Social Studies Curriculum Night

On November 11th, the Social Studies Department hosted a Curriculum Night for the whole school. Curriculum Nights are an ideal way for parents and members of the community to learn about how the IB framework works to create strong learners of all ages. A big thanks to everyone involved in making it happen, it was great to see everyone excited to share what they'd been learning! *(see p.71)*



Inktober: A Month of Art

Inktober is a month long art challenge that is focused on improving skill and developing positive drawing habits. Every day for the month of October anyone participating in the Inktober challenge creates an ink drawing under a particular prompt. Inktober was a success again at HIS this year with guest artists even joining us for three different workshops. We had Nela Fletcher, Maria Erika, and Lucie Loosova come to the school to teach an art lesson based on the prompts of the day. Participants were able to learn different ways of creating art for the prompts Skeletal, Puzzling, and Blast! *(see p.38)*



Theatre Workshop in Singapore

During October, HIS's DP Theatre students participated in the 'ISTA TAPS: Perspectives' event at Nexus International School in Singapore. Over three days, students from six international schools came together for an intensive exploration of theatre-making and performance. Through workshops led by professional theatre artists, students expanded their understanding of IB DP Theatre, developed practical skills, and reflected on their learning.





First HISAC Swim Meet

Hangzhou International School was proud to host the HISAC Round 1 Swim Meet on 25 October. With a total of eight schools involved, the HIS swim team secured the win, alongside breaking 18 HISAC records and winning 73 medals. We're so proud of our swimmers! A big thank you to the coaches, and Coach Nat for organizing the meet, as well to the parents and volunteers who put in fantastic support work to make this event happen.



Duke of Edinburgh Journey

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award students and their advisors traveled to Ninghai for an epic two-day adventurous practice journey at the start of November. In their Bronze, Silver, and Gold groupings, students set goals for their expedition, navigated using their map and compass skills, and demonstrated teamwork and resilience in the breathtaking, natural terrain of the region. Each student helped their team succeed in different but meaningful ways and showed spirit and perseverance.



‘Greased Lightning’

On 20 and 21 November, the magic of ‘Grease’ came to the HIS Theater. Set in a 1950s American high school, the classic musical tells the story of love and friendship through iconic and catchy songs. We’re so proud of all of the students, all the way from Grades 6 to 12, and faculty who were involved in making this show happen.































ROBO HANGZHOU

On Saturday 22 November, Hangzhou International School proudly hosted the first ever edition of 'RoboHangzhou', a VEX IQ Robotics Competition that welcomed seven of the nation's top international schools from across Shanghai and Hangzhou. The talented 160 middle school students showcased their creativity, engineering skills, and teamwork throughout a full day of intense yet collaborative matches.























West Lake MUN

In mid-November we held the 19th iteration of West Lake MUN, our homegrown Model United Nations conference and it was a huge success! There were many personal accolades awarded to HIS students, including Outstanding Delegate. A big thank you to our secretariat students who did an amazing job planning and organizing everything, and the faculty and staff who helped behind the scenes. We are super proud of the effort made to make this event happen, and we look forward to see how MUN continues to grow.









Progressing to Adapt or Adapting to Progress?

PAFA

Parent and Friends Association



For more information on parent events, contact: pafaevents@hisdragons.org.cn

by Gabby He
PR & Marketing Officer

What's in your School Bag?

Pakhi, G6





CCAs: Robotics, Musical, Student Council, MUN, Soccer
Outside of school: IFC Soccer team
Homework routine: 2-3 hours each day (Sometimes a bit of extra homework from Mom)

"I'm passionate about acting and debate, which is why I joined both Musical and MUN. I believe these activities have broadened my perspective and opened doors for my future"

"I was in the school band before, but I want to focus more on academics this year. I'm hoping to study Computer Science at the Hong Kong University"





Tanmay, G11





CCAs: Robotics, MUN
Outside of school: Guitar, Cricket Club (My dad runs the club, and we play every Sunday.)
Homework routine: 2-3 hours each day

"My favorite subject is Math. My goal is to study Math or Physics at Cambridge University after graduating from HIS"

Lika, G7



CCAs: No CCAs
Outside of school: Peking Opera (I have been practicing for 8 years), Ice Skating, Chinese Martial Arts, Boxing
Homework routine: 30 mins each day at home (I finish most of my homework before leaving school)

Lighting the Past

By Lily Zhou
Mandarin Teacher

The HIS Longyin Club puts on a show at the Mid-Autumn festival celebrations











As a key campus club dedicated to facilitating Hangzhou's international cultural communication and building a bridge for cross-cultural exchange, Longyin Club has always taken inheriting and promoting traditional culture as its mission.

This year, the club has further recruited more students who are full of enthusiasm, proactive and willing to contribute. They work together to fulfill the original aspiration and mission of spreading traditional culture, injecting new vitality into the club's development.

After careful planning and preparation, the 'Mid-Autumn Moon Appreciation Party', led by the core members of Longyin Club and participated in by all members, was successfully held on Friday 26 September.



The event featured a variety of immersive experience sessions, including tasting and making mooncakes, making auspicious lanterns by hand, sampling tea varieties, playing mahjong and appreciating classic Peking Opera. Each activity was filled with festive charm.

The event attracted many teachers, students and parents to participate.

Under the bright moonlight and warm atmosphere, everyone experienced traditional folk customs in an immersive way, and deepened their understanding of Mid-Autumn culture through hands-on practice and cultural appreciation.

At the same time, participants with different identities gathered together to interact and communicate, which made everyone deeply feel the warm cohesion and strong community atmosphere of the Hangzhou International School family.









Traditional Calling

By Lika F

Grade 7 student

My seven-year journey from Beijing Opera novice to starring on the London stage





While many of my classmates' childhoods were filled with the spins of ballet shoes, I was completely captivated by a single fling of a silk sleeve on the TV screen.

Back then, no one could have imagined that the first grader who couldn't take their eyes off the opera channel would dive headfirst into this world and stay for seven whole years.

I still remember that time in grade one, when I would keep replaying opera scenes from TV, obsessed with the performers adorned with beaded hairpieces and embroidered robes, whose silk sleeves could hold a thousand words with one flick.

When they sang, even their eyes told stories; their movements had the grace of dance, their voices the melody of song, and their acting could make the audience's hearts ache with emotion.

Watching, I pulled on my mom's hand and said, "I want to learn that thing where you sing, dance, and 'tell stories' all at once!"

My parents didn't dismiss it as a passing fancy. Instead, they helped me find an opera teacher, and my journey as a "little opera enthusiast" began in high spirits.

As well as highs though, this journey was full of hardships. Stretching my legs made tears well up in my eyes; practicing singing left my throat too hoarse to speak; and my teacher would always say I was "not getting a single one of the postures, eyes, movements, or rhythms right" when I tried to memorize routines.

Once, I practiced a silk sleeve move dozens of times but still couldn't get that light, floating effect. I sat in front of the mirror, feeling terrible and ready to give up. But the excitement of putting on my first opera costume and having my face painted came flooding back, so I gritted my teeth and stood up to try again.

Gradually, I got to the point where the audience would clap along when I sang 'Mu Guiying Takes Command', the sense of accomplishment I found in that was better than getting a perfect score on a test at school.



Now that I'm in seventh grade, opera is more than just a hobby for me. Every time I perform on stage, I feel incredibly proud when I see the audience go from curious looks of "What is this?" to nodding along with the rhythm.

It turns out I can be an inheritor of traditional culture, sharing the treasures of our ancestors with more people. Last year, I even performed 'Wang Zhaojun Goes Beyond the Great Wall' at the British Museum in London.

When I waved my horse whip in that exhibition hall and saw the amazement in the foreign audience's eyes, it suddenly hit me: this little "opera stage" can truly connect people from different countries.

"My seven-year opera journey has had its share of sweat and tears, but more than anything, it's been filled with passion and pride"

I want to keep singing in the future, letting more people see the beauty of opera, and making sure this tradition stays alive and thriving for my generation and beyond.



Behind the Lens

By Gabby He

PR & Marketing Officer



2024 photo projects by Gabby He





Capturing the moments at our school that manage to both inspire and educate

Walking around campus with a camera, the lens becomes much more than glass and metal – it is a bridge between moments, a quiet keeper of the stories unfolding all around.

Every video crafted, every interview done, every story shared becomes a chance to cast light on the singular experiences of those within our HIS community.

Through these narratives, I watch connections take root, diversity bloom in celebration, and the school's reach across the world deepen.



Around the World: A Global Stage for Student Confidence

One of my video initiatives in recent years is the Around the World video series. Here, students from diverse cultural backgrounds take center stage to share their knowledge and love for their home countries.

In these interviews, I see pride shimmering in their eyes – pride for their heritage, traditions, and identities. This is more than a showcase; it's an opportunity for students to exude confidence, to stand tall and say, "This is who I am".

From Shauna M glowing as she talks about her mom's home-made Indonesian dessert *martabak*, to Ayrad C. passing on wisdom about Yennayer – Algeria's beloved tradition tied to its unique calendar – every student who joined this video project wove in pieces of home: the famous places, vibrant festivals, and cherished foods that shape who they are.









School Promo Videos: Building Positive Impact

When students participate in any of our school promotional videos, they're seizing an opportunity to advocate for their school. Every email they reply to promptly, every project they attend on time, and every smile they share on screen is a testament to their dedication and pride in HIS. These moments become powerful testimonials, showcasing the positive impact our environment has on their growth.

For instance, a student might share how a teacher's guidance helped them overcome a challenge, or how a club activity sparked a new passion. Those stories matter. They don't make the school sound like a list of facts; they make it feel human.

Take the professional campus drone shoot we conducted this October – over 200 students and teachers took part in this very ambitious project, and their enthusiasm made the project truly stand out. In every moment, students became ambassadors, using their voices to highlight what makes our community special.

Grade 9's Radhika proactively approached me to ask if she could join the staircase scene, eager to contribute. Days before production, Grade 5's Philip along with Grade 6's Reyhaan and Afonso, checked in with me repeatedly to confirm the shooting schedule. They even asked to practice their drone-flying skills in advance, all because they wanted to showcase their best, and the best of HIS.

The Upper School Boys' Volleyball Team went the extra mile too – they repeated serves and blocks over and over, just to help us capture the perfect angle for the camera. And our lead student actors, Grade 9's Livia and Daniel, embodied the confidence and pride that HIS students are known for, shining brightly on camera.





Parent Interviews: Listening to our School Partners

Interviewing parents is another invaluable opportunity. As stakeholders in their children's education, parents offer direct insights into what we do well and where we can improve. Their feedback is a compass, guiding us to enhance our programs and services.

A family was lit up talking about our three-way conferences – saying how sitting down with the teacher and student, all together, helps them see exactly where their child needs support, how it makes learning feel more full and connected.

Another parent laughed while recalling a memorable PAFA experience: the Zumba lesson where many of them had their first attempt at the fun dance exercise; or the strenuous PAFA hikes they planned – little things that don't just get parents talking, but let them build real bonds, and make memories they'll joke about later.

It's never just "this helps" – it's about how these moments make them feel part of the school, too, not just watching on from the outside.



Jade Dragons: Celebrating Connections

The ongoing Jade Dragon video series is where we celebrate students who have been with us for eight years or more. Their stories – filled with memories, friendships, and growth – are records to treasure for years to come.

Whether it's recalling their first day on campus or sharing how a particular musical experience helped shape their confidence, these narratives offer valuable lessons for both current and future students. They inspire younger students to dream big and remind us all of the lasting connections we build here.

Capturing Moments, Sharing Opportunities

From time to time, usually when filming, I come across younger students asking me why we need to make these videos: 'Will you play them on the school TV?'

I always tell them, ***"These videos will help more people around the world get to know our school, and see just how amazing this place is"***

Working in the school's Marcom team means I'm in a unique position to capture these moments and share them with a broader audience.

Whether I'm crafting a script, editing footage, or conducting an interview, I'm always mindful of the opportunities each project presents. Every video is a chance to educate, inspire, and connect.

By sharing these moments, we demonstrate the real-world skills our students develop and the values we uphold. It's a powerful way to bring the school's mission to life, turning abstract ideals into something tangible that viewers can both see and feel.

by Dr. Emily Blalock
University Counselor and Head of Guidance

In With the Old



When you're thinking of buying new clothes, forget fast fashion and embrace sustainability

It is no exaggeration to say that I am intrinsically happy wearing new garments. There is something special about the first fit and first wear of a new piece of clothing.

I am addicted to change, new ideas, and evolving trends in textiles, prints, and style. I enjoy layering the old and new, mixing polka dots with plaid, and buying into WGSN's new color of the year. (Which by the way is "transformative teal" for 2026… a blend of blue and green with tranquil power.)

Fashion is a contagion. It spreads virally through populations, causing excitement visualized through ever-evolving clothing trends. In a sense, fashion is an obsession with the new.

Unfortunately, I am not alone. Most of the developed world has a shopping addiction, consuming textiles by the kilos. Economists have estimated that global spending on fashion was US$1.84 trillion in 2024 (McKinsey and Company, 2025). Consequently, keeping up with the latest TikTok fashion trend fuels about 1.86 percent of the global GDP. The world is quite literally drowning in textile waste.

The United Nations reported 92 million tons of textile waste were produced last year. Quantified, this is a garbage truck full of our unwanted garments condemned to a landfill every second. When I read statistics like this, I ponder, "Where are these landfills?", "Whose children live and play beside the trash?", "Do the textile chemicals seep into the local drinking water?", and "Is there any way to stop the fashion excess?".

Growing up in America, I have had the privilege and curse of never laying eyes on a landfill. I read about them in books, but I have never physically been in their presence, smelled the stench, and had my eyes burn from the fumes. Because of this, I don't think about my unwanted garments piling up as dirty trash.

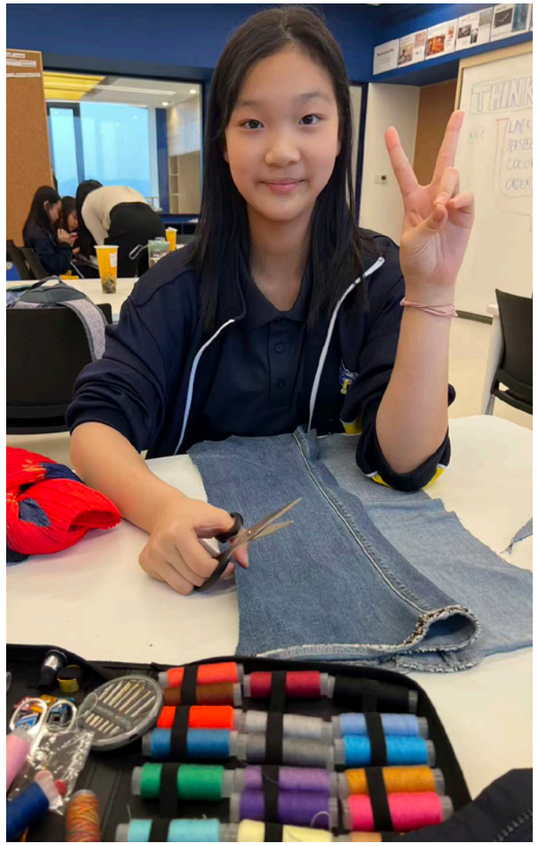
However, the facts are clear: my shopping habits were and are ruining our beautiful planet. It only takes a quick online search to see pictures of huge amounts of textile waste suffocating populations in Kenya, Ghana, the Atacama Desert in Chile, and even China's own Jiangsu Province (Bartlett, 2024; Walsh, 2018).



Ghana (below), Chile (right)









In addition, most garments are made with cheap manmade fibers like polyester and acrylic, which are derived from petroleum and can take more than 200 years to decompose (Mariano, 2021). Moreover, polyester sheds microplastics, which seep into the soil and water systems, finding a new home in the human body.

In perspective, it will take about eight family generations before one garment will decompose in the landfill. I am sure we both agree that fashion excess and waste is the elephant in the room.

We know it is a problem, but to what extent can we keep ignoring the global issue?

Snapshot of the Global Fashion and Textile Industries (United Nations Environment Programme, 2025):

Only **1%** of old clothes are recycled into new clothes

2 – 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions

9% of microplastic ocean pollution (for dying and cleaning)

215 trillion liters of water (for dying and cleaning)

Up to **15,000** chemicals used to produce fashion



What does this mean in reality? We are destroying our planet to produce, consume, and dispose of fashion.

This became a heavy burden on my heart early in my career as a fashion business professor. I began changing my pedagogy to focus not just on sustainable production techniques, but also on sustainable consumption and disposal.







Say NO to FAST FASHION



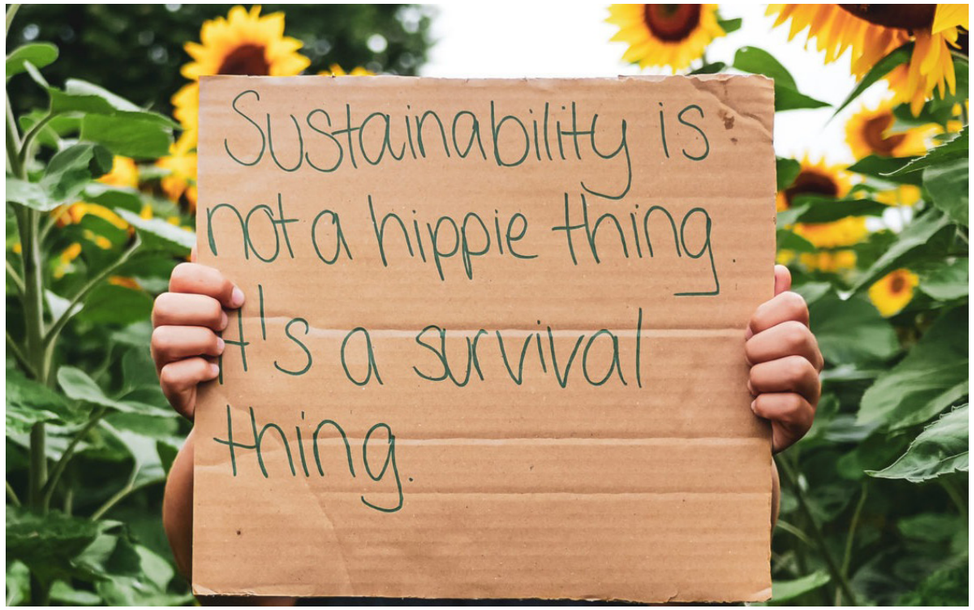
Through this process, I learned about upcycling: making new fashion from pre-loved garments by repurposing, dying, embellishing, or reconstructing pre-existing materials. The goal is to give current fashion a second life to reduce mass production, consumption, and disposal. I decided I couldn't just lecture about sustainable fashion consumption in class, but I also had to live it out.

This year I was fortunate to find other sustainable fashionistas at HIS through the Fashion Upcycling CCA. Thirteen brave MYP students joined me to explore creating new fashion from unwanted materials.

First, we scavenged the HIS lost and found for discarded garments, and then we searched our own closets for outdated fashion. We borrowed zippers from jackets to put into purses. We used old denim jeans to make a new, cute handbag. We even borrowed the HIS dragon logo from sweatshirts to make tote bags and t-shirts.

We made dresses, skirts, purses, hats, jackets, and shirts from pre-loved garments and fabric, while only breaking three needles along the way! Many students had their first experience hand-sewing and even more learned how to sew using a machine.

Not everything we made was perfect or even wearable. Yet in the imperfection, we found the confidence to create and learned life skills that will empower us with new opportunities. Our imagination abounded, and together we explored the difficulty in sewing fabric, but also the rewards of using our hands to create.



Interest in reducing fashion waste has moved beyond classroom rhetoric to the governments of the G20 nations. The European Union (EU) passed a law requiring apparel brands to recycle their own textile waste by 2028 (EP, 2025). France took a different perspective and mandates that all apparel includes an eco-score tag, displaying its environmental impact (UNEP, 2025).

The government legislation confirms what we already know. We must stop the fast fashion epidemic and recycle our outdated clothing into new fashions. We must consider the durability of textiles, seeking fashions that are sustainable for the years to come.

When we reimagine pre-loved clothing from our closet or the thrift store, we not only get the gratification of becoming fashion designers, but we also assume a version of a superhero, saving our planet one garment at a time.

I believe our actions matter. Small individual decisions. Small alterations in design. Creating new life for the outdated. Upcycling is the antithesis of fast fashion. These small and slow changes, when replicated and multiplied, become macro lifestyle changes.

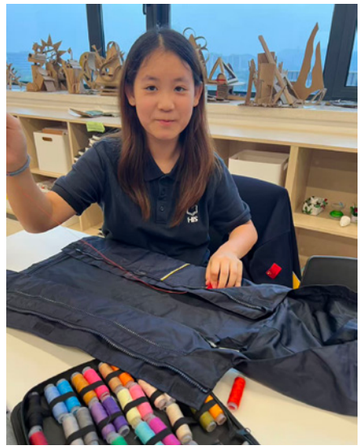
I encourage us all to explore our own closets to see what treasures can be found with a few simple modifications. After all, upcycling is a global fashion movement and a sustainable option for those who want a "new" look without the environmental impact.



It's time we all changed our wardrobe for the better

Rebecca (G7)

"I like making new fashion out of old because it's more helpful for the world. So it's basically being more creative and then helping to stop more pollution."



Nemo (G6)

"I enjoy collaborating with my friend. Because when we design it together, we can make the project perfect."



Yuki (G6)

"I enjoy creating. I use my imagination and do whatever I want with fabric. I was surprised to break my first needle on the sewing machine, but it's almost like an award… You have to break a few needles to finish."



Why did you like upcycling fashion?

Anne (G6)

"I joined this CCA because my dad works in the fashion business and I want to be creative. If I work hard enough, I can solve any problem with my creativity."



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Inktober® 2025









How We Celebrated 31 days of Artistic Opportunity in October

By Simon Ostheimer
MarCom Manager

Begun by American comics short-story creator, concept artist, illustrator, and animator Jake Parker in 2009 as a challenge to improve his inking skills and develop positive drawing habits, *Inktober* is a month-long art challenge that is focused on improving skill and developing positive drawing habits.

Every day for the month of October anyone participating in the *Inktober* challenge creates an ink drawing under a particular prompt and posts it online. Prompts this year included words like *'trunk', 'arctic', 'lesson'* and '*ornate*'.

Inktober at Hangzhou International School was begun last year by Upper School Visual Arts teacher Ms Janet McGifford, and this year continued under her guidance with the assistance of Design and Communication Specialist Ms Lisa Kerry, who reflected: "It was inspiring to see students continually drawing and creating together – the artist workshops sparked a real buzz and a shared creative energy across the community."

Also new this year was the addition of three visiting artists, who all addressed their own prompt in special workshops attended by students, parents and staff.

On 21 October we welcomed Swiss artist (and HIS parent) Nela Fletcher, who works with drawing, photography, and film. Capturing movement through drawing is one aspect of her practice, alongside exploring how the body interacts with various spaces. Her work is held in public and private collections. Inspired by the Inktober prompt 'blast', participants used nibs, brushes and ink to create a collaborative artwork full of energy and movement.



"It was inspiring to see students continually drawing and creating together – the artist workshops sparked a real buzz and a shared creative energy across the community"

A week later Czech artist Lucie Loosova, also an HIS parent, took on the prompt *'skeletal'*. Lucie's work bridges theater, costume, and visual art. Since moving to China in 2014, she has embraced Chinese ink painting, creating her *'Happy Birds'* series that unites Eastern brushwork with Western imagination. Her hands-on workshop that used different ink and paper, and drawing, painting and cutting techniques to create one-of-a-kind artworks.

Finally on 30 October it was the turn of artist and HIS community member Maria Erika for a creative workshop where participants channeled the spirit of Henri Matisse to create their own abstract piece of art.

Working across oil, acrylic, watercolor, and digital media, Filipina Maria Erika is deeply rooted in portraiture while exploring abstraction. Using the *'puzzling'* prompt, attendees 'painted' with scissors, cutting and arranging colorful paper and cardboard into dynamic shapes and compositions, assembling these vibrant pieces into a unique puzzle.

"This year the sense of community and achievement that many students felt having their work displayed and the pride in the skills they gained from the workshops given by Nela, Lucie and Erika were highlights for me," says Ms McGifford. "I was also pleased to hear the many conversations about language and how engaging with diverse prompts not only sparked creativity but also enriched many students' vocabulary."

We can't wait for *Inktober 2026*, which promises to be even bigger and better!







MEET THE ARTISTS

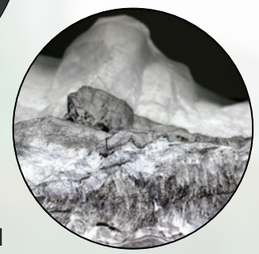
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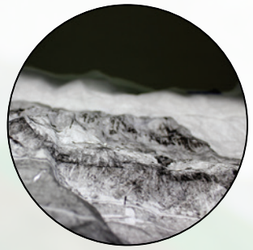
Design and Communication Specialist

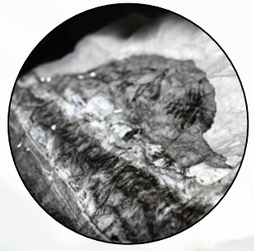


Meet Ms Janet McGifford

Visual Arts Teacher at HIS







What first sparked your interest in the arts, and how did that lead you into teaching?

My path to the arts was influenced by my high school environment. I had a fantastic art teacher, and I was inspired by seeing where the older students studied after graduation. Learning that my teacher's own children were successful artists, made the path feel tangible. Up until then, I thought my future was studying nutrition. But in a sudden shift, right at the end of my final year, I decided, 'I'm applying to art school.' Arriving there was a revelation—I finally found 'my people,' who shared my way of thinking. That experience of finding a creative community is ultimately what led me into teaching, hoping to foster that same sense of discovery and belonging for my students.

How would you describe your current art style or your favorite way of making art?

In the last few years, I have been inspired by sculpture and ceramics, but recently I've reconnected with printmaking, which was my major in art school. Attending a recent conference in Hong Kong was a catalyst—participating in hands-on printmaking workshops reignited my love for the process. This has motivated me to actively reintroduce both the practice and its concepts into my own work and my teaching methods.

Which artists or experiences have most influenced your creative practice?

My most formative influences were the practicing artists who taught me at art school. Their deep, specialized knowledge was inspiring. They modeled what it meant to master a craft, which instilled in me a desire to develop that same level of expertise in my own practice. That foundation from my lecturers expanded during my Master's program, when visiting artists in their studios, hearing them discuss their process, and engaging with my peers' work exposed me to a vast spectrum of creative practices.

Is there anything specific about New Zealand culture that has influenced your art practice or who you are?

Two key aspects of New Zealand's culture have fundamentally shaped my teaching. The education system instilled a multidisciplinary, craft-oriented foundation. I experienced firsthand how high school art prioritizes skill across painting, sculpture, and printmaking, building versatile technical competence. Concurrently, living within a bicultural society means the visual language, stories, and forms of Maori and Polynesian art are not just an influence but an essential context, constantly informing my sense of aesthetics and place.

How has living in China influenced your artwork or teaching approach?

Living in China has deepened my understanding of art history and materiality. Immersing myself in traditional arts like ink painting, calligraphy, and ceramics has been very inspiring. Simultaneously, engaging with dynamic contemporary Chinese art has shown me how this heritage is being reinvented. This duality has reshaped my teaching approach, which now stresses the interconnection of skill, cultural context, and innovative thought.

What advice would you give to student artists who are still building confidence?

Building confidence starts with challenging the most common misconception: the idea that art is only about perfect representation. True artistic strength comes from curiosity and personal expression. Prioritize the joy of making and experimenting over the pressure of a perfect product. Confidence isn't found in mimicking others, but in being supported as you find your own path.



Meet Lucie Loosova

Artist and HIS Parent



When did you first become interested in the arts?

My father was an architect, a well-known one—if you look at my name, L-O-O-S, that's the family (Ivo Loos)—so there was that artistic influence. My mother worked as a microbiologist, spending her days at the microscope. Sometimes she would call me over: "Come see how this grows, how that looks." Through the lens, the fungi and microorganisms looked like colorful abstract paintings, so she inspired me artistically too, even though she was very practical.

My grandmother was a seamstress with her own studio. She taught me how to sew, embroider, knit, cook—all the "fiddly" practical things—and I loved it. As an only child, that attention felt wonderful.



How did school prepare you to be an artist?

In the Czech system, when I was young, you had to decide what you wanted to do around age 13. My mother wanted me to be a doctor, a proper stable job, but my father said, "Do whatever you want." I said, "I want to be an artist. I can't cut people." I was always sketching—sitting in fields drawing animals, flowers, landscapes, reciting poetry in my head. I was too romantic for the doctor path.

My father warned me, "You may live a lonely life; you'll stand in front of zero all the time," which I understood only later. But they were supportive. I studied toy-making from 15 to 18, and then completed my bachelor's degree in theatrical design. After that, one needs to work in a theatre for a year to really understand the practice. Theatre is a cooperation with many people—you need to understand production, the director, dramaturgy, actors, lights, sound, choreography. If someone isn't communicating properly, it collapses. Communication is key. Artistic skills are key. And I like to learn all life. For me, questions are nicer than answers.



After my year of practice at the theaters I went to finish my Masters and PhD. studies.

What projects are you currently working on?

I moved to China with my family because my husband was offered a job here. My daughter is very happy in Hangzhou and at her school—here you can have an opinion, a conversation with the teacher, and students mix between classes. I like to help with the theatre pieces every year, seeing the smiling faces backstage and on stage.

I studied Chinese ink painting, because I want to understand Chinese art and culture deeply…and this is very good way, when you don't speak the language. The language of the artists brush is internal.



I also illustrate books about fashion for my friends in the Czech Republic—something I can do online no matter where I live. It connects me to my artistic roots and keeps me in touch with the creative scene at home.

For 4 years now, every day, I draw my *Happy Birds*. I decided to find something positive every day and draw a picture like a diary, posting it so people can see it and have a fun laugh. I do paper-maché sculptures, plein-air drawing, and travel around China because it's a huge and inspiring country.

So, speaking specifically about this image that you made, what inspired you on that particular day?



My daughter was presenting at the parent-teacher conference and was very proud of her results. That was encouraging. That was the story behind the picture: humor, help, hospitality, holiday, hope—everything in the school. Words that belong to school life. If you start with interest, individuality, and independence, that's all I stand for and HIS stands for as well.

How was your experience at Inktober, and had you heard of it before?

Fantastic. I was very honored to be part of it. Kids, parents, teachers came with smiles. The support from the school was great. All the drawings were exhibited so students could be proud of their little sketch. Because the school is full of people from all around the world, you can see how different they are through the drawings. A very positive thing.

Meet Nela Fletcher *Artist and HIS Parent*





www.nelafletcher.com

When did you first become interested in the arts?



Well, I would say that was quite early, because movement and drawing were my first languages, in a way, as a child. I was always creating something, even if I didn't call it art back then.

Did you grow up in an artistic household?

Yes. My dad was a goldsmith and a self-taught multi-instrumentalist, and my mom was a seamstress by trade. Our home was always filled with music, images, and instruments.

Was your family supportive of your artistic ambitions?

Yes and no. When it became clear that I wanted to train as a professional dancer, my mother was very protective because dance training is so demanding and expectations are high. The "school is more important than dance" argument came up often. My dad was always supportive.

Things changed when, at age 12, I did an audition-style assessment with international experts. They evaluated whether pursuing dance made sense. They said yes, and from that moment my mother also became supportive.

Did you study arts at school and university?

Yes. I trained professionally as a dancer in a full-time, four-year program. After nearly 15 years working as a dancer and choreographer in contemporary dance, I completed a Master of Arts in Fine Arts at the *University of the Arts* in Zurich, Switzerland.

Have you pursued careers outside the arts?

Yes, but later in life when my kids were born. As I slowly stepped away from dancing and choreographing, I considered a career that had more regularity and financial stability. I went to a career advisor and took various tests about my interests and strengths. The result was that I should be a dancer or an artist. It didn't help me change careers, but it affirmed that the arts are simply who I am.

How would you describe your art style, and how has it changed over the years?

I would describe my art style as precise, choreographic, and reduced. Sometimes it's even funny—I use humor to approach challenging topics. I use my body to think, which is central to my process, and I work with photography, film, and drawing. The biggest change in my work was shifting from dance and performance to the visual arts. That changed how I think about the body and space, and how I use movement. It is more distilled now. My approach is still formal, but storytelling has become increasingly important.

What projects are you currently working on?

I'm working on several projects. One is my ongoing photographic series *Fitting In*, begun in 2017, exploring how my body interacts with public spaces. I'm also in the research phase of a new video work responding to living in China.

Alongside this, I'm preparing for two upcoming exhibitions in 2026 in New Zealand: a photographic group exhibition at *Te Papa* (the National Museum of New Zealand) in Wellington, and another exhibition with artist Adrienne Martyn at the *Invercargill Public Art Gallery*. I will present photographs and new video work centered on the former maternity hospital, combining movement with birth stories from the 1960s.

What advice would you give to student artists?

Soak everything up. Try lots of different things. Listen to everyone around you—but listen to yourself a little bit more, because that may be your point of difference.

Why does art matter to all of us?

Art makes everything better.

Meet Maria Erika *Artist and HIS Spouse*

Can you tell me a little bit about your artistic journey?



I'm a self-taught artist. My art journey began more seriously during the pandemic, but even as a child I loved drawing and crafts. My parents influenced me a lot—my father is very skilled at drawing, and my mother always supported me with competitions and supplies.

I remember my dad helping me once with homework: he drew a woman giving birth, and I was amazed. It made me want to learn how to draw. Even though he's actually a stationary marine engineer, creativity runs in his family. He expressed it through cooking instead of art. My mom was always at my art competitions and encouraged everything I did.

What was your art instruction like in school?

We had art classes up through Grade 6. In high school, we didn't have formal art classes, but I still enjoyed art activities and always received good marks.

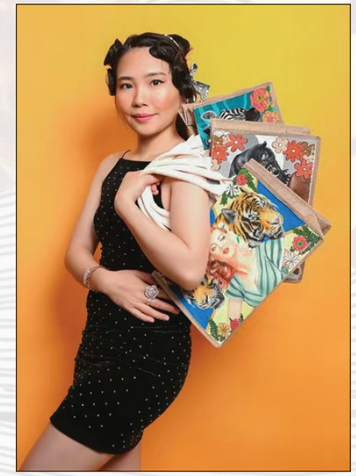
And in college?

I studied dentistry and dental hygiene—my parents wanted something stable, but I didn't abandon art. In dental school, we drew human anatomy constantly to develop dexterity. Drawing every day helped train our hands for working inside patients' mouths.

So let's go to the pandemic. Tell me about your experience.

I was in Kuwait. For two months we didn't work, so it was the perfect chance to return to art. I started with digital drawing on my phone, opened an Instagram account, and made small comics. But staring at a phone for hours gave me headaches, so I bought a tablet and some traditional materials.

I moved from watercolor to acrylic (which dried too fast for me) and then to oils, which I loved because of the slow drying time. For about three years, I was a full-time dental hygienist by day and an artist by night.



Can you tell me about your mentorship?

Two years ago, I attended my first official workshop—an intensive oil painting workshop in Italy. After that, I joined online courses. For the past year, I've been in a mentorship with an artist from Barcelona. We meet weekly. He gives assignments—painting exercises, gallery visits, written analysis, and experimentation. I shifted from classical styles to abstraction, which led me to collage.

What is your favorite subject matter?

Women, memories, stories. I like exploring personal narratives and emotions through color and form.

What artists have influenced you?

Frida Kahlo, because her art is personal and vulnerable.
Ghadah Alkandari, who mixes drawing, painting, and digital work seamlessly. I love artists who cross mediums and experiment fearlessly.

How has living in China influenced your artwork?

In Kuwait, realistic depictions of the body—especially female bodies—are restricted. Here, I feel free. No judgment. No limitations. I can experiment, explore collage, try new materials, and express more of myself. Materials are also more accessible here.

What advice would you give to student artists?

Show up. Practice often. In the beginning, quantity leads to quality. The more you create, the more you discover what you want to improve—color choices, cutting skills, composition. It takes time and patience.

Why does art matter to all of us?

Art expresses who we are, but it also records history. It shapes how we see beauty in the world. It inspires innovation. Art and science work together—architecture, medicine, design. Creativity pushes humanity forward. D

Piece of Cake



By Giana Wong
HIS Parent





How I discovered luck is what happens when opportunity meets hard work

Hello, my name is Giana, and I am a parent at HIS.

My son, Luciano, is a Grade 4 student at our school, though most of you will probably know me better as the 'Cookie Lady' from the Friday HIS Artisan Market. I'm the founder and baker behind a small one-woman bakery called Patisserie Luce, named after my son.

When I was invited to contribute to Dragon News, I really wasn't sure what to write about, after all, I'm hardly a professional writer.

But I've always believed that everyone has a story worth sharing, one with twists and turns, challenges and triumphs, so I thought I'd share the story behind my little bakery and what opportunity has meant to me over the years.

Searching for Purpose

I started Patisserie Luce about nine years ago; around the time my son Luciano was born.

Back then I remember sitting at the dining table one morning after another sleepless night of early motherhood, wondering, "I've always dreamed of being a mother, but now that I am one, why do I still feel unfulfilled?". That question was the seed of what would become my bakery.

As I searched for answers, I realized that I wanted to create something of my own; something that combined my passion and strengths. I wanted to work hard at something I could be proud of. Looking back, that was my first opportunity, and I decided to take it.

One Step at a Time

I made myself a promise: I would bake a cake every week and photograph it. If I kept that up for three months, I'd have enough for a small portfolio, maybe even a website.
And so I did.

At first, it was just friends who started ordering my cakes. But soon, word spread and before I knew it, I had customers I'd never met before. It felt like a quiet victory, one made possible through small, consistent efforts.

Beginning Again

After about a year, life took an unexpected turn. Our family was relocated from Singapore to Bali. Patisserie Luce had to pause as we adjusted from a city of skyscrapers to a home surrounded by rice fields.

We spent a total of five years living in Ubud. It was a long period of learning and adapting. I took occasional orders, but it wasn't really until our fourth year that the business began to come alive again. A friend was opening a café, and I offered to supply her cakes for free for a month as a gesture of support.

That opportunity, small and spontaneous as it seemed, changed everything.

Opportunity and Grace

I've come to believe that opportunity often carries an element of grace. You cannot predict when it will come, or how. But when it does, I hope you're ready to catch and run with it.

And precisely because it's unpredictable, you learn to stay patient, to keep your head down, and to keep practicing – so that when opportunity does finally knock, you're ready.

It took two months of trial and error before we found our 'hero product' – the Japanese Strawberry Shortcake. Soon, people were lining up outside the café for a slice. That moment of success, though it looked effortless from the outside, was really years of quiet work, patience, and perseverance.

It was also luck. But as they say, luck is what happens when opportunity meets hard work.



Recipe

"If you're willing to work hard when no one's watching, one day, it might just blossom into something beautiful"





Hibernation and Rebirth

After a year of success in Bali, another relocation came, this time to Hangzhou, in 2024. Once again, Patisserie Luce went into hibernation as we adjusted to a new home and new beginnings.

Now, a year later, I find myself slowly rebuilding, rediscovering, and rewriting the story of Patisserie Luce once again.

As I see it, opportunity doesn't always arrive in grand gestures. Sometimes, it appears quietly, in a simple idea, a friendly invitation, or a single act of courage.

If you're willing to work hard when no one's watching, one day, it might just blossom into something beautiful. D

World Beyond Language

When we communicate with others, it's not always necessary to understand everything

By Yuko Yanagimoto
HIS Parent



I met the great nephew of famed French philosopher Albert Camus in my early 20's. It was on a small dock, adjacent to a luxurious resort hotel, on Cape Vaitapé, Bora Bora, in French Polynesia.

He greeted others rigorously while he whispered softly to his Japanese wife. But from this first moment, I couldn't refrain from following the couple with my curious eyes and ears… because they were speaking in a language I had never heard before.

It was such a strange series of phrases and sentences that even Tahitian, which I had just started to acquire, sounded less exotic.

After a few minutes, I could feel the topic of their conversation change. They were now seemingly talking about their baby, and I realized they had switched to another language, clearly different from the one before, and as equally unfamiliar. Then he turned to others, carrying on with the conversation, in both French and English.

When we were leaving the dock, having noticed my name, he said his good night greeting to me in fluent Japanese. He was a popular TV personality in Japan, so it was the most familiar language I would have associated him with besides French and English.

"Would you like to join us for a drink?" Mr Camus asked me on the third evening. By that time, my curiosity was almost overwhelming. After dinner, we met at the bar looking over the darkened beach and blue lagoon.







"May I ask you a personal question?" I finally managed to ask him after finishing my Mai Tai and some small talk with his wife, who asked when I had first arrived in Bora Bora, which city in Japan I was from, why I had decided to work in the hotel business, and so on.

"Yes, of course," replied Mr Camus.

"What is the language you are speaking?"

"Can you guess?"

"In my student years I came across all kinds of world languages, existing and ancient, even artificial ones. But I can't guess yours. I can only assume that you are inventing, and re-inventing, your own new languages."

"Yes," he answered, a little surprised. "You are the first to find out so quickly."

He then generously shared how it worked. In short, they picked a language and, between syllables, threw in a random syllable from another language, but these rules could be elaborated and changed constantly. They must have been doing this for so long that it was just done very naturally, and they could speak much faster than an average person would speak in their mother tongue.

"But why are you doing this?", I asked. While posing the question, I imagined the reason might obviously be that, with his fame, he just wanted to keep family conversations private on the congested streets of Tokyo, where they lived. But his answer was different.

"It's to listen to each other more carefully," he said, holding his wife's hand tightly. "When we speak in a familiar language, we tend to speak and listen with only half effort. Especially at home. Or with family. But with our way of speaking, we need to pay full attention to what the other says because it's not easy to understand.

"It also makes us only say things that we really want to say because we need to think before we talk. We have a busy life in Tokyo, as you can imagine, but this is our key to keeping a happy relationship."



"Now it's your turn, Yuko-san," Mr Camus said, "tell us your secret", after ordering a second round of cocktails for us.

"I don't have any," I replied, "Why do you think I have some?" We were the only guests left in the bar now, though we were still entertained by the sound of crashing waves in the background.

"You told us where and how you have grown up in different places, but your fluency in different languages doesn't match your timeline.

"Normally people have the language ability first, then it gives them life options. But you've made life decisions first and then picked up the languages. Why? It must have been much harder."

"Yes, but it's exactly how it has been," I replied. "I decided to go somewhere or do something, and my decision required me to learn a new language every time.

"It's not like with some people; they grow up with different languages that help lead them to different worlds. I only had my mother tongue, and I didn't feel the need to learn anything else before I saw the first glimpse of a new world. I also never had the preconception that learning other languages at an older age would be difficult."

"But how did you manage to learn them so fast and easily?" asked Mr Camus.

"Well, I'm not sure if it was fast or easy…" Then I saw Mr Camus' wife coming back from the room with their baby. The evening was warm and quiet enough for the sleeping baby to accompany us at our side.



"People can float if they relax… and that's the only way to learn to swim"

Inspired, I continued, "Babies learn not only their mother tongue but all things from the day they are born. They are learning something at every moment, and every energy is used to learn. But they don't think how hard it is or how long it takes, right?"

"We tend to hurry in everything," Mr Camus' wife added. "Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished", repeating an ancient Chinese quote by Laozi.

"We all come to this world without language. No one is equipped with one beforehand. But we all learn one, at least," Mr Camus added. "There is almost no option that we don't learn. So yes, once you are there, you just learn, as long as…" he was trying to find the right words. "You can keep that full curiosity toward the world. And you can bear the uncertainty…"

I was starting to recall certain moments in my past. "Any foreign language is just noise in the beginning," he continued. "Only if you put your mind to listening, does it begin to make sense, and you start to see the order. Or it will just stay noise forever if you give up.

"To keep listening to something you don't understand does feel uncomfortable or insecure… it's like having to float in the water when you still don't know how to swim. But people can float if they relax… and that's the only way to learn to swim."

I remembered the day I arrived at Bora Bora after a long trip of more than 3 nights and 3 days due to complicated flight and boat connections. I'd never been so sleepless and exhausted in my life. I was surely traveling to the most remote place I'd ever been.

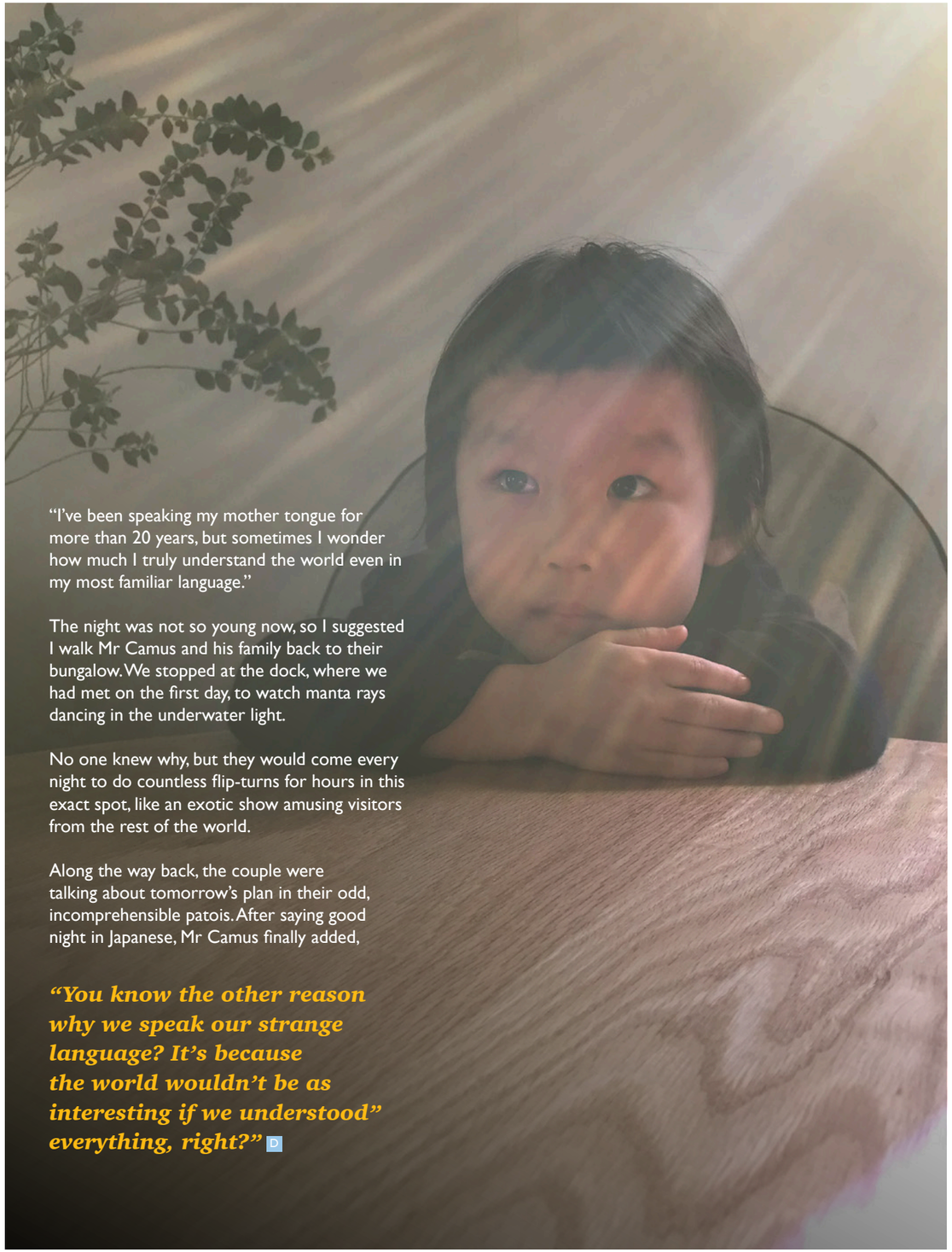
But when I finally reached the dock in the middle of the lagoon, colored with layers of blue, white and emerald, I knew, with no exaggeration, that it was the most beautiful place on earth. The first words I said to the people who welcomed me was: "I'm just so happy to be here."





When I recounted this story to the couple, Mr Camus' wife chuckled. "When a baby comes to the world, that must be the first words they would say… if they could already speak. Otherwise, they wouldn't be so eager to know the world."

The three of us were now thoughtfully observing their sleeping child, before I carried on, "Children could be considered braver than us because they balance themselves in that obscurity even when they understand none or little. And they still dare to walk deeper into the world that only gets even more abstract and unfamiliar…



"I've been speaking my mother tongue for more than 20 years, but sometimes I wonder how much I truly understand the world even in my most familiar language."

The night was not so young now, so I suggested I walk Mr Camus and his family back to their bungalow. We stopped at the dock, where we had met on the first day, to watch manta rays dancing in the underwater light.

No one knew why, but they would come every night to do countless flip-turns for hours in this exact spot, like an exotic show amusing visitors from the rest of the world.

Along the way back, the couple were talking about tomorrow's plan in their odd, incomprehensible patois. After saying good night in Japanese, Mr Camus finally added,

"You know the other reason why we speak our strange language? It's because the world wouldn't be as interesting if we understood everything, right?"

PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

Scan the QR to open the HIS page inside Bon App. Tap "Photo" to upload a moment, or "Review" to tell the story behind it.

扫码海报上的二维码，进入Bon App的HIS专页。点击"Photo"上传你最喜爱的HIS瞬间，或点击"Review"写下背后的故事。几步搞定，马上加入！



ALUMNI STORIES

Class of 2021

Daniel Branham

by Harper Girdner

PR & Communications Specialist

"Spend time with your friends, say yes to opportunities, and try new things. As life gets busier, free time becomes harder to find. You won't see all your high school friends as often, so make the most of these moments"

Alum Daniel Branham joined HIS in 9th grade and graduated in 2021. During his time here he was heavily involved in the HIS community, participating in multiple ACAMIS soccer tournaments as well as West LakeMUN. HIS was a strong influence on his life as it impacted his views on the world, and gave him skills that contribute to his work today.

All Star Attitude

From varsity sports to financial analysis, alum Daniel Branham embraces new challenges

Tell us about your experiences and journey at HIS

My journey at HIS was amazing and went by faster than I ever expected. From the moment I arrived, I felt the impact of the close and welcoming community.

Because HIS is a smaller school, teachers truly get to know you. My Physics HL class only had two students, which meant our teacher could tailor the lessons to exactly what we needed. I did not fully appreciate this until I went to UCLA, where classes often had hundreds of students and it was easy to become invisible.



What are some of your favorite memories from your time here?

My favorite memories are from ACAMIS tournaments. Traveling, competing, and spending time with teammates brought us together. The trips to Hong Kong, Shanghai and Shenzhen were amazing. Hosting ACAMIS soccer was also an unforgettable highlight (despite losing in the finals).

I also loved the China Trips, especially visiting Inner Mongolia. Camping on the Gobi Desert sand dunes is an experience I would never have had without HIS.

What kind of CCAs did you join at HIS and how did they help you?

I was involved in many CCAs at HIS. I served as Treasurer for both MUN and Student Council, helping organize events like West Lake MUN and Prom. I also ran the Econ Club.

Sports were also a huge part of my life. I played varsity volleyball, basketball, and soccer all four years and served as captain for all three teams. These activities taught me leadership, teamwork, and time management. They also gave me some of my closest friendships.

The skills I learned from CCAs made adjusting to university life much easier. They also helped me become a holistic candidate, which played a big role in getting into UCLA.









Did you feel prepared for life at UCLA?

I attended UCLA in Los Angeles and completed my Bachelor's degree in Business Economics in three years. The IB program prepared me extremely well. The workload in university felt much lighter than the IB, and I was able to handle multiple responsibilities while still having a lot more free time.





What are you currently up to?

I am currently working as a Senior Analyst at Goldman Sachs in Global Banking and Markets Operations at the Salt Lake City office in Utah, United States. I support institutional clients with their trading activities. This is my first job after university and I recently passed my six month mark.

What are your plans for the future?

I plan to continue building my career in finance and hope to remain at Goldman Sachs. I am also studying for the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) exam and plan to pursue an MBA in the coming years.

Looking back, what values from HIS do you still carry with you today?

HIS taught me how valuable an international mindset is.

Growing up in schools across Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, and then at HIS helped me understand different cultures and interact with people from all backgrounds. HIS also taught me time management and balance.

I was involved in many activities and sports, and learning to juggle everything with academics has helped me throughout university and now in my career at a fast paced and demanding company.

What advice would you give to current HIS students?

The IB and university applications can feel very stressful, but try to manage your time well and use all the resources HIS offers. At the same time, enjoy your high school years. Spend time with your friends, say yes to opportunities, and try new things. As life gets busier, free time becomes harder to find. You won't see all your high school friends as often, so make the most of these moments.

Have you kept in touch with any classmates?

Yes! I have stayed in touch with many of my HIS friends and have traveled to visit them all around the world. I have also visited the new HIS campus twice with fellow alumni. I am very impressed by the new facilities and slightly jealous that we did not have them during my time.



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Once a Dragon, Always a Dragon!



LOWER SCHOOL

Six strategies to help parents understand and connect with their sons

Navigating the Boy Code

by Merryn Atkins

Occupational Therapist





Understanding the inner world of boys can be confusing sometimes, and beneath the surface are complex young people who can be quite different to their female counterparts.

To really connect with boys, we've got to understand why they act the way they do and appreciate the unique emotional twists that shape their reactions. (Note: The ideas are not limited to boys, but generally more suited to boys).

Why Boys Act Out

Young boys, in general, can struggle to communicate their feelings. Their emotional vocabulary might still be in the early stages, and the understanding of what their body is signaling is evolving. As a result, they express themselves through actions, which may sometimes appear aggressive or irrational.

This behavior typically stems from deeper emotions such as fear, sadness, or feelings of inadequacy. It's crucial to understand that boys often develop differently than girls. Frustration may arise when they can't match their female peers' milestones. Recognizing this developmental difference is key to nurturing their self-esteem and motivation.

The Weight of the School Day

By the end of the day, many boys find themselves stressed out. Navigating the complexities of friendships, attentive listening in class, having to sit still, and remembering daily tasks push their cortisol levels, the stress hormone, to an all-time high.

When they reunite with parents and caregivers, they often feel emotionally drained, expressing this stress in less desirable ways with those they feel safest with.

6 Strategies for Connection and Regulation

1 Get them moving (and don't forget unstructured play):

Generally, boys are wired to be physically active for extended periods. Incorporating movement at home helps them regulate and promotes the ability to focus.

For example, allow them to carry in heavy groceries, wash the car, or provide time to ride bikes or play outside. Research also shows the importance of unstructured free play in developing minds.

2 Building emotional bonds with an 'empathy first' approach:

The stronger the emotional connection a boy has with a grown-up, the safer he feels emotionally, increasing the likelihood of positive behavior.

One simple thing to remember when your son is experiencing anger or sadness is to not rush in to correct or teach a lesson. Connect first by acknowledging their pain point, this way they will feel heard and will be ready to regulate their emotions much quicker.

3 Short and simple instructions:

Boys need to feel successful at school to avoid struggling and acting out. Keeping requests short and simple, around 10 words or less, increases the chances of them succeeding with a verbal instruction. (Note: Sometimes when your son is not hearing you, be mindful he may not be deliberately disobeying you, as they're wired to act first and think later).

4 Positive reinforcement and the 'just right' challenge:

Using the 'just right' challenge – something that makes them think and still fosters growth but is achievable, is a good way to boost their confidence through the sense of competence. And providing the right kind of encouragement is key.

Who doesn't need positive feedback? Boys love praise so catch them in the act of doing something right. (Pro-tip for a healthy self-concept is to read up on 'growth mindset' from the work of Dr Carol Dweck in her book 'Mindset').

5 Enough sleep and the right food:

Never underestimate the power of the basics! Good sleep and nutrition cannot be overstated. A consistent bedtime routine that delivers 9 to 12 hours of sleep is non-negotiable for a regulated nervous system and a developing brain.

Second, leverage the power of food at key transition times. The after-school period is a classic example. A brain depleted of focus and mood-stabilizing chemicals needs a quick reboot.

A healthy snack offered immediately, like in the car ride home, provides the necessary fuel to boost serotonin and dopamine, turning a potential meltdown into a manageable moment. (For more on this, see Maggie Dent's 'Mothering our Boys').

6 Model emotional regulation:

Children learn a great deal by observing adults. Demonstrate healthy emotional regulation by expressing your feelings appropriately.

If you're feeling frustrated, for example, discuss why and how you're managing that emotion in a positive way.

We hope these practical strategies might help you support the unique development of our young boys. Remember that no parent is perfect and asking for ideas should be embraced. D

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by Simay Bastedo
Pre-K Teacher

From Home to School

Revealing the power of parental participation in Early Learning

The first years of a child's formal education are a period of unparalleled brain development.

Did you know that by the age of five, approximately 90% of a child's brain has already developed? This incredible growth is fueled by every conversation, every game, and every new experience. It's a time when the foundations for future learning, behaviour, and health are laid down.

As parents of young learners at HIS, you are not just spectators in this process; you are essential partners. The school, family, and child form a powerful triangle of support, and when all sides are strong, the child thrives.

So, how can you, as a parent, actively support your young learner? Here are four concrete ways to make a significant impact.

"As parents of young learners at HIS, you are not just spectators in this process; you are essential partners"









BE an Active Audience: Talk About Learning

One of the most powerful tools you have is your genuine interest. When your child comes home from school, move beyond asking, "What did you do today?".

Instead, try specific, open-ended questions like, "What was the most interesting thing you learned?" or "Can you show me some of the shapes you learned?" This shifts the dynamic from a simple report to a meaningful conversation.

At home, make a habit of discussing the topics highlighted in the teacher's newsletters or portfolio updates in Toddle. If the class is learning about the five senses, you could talk about the things you smell and hear at home, or prepare a simple hands-on cooking activity, discussing the tastes and smells and textures of the ingredients.

When a child explains their learning to you, they are reinforcing their own understanding and building communication skills. Please share these interactions with teachers; photos, videos, and stories of learning-related activities at home can be used by teachers in the class to reinforce that home-school connection.

Staying current with updates and announcements from your child's teacher via Toddle is also key. When the teacher requests photos or items



for show-and-tell, sending them on time supports your child's growing sense of responsibility and ownership of their learning.

Most importantly, your engaged listening sends a clear message: "Your learning matters to me."

BE a Present Partner: Engage with the School Community

Your physical presence at school, when possible, builds a vital bridge between your child's two worlds. It shows them that home and school are connected and that you value their school life.

This doesn't require a huge time commitment. Volunteering as a field trip chaperone, sharing a family tradition or skill with the class, or attending a PAFA event are all wonderful ways to participate.

For families with busy schedules, consistent involvement is still achievable. HIS annual calendar is full of events like three-way conferences, parent-teacher meetings, student-led conferences, assemblies and showcases. These are not just appointments; they are dedicated opportunities to align with your child's teachers, celebrate progress, and understand their needs.

This collaboration ensures that everyone who supports your child is on the same page, making it easier to nurture their strengths and address any challenges.

BE a Dedicated Playmate: Prioritize Quality Time at Home

In our fast-paced world, the simple act of being fully present with your child is a profound form of support. Quality time means setting aside distractions, especially digital devices, to simply be together.

This could involve building a fortress with cushions, playing a board game, working on a puzzle, or just talking about their dreams and worries.

Crucially, make reading together a daily ritual. Beyond boosting literacy skills, shared stories become cherished memories and provide a rich bank of experiences for your child to draw upon.

Children who regularly engage in conversation and imaginative play at home often participate more confidently in class discussions. They are accustomed to the back-and-forth of dialogue and have a wealth of personal stories and ideas to share.

BE a Curious Guide: Focus on the Journey, Not the Destination

In the early childhood program at HIS, the process of learning is far more important than the end product. Instead of focusing on future aspirations – like becoming a doctor or a star athlete – focus on nurturing the curious, resilient learner in front of you today.

Praise effort and perseverance ("You worked so hard on that drawing!") rather than innate ability. Celebrate questions, even if you don't know the answers; discovering the answer together can be a wonderful adventure.

This approach reduces performance anxiety and fosters a lifelong love of learning. When a child feels that their value isn't tied to a specific achievement, they become more willing to take creative risks, make mistakes, and bounce back from challenges.

Your role is to be their guide, not their director, helping them discover the joy of learning itself.



A Partnership for Growth

Supporting your child's early learning is less about adding to your to-do list and more about weaving moments of connection and curiosity into your daily life.

By being an active audience, a present partner, a dedicated playmate, and a curious guide, you strengthen every side of that critical triangle of support.

Together, as a united team of school and family, we can provide our youngest learners with the strong, confident start they deserve. D







by Carolina Perdomo, EY1A
Homeroom Teacher;
by Kira Bowe, EY2C
Homeroom Teacher

Empowering Young Learners

The role of collaboration in Early Years at HIS

At HIS, Early Years 1 and 2 mark the start of a child's educational journey, introducing our youngest students to the school environment. In EY, children develop essential skills such as social interaction, fine motor control, communication, and attention span while learning about school dynamics and routines.

With an age group ranging from children who just turned two years old in EY1 to students who are already turning four in EY2, the essence of this grade level relies on this mixed-age setting that enriches the learning experience, allowing younger children to be inspired by older peers, while older children reinforce their knowledge by helping their younger classmates.

The spirit of Early Years is collaboration, and our team is eager to extend our students' learning by working with older students in lower school!

With seven grade levels above EY from Pre-K to Grade 5, collaborating with other ages is important to explore learning spaces outside the ECE building and build new relationships, especially with our Grade 2 buddy classes.





Interaction with older children exposes EY students to advanced concepts, while the older children benefit as they step into new leadership roles and get to share their learning with eager participants. Both groups develop PYP Learner Profile skills such as being "caring" to each other and effective "communicators."







Finding opportunities for our youngest students to interact with older students brings numerous benefits:

- Guidance from a child's perspective: Older children provide younger ones with relatable advice, inspiring them to tackle challenges and fostering independence.

- Role modeling and collaboration: Younger children view their older peers as role models, promoting teamwork during joint activities. - These interactions enhance social skills, such as sharing and turn-taking, which older children have more experience with, ultimately reducing conflicts.

- Leadership and confidence building: Older children assume leadership roles and offer support, boosting the confidence of both age groups.

- Language and communication development: Younger children are exposed to more advanced language, while older children learn to adapt their communication style. This exchange promotes better communication skills for all involved.

This school year, the Early Years (EY) team has created several opportunities for our youngest learners to interact with older students from Lower School.

As part of our Unit of Inquiry (UOI) about Movement, our team collaborated with Grade 4 to learn about the human body. Grade 4 invited the EY students to a small exhibition showcasing projects on different body systems.

This collaboration challenged the older students to adapt their language and activities for a younger audience, which they accomplished successfully.



Meanwhile, our EY students benefited from this "field trip" to the main campus, enjoying interactions with older peers and making meaningful connections to their own unit of inquiry.









The next exciting collaboration was teaming up with the lower school P.E. department, Mrs. Ford, Mr. Sean, Ms. Jackson, and Ms. Sia to observe and interact with older students regarding our UOI.

Firstly we went to see a Grade 3 P.E. class and watch their different forms of movement, and the EY2C class reflected the following:

"I can sit high and watch" – Will

"I like seeing big kids fighting for the balls" – Benjamin

"I see big kids exercising" – Sia

"I see one brother running so tiredly" – Cici

We then continued by participating in different obstacle course activity stations, with the Kindergarten students to guide us.

Early Years were delighted to try new movements like bowling, crawling, balancing, and grateful to the Kindergarten students and the P.E. team for taking such good care of them and extending their learning and reflective abilities.











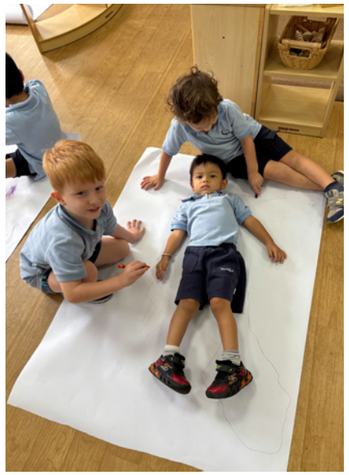
Another regular activity we have with older students is buddy classes. This year, EY1A has been paired with Grade 2D. The teachers from both classes met to identify aligned aspects of their units and plan activities that benefit both groups.

During our first unit of inquiry, which focused on how we express different emotions with our bodies, the EY and Grade 2 students collaborated on creating portraits of their buddies, paying close attention to their emotions. The Grade 2 students served as excellent role models, encouraging their younger counterparts to dedicate time to their work and reflect on which body parts were missing or which feelings to portray. This partnership fostered a supportive learning environment for both age groups.











One of the many benefits of a mixed-aged and shared classroom between EY1A and EY2C is our combined activities! The older EY2 students know how to treat EY1 kindly as "small friends", while EY1 looks up to EY2 as "big friends."

The two classes worked together on an activity related to our Unit of Inquiry, in combination with practicing social and fine-motor skills. Both buddies traced each other on paper and afterwards discussed the drawing's parts of the body: Did it match the person? They learned to control their grip on the crayon, took care of one another, and made new friends!

Our Early Years department team goal is "Community engagement; communication and preparation and planning for collaboration."

This involves strengthening service learning by involving the community as active partners by creating opportunities for different members of the community to share their expertise, participate in classroom projects, and collaborate in simple, meaningful ways that encourage student action and community connection. The most recent and meaningful example of this was our mini-exhibition!

Early Years students, as part of their "taking action" stage of their UOI, invited their families to showcase their learning about movement by voting on their favorite stations and helping to set them up. It was a big success, and we thank everyone for their attendance and support, and look forward to more exciting collaborations in the future!



Our Early Years department team goal is "Community engagement; communication and preparation and planning for collaboration"





UPPER SCHOOL

by Jayden H
Grade 12 Student

Finding My Voice

A Grade 12 student reveals the unseen weight of hidden stuttering, and why early recognition and understanding matter for everyone



"Speaking, which is something most people don't think twice about, felt like a challenge I had to face every hour"

The theme for this edition of *Dragon News* is 'Opportunity'. For me, opportunity appeared the day my science teacher in Grade 10, Mr Callahan, recognized that I was struggling with my stuttering and reached out to our school's speech therapist, Ms Chelsea.

At the time, I didn't see it as an opportunity at all. It felt like like another person pointing out my stutter without any clue about how awful I feel hearing it all the time. But looking back, that moment became the beginning of one of the most important changes in my life.

In my senior year now, I also see this *Dragon News* article as another opportunity as this allows me to spread awareness about stuttering. Many people don't realize what stuttering actually feels like or how it happens and shows up in different people, and I want to share the information so that future students don't have to wait months or years before getting support.

Before working with Ms. Chelsea, my stutter controlled the way I spoke and even the way I thought. My stutter itself is a real physical struggle, and I deal with it every single day.

It felt like I could not speak anymore, and I was frustrated. People constantly telling me to slow down, finishing my words, rushing me, or cutting me off before I had finished all added to my communication reality. If I am upset or more emotional then my stutter struggles amplify.

After years, it had become more difficult to finish when I chose to speak, and while also trying to keep my emotions together.
I figured out ways to hide my stutter from others to prevent any reminder response to it. Whenever I felt a word coming that I knew would get stuck, my first reaction was to avoid it completely, replacing it with something "easier" to say.

I also sometimes said things like "I don't know" or "I forgot" just to escape another stutter. This wasn't just hiding my stutter, it was hiding my voice.

The frustration I felt when I couldn't get words out often overwhelmed me. When I was stuck on a word while trying to explain something, the emotions of being embarrassed, stressed, and frustrated with myself were more than I could manage, and everything exploded in that moment.

People telling me to "slow down," finishing my words for me, or talking over me only added to the pressure. If I was already upset or stressed, my stutter became even harder to control. The emotional load of all of this was huge, and at its worst, it made me believe I couldn't even speak.

I never talked about stuttering as a challenge, so I didn't understand how much my reactions were connected to it. Because of that, my emotional outbursts caused conflicts during





interactions with classmates and even teachers, long before I realized what was actually happening.

Speaking, which is something most people don't think twice about, felt like a challenge I had to face every hour. But then the opportunity came, a chance to actually learn about what I was going through. In my sessions with Ms. Chelsea, the first thing she told me was that stuttering never disappears completely, but there are techniques that can help you live with it. I learned to slow down before starting a sentence, to pause when I felt a block building, and most importantly, to stop hiding the words I wanted to say.

These strategies weren't just tools, they were a way for me to finally speak with confidence. Over time, everything started to change. I became more confident when speaking. My emotional reactions weren't as intense, and instead of feeling controlled by my stutter, I felt in control of my communication. This also helped reduce conflicts and improved my relationships with teachers and friends.

I still stutter sometimes, but now it no longer feels like a barrier; it's a part of me that I've learned to work with, not run from. The opportunity Mr. Callahan opened for me shaped not only how I speak, but how I see myself.

It taught me that opportunities aren't always loud or obvious. Sometimes they come in the form of a challenge, a conversation, or a small act of support. When we embrace them, they can help us grow in ways we never expected. D

by Akira Sugata
Social Studies Teacher

Learning Through Time

Social Studies Curriculum Night promotes possible pathways from PYP to the DP



On November 11th, the Social Studies Department hosted a Curriculum Night for the whole school.

This was an amazing opportunity for parents, students, and visitors to see the learning that we do here at HIS and the transition of learning from lower school all the way to upper school.

The exhibit started in the Black Box, showcasing all the learning models and activities facilitated in the PYP with Units of Inquiry that investigate who and where we are in the world, as well as units on culture, migration, and ancient civilizations.

Each of the DP discipline exhibits was held in classrooms, representing Economics, Psychology, History, and our newest addition, Business Management.





"I think that curriculum night was a great way to get to know new people and gather new experiences in terms of communication. I got to explain what we did in our previous summative, which also helped me reflect on my work and see what I could do better next time to improve"

— Anastasia B, Grade 8

Social Studies (especially in the upper school) is a subject that offers different opportunities for students to take on subjects that align with their future goals and aspirations or their interests as they progress to the courses offered.

Over the years, we have had students who have transitioned from studying History and Economics to majoring in Political Science, while others who left HIS loving Psychology went on to study Behavioral Sciences at university.

Our four courses at the top of the curriculum create a guideline for the different units that the Middle Years Programme delves into, establishing a strong base of knowledge and understanding, as well as strong analysis and investigation skills.





As we explore our units throughout the ages, we hope to integrate three core skills into our curriculum: critical thinking through real-world applications, research skills, and communication skills in multiple forms, with a focus on written communication.

At each grade level, the progression of these skills becomes increasingly challenging with each passing year, and the content knowledge becomes more aligned and suited to the four subjects at the top, providing opportunities for students to build their interests or passions in specific fields.

"It was interesting to see what other DP social studies classes are currently working on. I had a chance to look at DP History, Economics, and Psychology, which provided me with an overview of what these subjects are like in DP"

— Prisha J, Grade 11





As the Head of the Social Studies Department this year, it was truly wonderful to see our work as a department come together and be celebrated by the community.

Thank you to my department members – Zach Ober, Chaddwick Plotz, Lewis Braithwaite, Zach Gerhard, and Bart Brzezicki – for their efforts over the weeks leading up to the event.

Thank you also to the Lower School teachers involved for organizing and setting up the respective exhibits. I'd also like to extend my thanks to the many students who represented their grade levels in upper school.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the Technology Department and Christine from Operations for helping us set up and clean up for the night.

As a department, we hope to continue developing and aligning the curriculum to create inquiry-based and fruitful opportunities for students as they progress from the PYP to the DP.









Gleaming the Cube

There's so much more to this famous 1974 toy than just solving a puzzle



by Kingsley C
HIS student

If you've ever heard the faint clicking of plastic in the hallway or seen someone twisting a colorful cube during break, you've witnessed one of HIS's quiet revolutions: the rise of cubing.

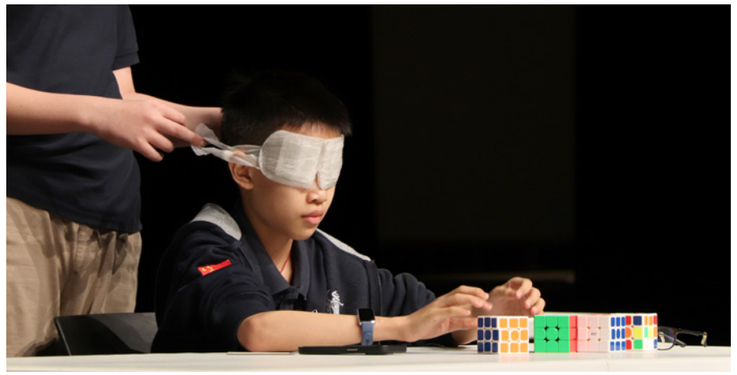
What started as a simple hobby has grown into something much bigger – a community of problem-solvers, thinkers, and learners who are discovering that the Rubik's Cube is far more than just a toy.



Earlier this year, we held the school's first Rubik's Cube competition, bringing together students from all of Grade 8 to test their skills in a friendly but fast-paced challenge. The atmosphere was filled with anticipation and focus as participants raced to complete their solves while others watched attentively.

Even those unfamiliar with cubing found themselves engaged by the determination and concentration on display. It wasn't only about who finished first, but about celebrating patience, focus, and the satisfaction of completing something that once seemed impossible.

One of the special highlights of the event was a blindfolded solve, where I demonstrated how the cube could be solved entirely from memory.



It drew strong interest from many students who had never seen such a method before, and it showed how cubing involves a surprising level of memorization and strategy. After the event, several students expressed curiosity about how it worked, and by the following week, a few had already begun learning their own first solving methods.

Following that success, a few of us began planning something new – a cubing showcase that focuses on creativity and variety. Instead of just timing solves, we want to show that there's no single way to solve the cube, and that it's just as much about problem-solving and self-improvement as it is about speed.

The showcase, which is still being developed, will give students a chance to see how different cubers think, cope with challenges, and find unique solutions – much like in any subject at school.

Organizing such an activity also brings a range of educational and personal benefits to the school community. It encourages teamwork, communication, and leadership, as students must plan, coordinate, and collaborate to make the event possible.

It also inspires others to explore new interests – students who might not have considered cubing before often discover it as a fun and rewarding challenge. Moreover, it helps build confidence, as participants learn to perform under time pressure and try learning new methods.

In this way, a simple showcase becomes a meaningful opportunity for growth, combining logical thinking with creativity and cooperation.

But beyond events, cubing at HIS has become a reminder that learning can happen anywhere, anytime. Every time someone picks up a cube, they're practicing focus, memory, and perseverance – without even realizing it.





You don't need to be a mathematician or a 'genius' to get into cubing. It's open to anyone who enjoys the feeling of figuring things out step by step. It's a great way to learn patience and problem-solving, but also creativity – because every cube, even when scrambled, has hundreds of possible paths to the solution.

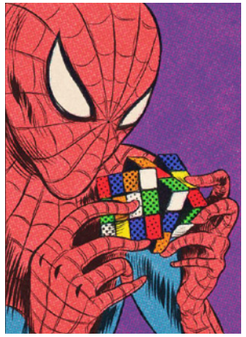
Cubing also brings people together. During breaks and after school, groups of students can often be seen gathering to share solving methods, offer guidance, or simply practice together. You don't have to be fast – what matters is steady improvement and enjoyment of the process.

It's this shared curiosity that's turning cubing into something more than a pastime – it's becoming part of the school's culture of exploration and learning.

We're now also looking at turning this enthusiasm into something lasting: a Cubing CCA. The idea is to create a space where both beginners and experienced solvers can meet regularly, practice, and maybe even represent HIS at official competitions in the future.



"A simple showcase becomes a meaningful opportunity for growth, combining logical thinking with creativity"





It would be a great opportunity for students to learn from each other, challenge themselves, and grow skills that apply well beyond cubing – such as patience, concentration, and creative thinking.

What makes the Rubik's Cube so special is that it's both simple and infinite. It fits in your hand, yet it contains billions of possibilities. Solving it teaches you that seemingly daunting challenges are actually just a collection of smaller, simpler steps.

You start confused, but as you keep going, patterns begin to appear. And before you know it, you've turned something that looked impossible into something perfectly solved.

That's the real beauty of cubing – not just in how fast you solve it, but in how much you learn from it. It's a reminder that improvement is never instant; it's built one move at a time.

So next time you see someone twisting that colorful cube between classes, it's not just a fidget toy. It's a quiet moment of focus. It's a problem waiting to be solved. And maybe, it's an invitation – to pick one up yourself and see where it takes you. D

by Yessika T
Grade 11 Student

Bowled Over

New international science competition provides fresh opportunities for HIS DP students





The HIS edition of the Science Bowl began through a casual conversation with a close friend at Stone Hill International School in Bangalore.

Their school was hosting the competition that year, and they had received an invitation to participate. As they explained what the Science Bowl was and how fast-paced it could be, the idea immediately caught my interest.

When she asked if I wanted to be part of it, I realized that bringing the Science Bowl to my own school could be a welcome initiative. Even though we had never participated before, I felt it was a great opportunity for my peers.







The Science Bowl uses question formats such as multiple-choice tasks, rapid-fire questions and team challenges. It encourages students to engage in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) in a fun and competitive environment.

After gathering the basic information about how the competition worked, I decided to propose the idea to my school administration. I explained how participating in the Science Bowl could benefit students by strengthening academic skills, encouraging teamwork, and giving us a chance to compete with other schools. The school admin was supportive, and with their approval, I started working on the next planning steps.

Once HIS agreed to join, the challenge was finding students who wanted to participate. Many students were unsure about what the event involved or whether they had enough science knowledge. I reached out to classmates and put up posters to spread the word.

Gradually, a group of interested students formed, each with strengths in biology, chemistry, physics, environmental systems and societies and psychology. We registered a Grade 10, 11 and 12 HIS team.

Forming the team was only the start. My main role was communicating



between the host school and our HIS team, sharing topics and materials, and keeping everyone updated on what to focus on.

I helped make sure everyone understood the areas we needed to practice and clarified questions from the information we received. Coordinating practice times and keeping track of updates from the school in Bangalore took some effort, but it helped the team stay on track and be prepared for the competition.

Throughout this process, Ms Kushner played a big role in supporting us. She helped with coordination, made time for meetings, and communicated with the administration when needed. Her guidance made it much easier to manage everything.

Looking back, what started as a simple invitation turned into a practical experience that taught me how to organize, communicate, and support a team. We look forward to participating again next year and are aiming to host a Science Bowl of our own in the future.

Many thanks to our Grade 10 participants Paul S, Tiger L and Lydia Y; Anna L, Tonya L and Diego W from Grade 11; and our Grade 12 seniors Claire S, Joseph F and JiaChen Q.



Small but Mighty

Tiny Desk Concert series a musical showcase of learning and change

by Ellie Caven
Music Teacher



In December, the Upper School Library came alive with music, creativity, and student voice as our Grade 7 and 8 learners presented their very own Tiny Desk Concerts.

Inspired by the iconic NPR series in the United States, this performance opportunity was more than just a musical event: it was a celebration of student agency, collaboration, and curricular exploration.

Each performance was rooted in the students' Unit of Inquiry.







Grade 8 students have spent the semester exploring songs of change: music that inspired movements, raised awareness, and empowered communities. Based around themes such as body positivity and environmental activism, their chosen ukulele pieces reflected the power of music to spark dialogue and drive transformation.

Meanwhile, Grade 7 students have dived into the world of celebrated British band The Beatles, learning not only about the famous band's musical legacy but also their significant cultural impact around the world.

These two groups, along with the High School Music department, then embarked on a week of Tiny Desk performances. The project was more than just a concert – it was a celebration of student autonomy and artistic growth.

The groups worked to create an immersive space that spoke to what they've learned this semester. Ahead of the concerts, students explored what makes a Tiny Desk Concert so special: the intimate setting, the creative use of space, the thoughtful props and backgrounds, and the authentic connection between performer and audience.

With these elements in mind, they brainstormed how to recreate the magic of Tiny Desk right here at HIS, a format that offers a unique opportunity for students to take ownership of their learning. In small groups, they selected songs, rehearsed arrangements, and collaborated on set design.

Concerts were held after school during the final week before the winter holiday, and the HIS community showed up in strength to support.

The library was transformed into a cozy performance venue, with the makeshift tiny desk office used for storytelling through curricular exploration and musical expression. One tiny desk, many powerful messages.



This initiative marked the beginning of a larger journey, one that aims to nurture confident, independent performers who feel empowered to express themselves through music.

By giving our students the tools and freedom to shape their own performances, at HIS we're fostering not only musical skills – but also teamwork, creativity, and self-belief. D

Leaders of Tomorrow

Creating new opportunities for mentors and mentees in Model United Nations

by Tonya L and Anna L
Grade 11 Students

The Delegate Mentor Committee, or DMC, is a part of Hangzhou International School's Model United Nations (MUN) Secretariat. In the DMC, we mentor middle and high school delegates, ranging from beginners to advanced.

Although the DMC is a new division of the HIS MUN Secretariat, established in the spring of 2025, it has blossomed, becoming an opportunity for growth, collaboration, and leadership within HIS's MUN community.

What opportunities are provided for delegates?

Student delegates get practical help with research, writing, and debate techniques, while also being given the opportunity to receive personalized feedback during the conference preparation process.

This tailored support better equips delegates for the challenges faced in the committee room and builds much-needed confidence in our beginner delegates.

The DMC provides a safe environment for students to explore new skills and familiarise themselves with procedures before going into the larger MUN arena, providing them with many opportunities to challenge themselves and grow.



What opportunities are provided for mentors?

The delegate mentor experience involves weekly meetings to coordinate planning for the MUN CCA sessions, working closely with MUN directors, and guiding delegates through the conference preparation process.

Mentors not only develop skills in leadership, organization, pedagogy, and lesson design, but build meaningful connections with the delegates and expand their network within the HIS community.



One of the most rewarding aspects of this role has been seeing the progress of the students we mentor. Watching their confidence grow while they practice speeches or construct resolutions to global issues is incredibly fulfilling.



How does DMC tie into wider opportunities at HIS?

Beyond the skills directly related to MUN, the DMC also ties into HIS's focus on the exploration of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its curriculum.

We explore critical global issues like climate change, poverty, and education equality through our discussions and debates, which align with the school's mission to develop globally minded citizens.

Students prepare for MUN conferences and are also engaging with the bigger picture of what it means to be an active, informed global citizen by participating in the DMC.





In conclusion, the DMC is a testament to the opportunities HIS provides for its students to grow as leaders, thinkers, and changemakers.

It's a space where mentors and delegates can challenge themselves, support each other, and contribute to a community that values growth and collaboration. D

United we Stand

The 19th edition of West Lake MUN once again showcased the abilities of our outstanding students

by Lewis Braithwaite
Social Studies Teacher



Over the weekend of November 14th to 16th, Hangzhou International School hosted the 19th iteration of its celebrated annual Model United Nations (MUN) conference.

West Lake MUN XIX saw 19 international schools from inside China and elsewhere in the region in attendance, with the total number of students attending passing 300.

This year's theme, 'Progressing to Adapt or Adapting to Progress?', was selected to give attending delegates the opportunity to discuss some of the world's most critical issues, including climate change, globalization, and peacebuilding.

Across the 3-day event, attendees acted in a variety of roles. The majority took on the mantle of the delegate, whose diplomatic skills were honed as they discussed, negotiated, and found solutions to issues of global relevance.

Others took on the role of student officers. Here, leadership skills were tested, with officers managing the flow of debate in each committee and bearing the responsibility for quashing any unruly delegate behaviour.

Each committee was also fortunate to have admins, whose responsibilities of passing messages between delegates and assisting the student officers was indispensable.





Fundamental to the success of West-Lake MUN XIX, however, was a small body of students whose work began long before the event itself. This was the West Lake MUN XIX secretariat, who met weekly in the months leading up to the conference and readily gave up their time to ensure the delivery of a successful event.

In this capacity, the secretariat was given hands-on experience in project management and tested their self-management skills as they balanced the event's planning with busy academic schedules.



Complementing the West Lake MUN XIX secretariat was an adjacent student body, the Delegate Mentor Committee (DMC). Taking responsibility for the preparation of HIS' own delegates for the conference, these student leaders met weekly to plan the delivery of meaningful and engaging sessions for students since the spring of this year.

Akin to the West Lake MUN XIX secretariat, the DMC underwent their own learning journey, developing their pedagogical skills in the workshops and lessons they delivered.

Ultimately, West Lake MUN XIX was an event in which opportunity was foundational. Each student involved embraced the opportunities that the conference had to offer, and reciprocally, the conference was given the opportunity to succeed because of all those students who committed their precious time to it.

Here's to another successful year of Model United Nations at HIS, as we not only reflect, but also look forward to an exciting international trip in semester two and West Lake MUN XX next year – the 20th anniversary of one of our most treasured annual events.

Top Ten

by Naomi X, Jessie T and Lydia Y
HIS students





It's been a busy year so far for Grade 10, who are leading the way across many school activities

Hello, we are the Grade 10 PR Team. On behalf of our grade, we wish to share a variety of projects and extracurricular activities students have been working on this semester.

Many tenth graders are involved in multiple sports. For example, Prisha H is a member of the volleyball, basketball, and soccer teams.

Prisha loves working with her coaches and her friends, strongly valuing the friendships she has made. She credits sports with helping to teach her the importance of hard work and staying open to growth opportunities.









Multiple members of our grade were part of our High School Musical, Grease. Andrea J is the Stage Manager and was impressed by the teamwork shown between cast members in the show: "We're a team, we collaborate!"

Cami Y and Bryony K were both actors in the show. Their favorite parts were the diversity of the dances and the progression as a team. Cami brought recognition to student leadership, applauding how stage managers, "organized everything and brought the show alive!"

Additionally, 10th Grade leadership is present in swimming. As a swim team captain, Simeon B is central to communication among the team and helps organize marshalling and relays. Despite challenges sometimes in getting younger students to listen to him, Simeon has enjoyed the role and learned more about motivation and organization.

Two students have also begun a whole new sports team this year. Grace T and Charlotte X combined their love for dance and volunteering to launch HIS's first cheerleading squad.

The team made their spirited debut during a November volleyball tournament in self-designed outfits. Overcoming numerous initial difficulties, they have gathered a growing squad and are excited to keep boosting school spirit at future games.

Grade 10s have also been working on their unique Personal Projects varying from technological innovation to captivating art. Tiger L is working on a science passion project on machine learning, analyzing and predicting dynamic movement in hockey.

Another student, Aryan S, is passionate about personal health and physical condition. His personal project focuses on gym progression and how to increase benchmarks for bench presses, weighted squats, and bicep curls.

Meanwhile Yoyo Y is working a multimedia mosaic art piece, combining dream-like elements to create a sculptural form, in an ambitious creative endeavor. Yoyo's project already looks extremely promising.

We look forwards to seeing more amazing Grade 10 personal projects in our April exhibition.

Thank you for reading.

Hangzhou International School

DRAGON SCIENCE

Open for Submissions

TURN YOUR CURIOUSITIES INTO PUBLICATIONS!

Submission Deadline
12.01.2025

What: An article (~600-1000 words) about your science rabbit hole.

Why: CAS, and the joy of sharing what you love.

How Where: Submit your draft to Tonya's mailbox: liut59165@hisdragons.org.cn



For Information, contact sunk66432@hisdragons.org.cn (Claire)

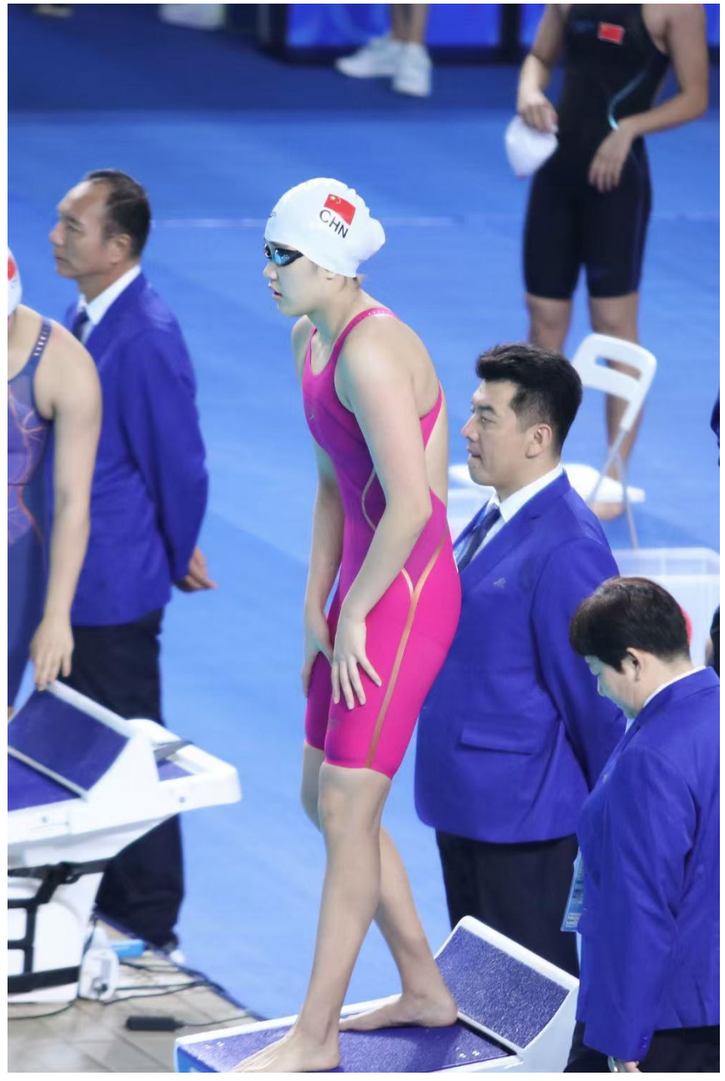


SPORTS

The Quiet Star

Meet HIS Coach Cathy Feng, a former national swimmer who is calm under pressure

by Meg Shaul
Assistant Aquatics Coordinator



If you've ever seen a swimmer glide through the water with effortless grace, chances are you've caught a glimpse of HIS Coach Cathy Feng in action.
But Cathy isn't just a former elite athlete – she's a calm, confident, and quietly brilliant presence on our coaching team.

Coach Cathy began swimming at the age of six and joined a professional sports team at 13, eventually training alongside Olympic legends like Sun Yang and Wang Shun.

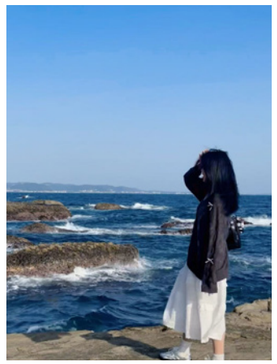
Her resume sparkles with national titles and international medals, including gold at the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games, but you'd never hear her brag. In fact, you might have to coax the stories out of her, and trust us, they're worth hearing.

Her specialty was the 400 meter free-style, a race that demands grit, pacing, and serious endurance – all experience that shows in her coaching style. Cathy understands long-term effort and the value of staying calm under pressure, and she brings that same steady energy to the HIS swimmers in her care.

"Her resume sparkles with national titles and international medals... but you'd never hear her brag"







Outside the pool, Cathy is a curious adventurer. She loves to travel, explore new cultures, and she unwinds with concerts, Korean dramas, or a cozy day at home watching TV. Her time studying abroad even led her to discover a love for 'walking football', proof that she's always open to new experiences and ideas.

Cathy is a thoughtful and hardworking coach, and she's always full of quiet surprises. Her journey through the Chinese swim system has shaped her in powerful ways – some challenging, some inspiring – and if you get the chance to ask her about it, you'll come away with a deeper appreciation for the impressive strength behind her natural calm.

Now retired from professional swimming, Cathy brings over 15 years of experience to the pool deck, blending technical precision with a warm, approachable style.

Sure she's a certified National Level Athlete, a Level 3 Social Sports Instructor, and a Level 5 Lifeguard, but more importantly, she's a natural teacher. Whether she's leading a group of young swimmers or supporting her fellow coaches, Cathy's input is always thoughtful, grounded, and quietly impactful.

Despite being the youngest member of our team, Cathy carries herself with maturity and poise. Her ability to switch seamlessly between Mandarin and English is just one example of her sharp mind and adaptability. She's fast becoming a cornerstone of our department – not just for her knowledge, but also her calming energy and kind spirit.



Running Up That Hill

By Akira Sugata
Social Studies Teacher



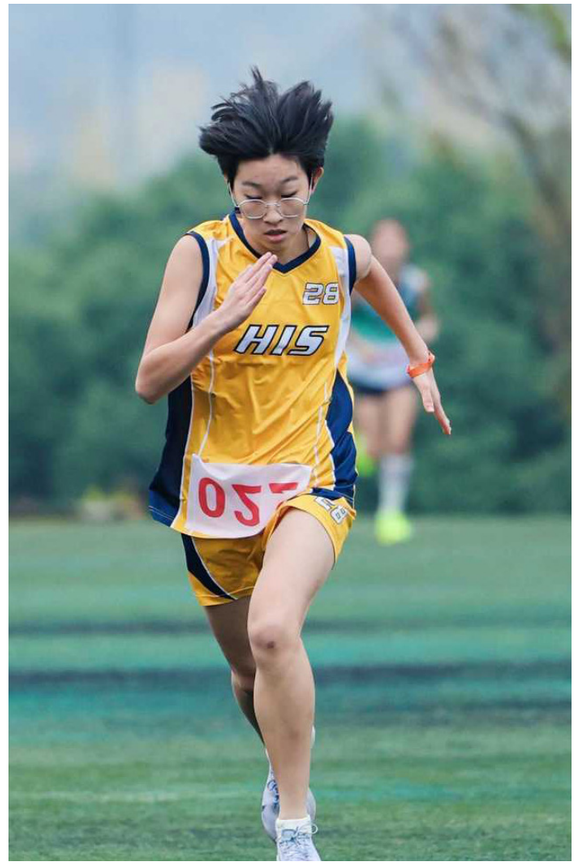
Cross country running not only keeps you fit but builds your mental and physical resilience

As a long-distance runner myself, one of the more exciting things I get to do at HIS is coach the Middle and High School Varsity Cross Country team.

As our team grows larger every year, and with the combination of the running club CCA joining us for practice every Tuesday after school, the increasing interest in what may seem like mundane, boring endurance sports like cross country brings me immense joy.

Cross country is a long-distance running event across many different terrains such as concrete pavements, mountainous trails, muddy tracks, and more. Many people perceive it as an individual sport; however, it also has a team aspect, as the lowest number of points per team wins, with the top four runners' placements being summed up.

"Not only does it improve endurance, but it also builds mental toughness and resilience"







This year, our small group of seven runners made our way to Chengdu to Leman International School to race on a mentally and physically challenging course – a 1.5-kilometer loop with a maximum elevation of 469 meters.

Despite the physically strenuous course, ***Helen Z (Grade 9) took home 1st place in the U14 girls' category, running 3 km in 15:05 minutes.*** This was also Helen's second gold medal for HIS this year, showcasing her ever-growing resilience in this tough sport. In addition, the ***U14 girls, including Lena K and Abby W (both Grade 6), Lucia X (Grade 7), and Helen, earned 2nd place in the team award.***

A sport like cross country not only opens up opportunities for students to build strong camaraderie with peers across age groups but also provides space for students to shine in terms of leadership and the strength that brings a group together.

To see some students step up and showcase a side of themselves that they usually do not reveal within the classroom walls is always a gift to experience as a coach.

As we finish up this season, I am excited about the upcoming young group of 4th and 5th graders who seem to have a drive for long-distance running, and I look forward to seeing this current group of students come back and keep improving.



We hope to see more students develop an interest in cross country as they realize that not only does it improve endurance, but it also builds mental toughness and resilience – integral components of a student's character as they progress through upper school. D





by Bart Brzezicki
Social Studies Teacher

Sail, Don't Drift

Embrace the challenges that come your way – the strongest storms make the best sailors



"Bart, turn around!" my friend Patrick exclaimed. "The boat?" I replied, "I can't, I'm focused here." "No, like look behind you!" he insisted.

I was at the steering wheel of a boat about halfway through a 16-hour sailing journey across Lake Michigan. It was the summer between 10th and 11th grade, and my sailing youth organization, the Sea Scouts, were on a 4-ship convoy across the lake.

"Dude, just look behind you!" Patrick repeated, and I finally relented. Our boat, Second Chance, was a 30-foot sailboat pushing 50 years old. There was no autopilot, no GPS, no electronic anything except for a few lights, and no way to secure the wheel.

This was old-school sailing, and if we fell off course it would be a pain to get back on track again. As soon I turned around though, I saw there was plenty good reason to look: a 50,000-foot wall of dark black clouds on the horizon was chasing us down.

The summer storm we thought we could outrun was moving a lot quicker than we had anticipated. We wouldn't make landfall before it hit us, so we would have to weather it out in the open water.



Pat ran downstairs to wake the rest of the crew. Steve, our coach and leader, popped his head out of one of the hatches in front. "Patrick, take the wheel. Bart, get all the cushions inside. That storm is about 30 minutes away." He was wrong, though; it was only ten minutes away and moving fast.

As soon as it hit us, we knew we were in trouble. Our sails were still up, and Second Chance was tossed violently around. Steve took the boat's steering wheel and handed me a rope. "Here, tie this through your belt loops and around your waist, use a bowline, not any slipknot." I did as I was told without asking.

"Now what?" I asked. "Go up to the foredeck and get ready to pull the sails down. I'll release the main and jib halyard and, on my call, give the sails as strong of a pull down as you possibly can. Stay low, everything is whipping across the deck right now."

Waves were indeed washing over the bow, and the rain was coming in sideways. While the rest of the crew were getting our gear below, I was preparing to scurry up the deck. "Steve, what's the rope for?" I asked. "It's in case you fall overboard!" he shouted.

I could barely hear him now. The wind was too strong. I watched as he tied the other end of the rope to the boat. Not a reassuring thought. What a completely wild adventure this was though, and what an opportunity.







Taking to the Water

Sailing always felt like a part of me; as if it were stitched into my DNA by accident before I was born. Growing up, I would walk along the cold, rocky shores of Lake Michigan and watch boats slowly disappear across the horizon.

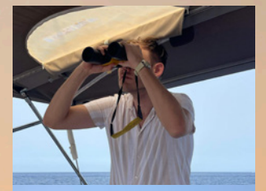
The "lake" was really more of an inland sea, covering 58,000 square kilometers. Growing up near it meant there were always sailing clubs, groups, and races to participate in. It all felt like some elusive, exclusive group that I could never be a part of. A secret brotherhood with stories, terms, and skills that seemed completely foreign right in my backyard. I just didn't know a way in.

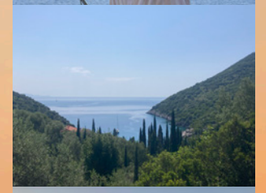


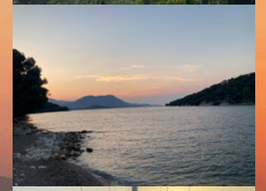
At around 12 years old, my mom heard of a scouting organization in the US, the Sea Scouts, who were having an open sailing day. She took the opportunity to bring my younger brother and I out on the water. We were immediately hooked.

The way the wind and sea-spray felt as it hit my face, the way the boat cruised through the water, and the way that seven and a half kilometers per hour felt like a blistering pace meant I was never going back.

My mom saw how much fun my brother and I were having and worried that her hard work as a nurse wouldn't be enough to cover the usually pricey fees sailing tends to require. She sheepishly walked over and asked the club president what the membership cost was for two youth members. "It's 40 bucks a year; we're a volunteer run organization though so if your boys are any good with tools it would be a great help to have them over on Saturday mornings to fix boats. We'll teach them what to do." That was it. We were in.









Call of the Ocean

The opportunity that sailing has given me to grow as a person has been genuinely life-changing. It has become a mainstay in my personal endeavors, and a passion I am constantly seeking out.

During the next few years I tallied up countless nights on watch as our boats made passage on sailing trips. I counted shooting stars in the black of night by the dozens. I would watch the sun rise on the horizon in the early morning while our boat silently drifted along.

There were days when the wind would blow so hard it would feel like our boats were being pulled into the sky. There were other days where the wind would be so light that a small breeze would feel exciting. And whenever someone needed help fixing something, I never turned down the opportunity to learn a new skill.

Maintenance and repair isn't like writing or math. It's a completely different set of skills that require what feels like a part of my brain that never got tested, tried, or tuned in school. I was learning about calculus and narrative literature in the classroom, but when I got on the water, I was learning what it was like to feel alive.



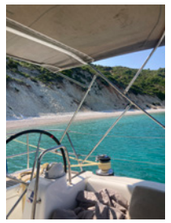
Now it's Your Turn

The years are now slowly turning into decades, and the stories and memories have only piled on. I remember cutting across the waters of the Persian Gulf on my own catamaran, much like the way Arab traders had done in their dhows for thousands of years.

I've had the opportunity to become a licensed sailing skipper (or captain) and charter sailboats in Greece and Italy with my best friends. I sat on the bow of my boat and watched as dolphins raced us through the waves. And it still feels like it's all just beginning.

I write this because this hobby, this passion, is now an opportunity that you can take advantage of. We're so fortunate to have a sailing CCA as part of our school; there are very few schools around the world that have this opportunity.





Alan, who partners with HIS to deliver the sailing curriculum, has crossed oceans. He has an incredible wealth of nautical knowledge and is just an inspiring figure to be around. If you have read this and want to take the first step, reach out to me or the school. We want to grow the program and open these doors to new sailors.

Life is short, and you don't have to keep standing on the shore looking at the horizon; there might be opportunity that lies just beyond it. D

HIS
Hangzhou International School

LET'S GET AQUATIC!

ARE YOU READY TO SAIL, ROW, OR KAYAK?

UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL

Join our Aquatics CCA – Sailing, Rowing, Kayaking! Discover the thrill of aquatics in a supportive and friendly environment. No experience necessary - just bring your enthusiasm!

REGISTER NOW!

SAILING

ROWING

KAYAKING

For more information: activities@hisdragons.org.cn

Know Your HIS Acronyms

At HIS, you will notice that administrators, students, teachers, and parents frequently use acronyms in our news, publications, announcements, and conversations. Here's a helpful list of the most common acronyms used.

EY	EARLY YEARS
LS	LOWER SCHOOL
MS	MIDDLE SCHOOL
HS	HIGH SCHOOL
US	UPPER SCHOOL
ECE	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
HL	HIGHER LEVEL
SL	STANDARD LEVEL
CAS	CREATIVITY ACTIVITY SERVICE
IB	INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE
MYP	MIDDLE YEARS PROGRAMME (GRADES 6-10)
PYP	PRIMARY YEARS PROGRAMME (EY-GRADE 5)
DP	DIPLOMA PROGRAMME (GRADES 11&12)
EAL	ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE
PHE	PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION
MCT	MANDARIN CO-TEACHER
GLL	GRADE LEVEL LEADER
SSS / SST	STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES / STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM
STEAM	SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING ART MATH
DT	DESIGN TECHNOLOGY
CCA	CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
TOK	THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE
TLA	TEACHING LEARNING ASSISTANT
EE	EXTENDED ESSAY
IA	INTERNAL ASSESSMENT
PAFA	PARENTS AND FRIENDS ASSOCIATION
ACAMIS	ASSOCIATION OF CHINA AND MONGOLIA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS
CISSA	CHINA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS SPORTS ASSOCIATION
SISAC	SHANGHAI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
HISA	HANGZHOU INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION
HISAC	HANGZHOU INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
EARCOS	EAST ASIA REGIONAL COUNCIL OF SCHOOLS
SEASAC	SOUTHEAST ASIA STUDENT ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE
MUN	MODEL UNITED NATIONS
GIN	GLOBAL ISSUES NETWORK
GLT	GENERAL LEARNING TARGETS
NWEA	NORTHWEST EVALUATION ASSOCIATION
UOI	UNIT OF INQUIRY

Hangzhou International School
杭州国际学校

School Calendar 2025-2026

SEMESTER ONE

JULY

M	T	W	TH	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

AUGUST

M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
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18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

SEPTEMBER

M	T	W	TH	F
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8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

OCTOBER

M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

NOVEMBER

M	T	W	TH	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

DECEMBER

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

IMPORTANT DATES:

SEMESTER ONE

JULY	30-31	New Faculty Inservice (no school for students)
AUGUST	1	New Faculty Inservice (no school for students)
	4-11	All Faculty Inservice (no school for students)
	12	New Family Orientation Day & Open House
	13	**First Day of Semester One**
SEPTEMBER	12-13	Professional Inservice (no school for students)
	29-30	October Break
OCTOBER	1-3	National Day Holiday
	6	Mid-Autumn Festival
	7	Professional Inservice (no school for students)
	10	**Mid-Semester Progress Reports**
	14	Parent-Student-Teacher Conferences
NOVEMBER	28	Professional Inservice (no school for students)
DECEMBER	19	**End of Semester One & Semester Reports**

SEMESTER TWO

JANUARY	12	Professional Inservice (no school for students) & New Family Orientation Day
	13	**First Day of Semester Two**
FEBRUARY	16-20	Chinese New Year Holiday
	23	Professional Inservice (no school for students)
MARCH	13	Professional Inservice (no school for students)
	27	**Mid-Semester Progress Reports**
APRIL	6-10	Qingming "Tomb Sweeping" Festival Holiday and Spring Break (no school)
MAY	1	Labor Day Holiday (no school)
	4	Professional Inservice (no school for students)
	26	Student-Led Conferences
JUNE	17	**End of Semester Two & Semester Reports**
	18	Professional Inservice (no school for students)
	19	Duanwu "Dragon Boat" Festival Holiday

SEMESTER TWO

JANUARY

M	T	W	TH	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
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19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

FEBRUARY

M	T	W	TH	F
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23	24	25	26	27

MARCH

M	T	W	TH	F
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16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

APRIL

M	T	W	TH	F
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MAY

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25	26	27	28	29

JUNE

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

New Family Orientation Day
Beginning/End of Semester
New Staff Inservice (no school for students)
Legal Holidays (no school)
School Holiday (no school)
Professional Inservice (no school for students)
Conferences

Total Student Days: 180

Connect With Us

DragonNews magazine is published four times a year and is shared with the HIS and wider Hangzhou communities.

If you would like to contribute an article, have a suggestion for content, or want to ask a question, please email: hismarketing@hisdragons.org.cn

Designer: Mickey Ip

Editor: Simon Ostheimer

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WE ARE SOCIAL

Stay connected with HIS through our social channels:

WeChat | LinkedIn | WeChat Video | Facebook

Instagram | YouTube | Website | Xiao Hong Shu

Student Dragon Wechat Sticker Set

by Anna Z, HIS alumni

Scan the QR code to use the stickers!





Once a Dragon, Always a Dragon!

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Founded in 2002, Hangzhou International School was the first international school in Hangzhou and remains the only non-profit, WASC accredited, IB World School in Zhejiang province.