

Spring 2026

# DragonNews

## *Strength in Community* p.22

Chinese New Year Celebrations

## *Find Your Passion* p.63

HIS seniors prepare for the future

## *Excellence in Motion* p.71

Having the right attitude  
propels us forwards

**Happy  
YEAR OF THE HORSE!**





**We are**

**HIS**

**Community**

Diversity

**Opportunity**

Engagement

**Excellence**

Purpose

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**At HIS,  
Lower School is about  
building community, fostering  
talent, and encouraging  
lifelong learners.**

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



## Welcome from the Superintendent

Dear HIS Community and Friends,

Welcome to this edition of DragonNews, where we celebrate the theme of "Excellence." As we continue our 24th year in Hangzhou, we take this moment to reflect on the achievements, spirit, and resilience that define our HIS community. Excellence at HIS is not simply about results, it is about habits, attitudes, and the collective pursuit of being our very best, together.

Aristotle once wrote, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." At HIS, we embrace this philosophy by cultivating a culture where excellence is woven into daily life. From the classroom to the stage, from the playing field to service in our community, our students are encouraged to strive, reflect, and grow. Excellence is not perfection, it is the courage to try, the resilience to learn from challenges, and the joy of celebrating progress.

Our International Baccalaureate (IB) program exemplifies this commitment, fostering inquiry, creativity, and critical thinking. Whether it is our youngest learners discovering the world around them or our seniors preparing for university, HIS provides opportunities that match each student's potential and aspirations. Excellence is achieved when students, faculty, and families work together to nurture curiosity, perseverance, and a lifelong love of learning.

We celebrate the outstanding academic results and university acceptances our students achieve, and equally value the caring culture that supports them along the way. Excellence at HIS is holistic, it shines in the arts, athletics, leadership, and service. It is visible in the smiles of our students, the dedication of our faculty, and the unwavering support of our families.

As a community school, we believe excellence is not a destination but a journey. Together, we create an environment where every student can thrive, every challenge becomes an opportunity, and every success is shared.

Thank you for being part of this journey. We hope this edition of DragonNews reflects the color, spirit, and strength of our HIS community, united on a journey of excellence.

As always... GoooOOO Dragons!!!



Jeffrey R. Stubbs  
Superintendent



## Important Contacts

**Jeffrey Stubbs**  
Superintendent  
[jeffrystubbs@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:jeffrystubbs@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Jeff Hart**  
Lower School Principal  
[jeffhart@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:jeffhart@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Jessica Johnson**  
Lower School Vice-Principal and PYP Coordinator  
[jessicajohnson@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:jessicajohnson@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Rene Smal**  
Lower School Vice-Principal and ECE Coordinator  
[renesmal@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:renesmal@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Andrea Stubbs**  
Director of Admissions and Community Relations  
[andreasstubbs@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:andreasstubbs@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Filipe Nogueira**  
Director of Athletics and Activities  
[filipenogueira@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:filipenogueira@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Ira Canada**  
Upper School Counselor  
[iracanada@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:iracanada@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Ruth Viader**  
Lower School Counselor  
[ruthviader@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:ruthviader@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Natalio Liares**  
Aquatics Coordinator  
[natalioliares@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:natalioliares@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Vivian Wang**  
Upper School Secretary  
[vivianwang@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:vivianwang@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Lily Fan**  
ECE Secretary  
[lilyfan@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:lilyfan@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Aaron Ayers**  
Deputy Superintendent  
[aaronayers@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:aaronayers@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Cynthia Wissman**  
Upper School Principal  
[cynthiawissman@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:cynthiawissman@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Jason Benton**  
Upper School Vice-Principal and DP Coordinator  
[jasonbenton@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:jasonbenton@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Dave Gates**  
Upper School Vice-Principal and MYP Coordinator  
[davegates@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:davegates@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Danie de Beer**  
Director of Technology  
[daniedebeer@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:daniedebeer@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Simon Ostheimer**  
MarCom Manager  
[simonostheimer@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:simonostheimer@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Emily Blalock**  
Head of Guidance and University Counseling  
[emilyblalock@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:emilyblalock@hisdragons.org.cn)

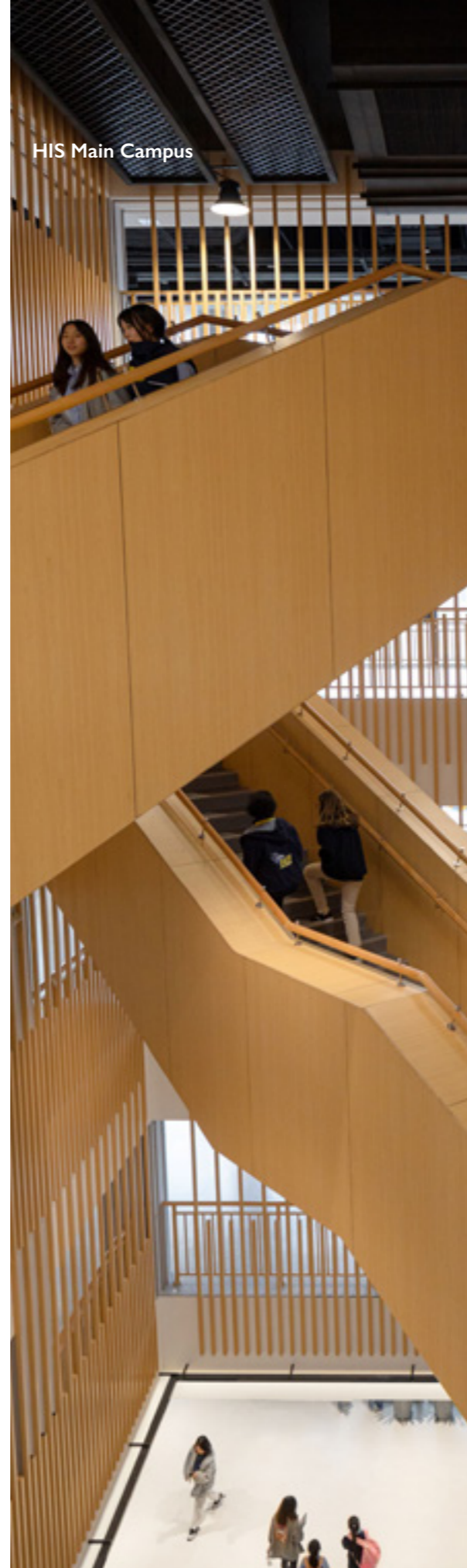
**Mary Powers**  
Lower School Counselor  
[marypowers@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:marypowers@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Cheryl Philp**  
Aquatics Coordinator  
[cherylphilp@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:cherylphilp@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Flora Li**  
Lower School Secretary  
[floral@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:floral@hisdragons.org.cn)

**Tracy Zhu**  
Transportation  
[tracyzhu@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:tracyzhu@hisdragons.org.cn)

HIS Main Campus



**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*





## Middle School Winter Concert

The performing arts department organised a lovely semester wrap-up for Middle School music, with fantastic performances from the Grade 7 Concert Band, Grade 7 String Orchestra, Grade 7 Dance Troupe, Grade 8 Jazz Band, Grade 8 String Orchestra, and the Grade 8 Choir. Well done to all the student musicians, it was truly a night to remember.



## Dragon Chef

In this spirited inaugural kitchen-themed activity, PE students worked in groups to design, create, and present a nutrient-dense smoothie bowl that aligned with specific nutrition goals. Each group applied their understanding of macro and micronutrients to craft and then present a bowl. It proved that education can be fun, entertaining, and delicious!

## Lower School Winter Concert

We headed into the holiday season with a fantastic Lower School music concert, which consisted of multiple amazing performances from the Lower School Choir and Modern Bands as they performed a variety of famous holiday tunes for our entranced community.



# COMMUNITY

# Hot Chocolate & Carols

To really send off our families in style, we were able to celebrate the holiday season with students, faculty, and parents on the last day of the semester with hot chocolate and carols. An amazing way to bring the community together, we even broadcast it live!



# Charity Arts Festival

Over the last two years, the HIS Volunteer Club has consistently dedicated its efforts to providing volunteer services in schools, communities, and cities. This Charity Arts Festival emerged as an opportunity to raise funds to make a difference in schools in Sri Lanka, where they had previously volunteered. Organized by Henry, Amy, and Wendy, attendees enjoyed stellar performances including a piano solo by Henry, a duet by Henry and Alex, and a demonstration of Chinese instruments by Amy. Gong xi on a great job everyone.



# Tiny Desk Concerts

For the very first time, HIS hosted Tiny Desk Concerts, where we heard a variety of intimate musical performances from Upper School students. The idea of Tiny Desk comes from NPR (National Public Radio) in the United States, where famous artists perform in a small office setting. These performances, in a more casual setting, were able to connect our musicians to the community in a way we've never done before at HIS. We can't wait until the next one.



# Harvard Model Congress Middle East

Six Hangzhou International School student leaders were nominated to attend the Harvard Model Congress Middle East. The trip was a fantastic opportunity to engage and develop leadership skills in cultural activities and planning efforts, as well as practice following parliamentary procedures and skills needed to be influential. It was overall an overwhelming success as the students went away with four awards. Along with that, they were also awarded Best Delegation for having the most consistent contributions and representation at HMCME. We are incredibly proud of our students for their hard work.



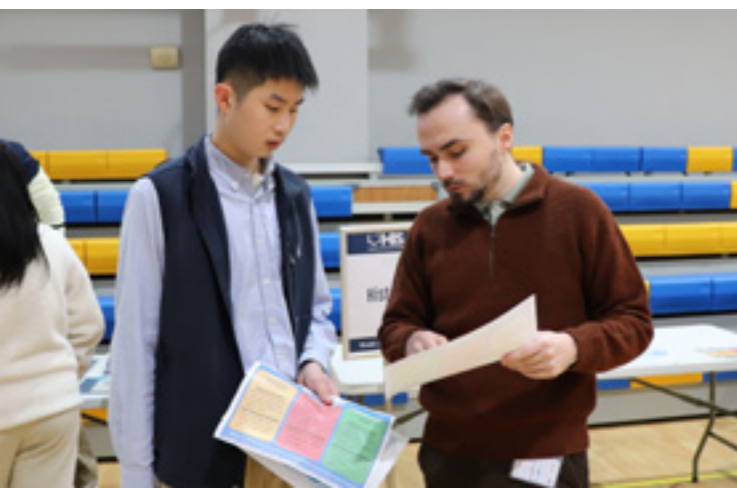
# Chinese New Year Celebrations

We celebrated the Lunar New Year in style, beginning with energetic lion and dragon dances that filled the air with joy. Lower school students then took to the stage with wonderful performances, showcasing their talent and culture. In the afternoon, Upper School students and Mandarin teachers hosted a lively CNY carnival fair. Everyone enjoyed fun games and fascinating cultural heritage activities.



# Grade 10 Subject Fair

We welcomed our Grade 10 students to our annual Subject Fair, where they were able to learn more about what our IB Diploma programme has to offer. Students heard from our experienced IB teachers, as well as current DP students, who answered questions and helped them decide what courses they want to take for the IB Diploma next year.



# Grade 4 Art Exhibition

Over the course of a couple of weeks, our Grade 4 students presented their Annual Cultural Art Exhibition, a fantastic way to connect the many different cultures that exist at HIS. To open the exhibit, parents were invited to see their child's work and hear from them firsthand the thought that had been put into their work. A great way to see art and culture celebrated.



# DRAGON PALOOZA

IGNITE THE SPIRIT  
PLAY LIKE A DRAGON



Our first annual DragonPalooza was a joyful morning in our Early Childhood Education building, where children and parents came together to play, move, and learn side by side. Through fun, inclusive activities, the event celebrated working together, supporting one another, and building strong connections as a school community. GoooOOO Dragons!!!



# Winter Fair

The 2025 edition of the annual Winter Fair was a festive day with shopping from community vendors, international food, festive treats, activities for all, music performances, and the special visit of Santa Claus! Everyone enjoyed making new winter memories, and a huge thank you to our amazing student, teacher, and parent performers. It was a very memorable day.



# Highland Games

The Lower School PSPE department organised our very first Cultural Sports Day, choosing to celebrate the Highland Games of Scotland. The theme was revealed to students at a special assembly featuring a guest bagpiper from Shanghai. Involving every student from Kindergarten through Grade 5, over the weeklong event students and parents enjoyed classic Scottish games such as the caber carry, highland flip, stone putt and haggis toss.



# PAFA

Parent and Friends Association



For more information on parent events, contact: [pafaevents@hisdragons.org.cn](mailto:pafaevents@hisdragons.org.cn)

 **HIS**  
Hangzhou International School

# THE YELLOW BOAT

BY DAVID SAAR

Tuesday 14 April  
Wednesday 15 April  
at 6:00pm

**THE BOX**  
Hangzhou International School

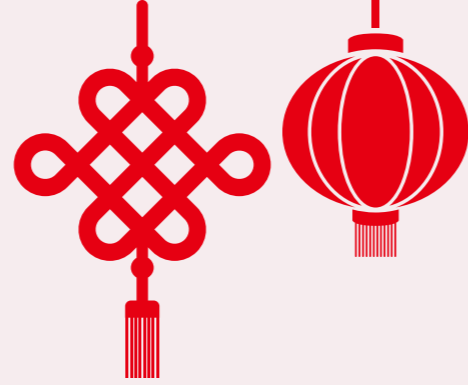
PRODUCED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY OF WOODSTOCK, ILLINOIS

# Strength

By Vivian Zhang  
Schoolwide Mandarin Coordinator

**Our HIS family came together to celebrate Chinese New Year and the Year of the Horse**

# in Community



***“At HIS, we believe that the best education goes beyond the textbook – it’s about experiencing the world around us”***



Celebrating Chinese New Year (CNY) is one of our favorite ways to honor the rich culture of our host country. This vibrant celebration not only enriches our students’ understanding of Chinese traditions but also fosters a sense of community and appreciation for cultural diversity among all our students.

On February 13, 2026, our school came alive with the festive sounds of CNY, uniting students across all grade levels in an annual celebration of culture and tradition.

The day kicked off with mesmerizing Dragon and Lion Dance performances on the field, setting a joyful tone for the event.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) students immersed themselves in cultural classroom activities, while the Lower School (LS) hosted a dynamic gala featuring skits, creative poem-singing, dances, group cross-talk, and Chinese musical drama.

Each grade presented unique performances tied to their Units of Inquiry based on PYP Transdisciplinary Themes, highlighting various aspects of Chinese culture and history.



Mandarin classes also took center stage, with students showcasing their learning through creative expressions such as dance, singing, and skits, all connected to their curriculum.

The collective enthusiasm and creativity on display were truly inspiring, leaving parents and teachers in awe of the students' dedication and talent.

The celebration continued with a lively Carnival Fair in the afternoon, where Lower School and Upper School students explored traditional Chinese activities such as paper-cutting, opera face painting, bamboo dancing, chess, and Tai Chi.

Adding a special touch, two Intangible Cultural Heritage specialists demonstrated tea art and dough figure crafts, offering an authentic glimpse into Chinese traditions and culture.

This joyful event not only deepened students' appreciation for the host country's culture but also strengthened our school community through shared experiences and unforgettable memories. It was a day filled with learning, creativity, and celebration!



中国新年庙会



This amazing HIS community event beautifully ties our host country's culture to our community members, fostering connections and a festive atmosphere among everyone.

It aligns perfectly with our school mission statement about excellence and providing opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity in a caring and unique community, where every culture is embraced, creating an environment where students can thrive both academically and socially.

This commitment to inclusivity strengthens our collective spirit and reinforces the values we hold dear at HIS.

As we celebrate the Year of the Horse, we wish our entire HIS family happiness, health, and success in the coming year. 🐎





# International Women's Day



## Celebrating International Women's Day:

# #GiveToGain

by Lisa Kerry

Design & Communication Specialist

Each year on March 8, communities around the world celebrate *International Women's Day (IWD)*—a global day to recognize the achievements of women and to continue working toward gender equality. The observance began more than a century ago when women organized demonstrations in Europe and North America calling for fair wages, safer working conditions, and the right to vote. Over time, the day has grown into a worldwide celebration of leadership, creativity, resilience, and progress.

*International Women's Day* is marked in schools, workplaces, and communities across the globe. Events often include educational programs, exhibitions, community gatherings, and opportunities to recognize women whose work has shaped society in meaningful ways. The day encourages reflection not only on achievements but also on the importance of creating opportunities for future generations.

The global campaign surrounding *International Women's Day* is coordinated through the *International Women's Day* platform, which promotes annual themes designed to inspire action. The theme for 2026 is “#GiveToGain.” The message emphasizes that meaningful progress happens when people actively support one another. Giving recognition, mentorship, opportunity, visibility, and resources to women and girls helps create stronger and more inclusive communities.

For schools and educational communities, *International Women's Day* provides a valuable opportunity for students to reflect on the women who inspire them—teachers, family members, scientists, artists, athletes, and leaders. By sharing stories and celebrating achievements, communities help students see how women's contributions shape the world around them.

*“International Women's Day reminds us that progress grows when communities recognize achievement and create opportunities for the next generation.”*

In China, *International Women's Day* is known as 三八妇女节 (Sān Bā Fù Nǚ Jié) and has been observed for decades. National recognition programs organized by the *All-China Women's Federation* highlight women who have made important contributions in fields such as science, education, healthcare, technology, public service, and the arts.

While celebrations may take many forms, the spirit of the day remains the same: recognizing progress, encouraging opportunity, and supporting the next generation of women and girls. The theme #GiveToGain reminds us that when individuals and communities actively support one another, everyone benefits.

During our school's *International Women's Day* community event, students, staff, parents, and guests were invited to participate in a photo booth celebrating women who inspire them. Participants shared reflections by answering questions about the women who have influenced their lives and how they might “give to gain” in their own communities. The portraits and responses capture a wide range of voices and perspectives, highlighting the many ways women shape our families, schools, and communities.

# How can you #GiveToGain?



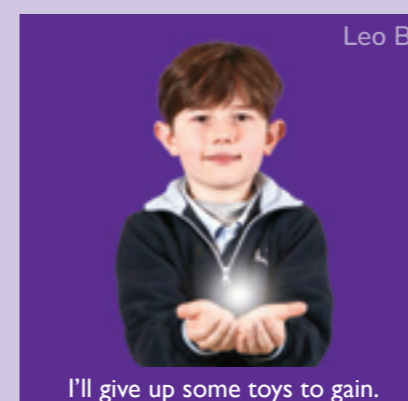
Give Time Give Respect



Giving Respect, Safety, Opportunity & Time



Advocate for Equal Pay & Wages



I'll give up some toys to gain.



Give Credit, Time, Access & Opportunity



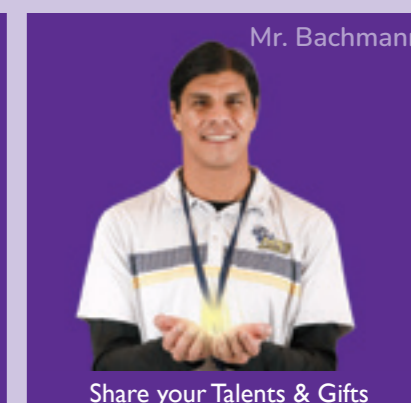
Give Respect Give Time, Space, & Credit



Give Access, Give Second Chances and Give Equitable Opportunities



Give my Best Effort to Gain Freedom



Share your Talents & Gifts

The theme reminds us that **PROGRESS HAPPENS WHEN WE TAKE ACTION.**

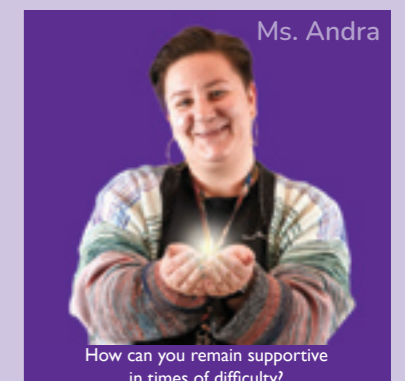
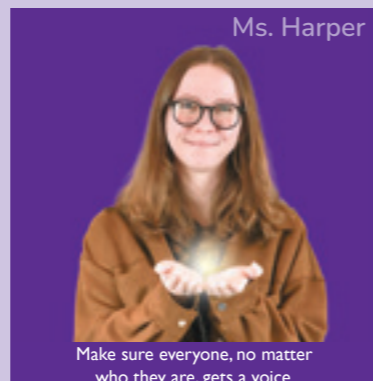
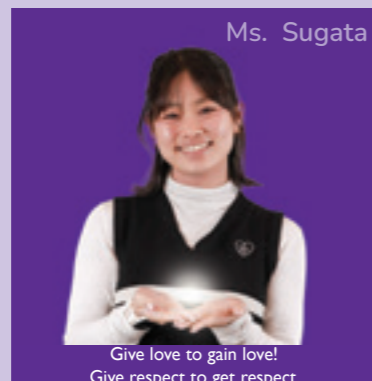
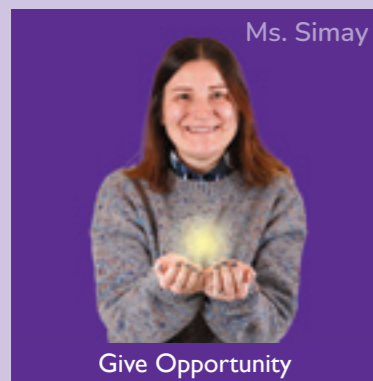
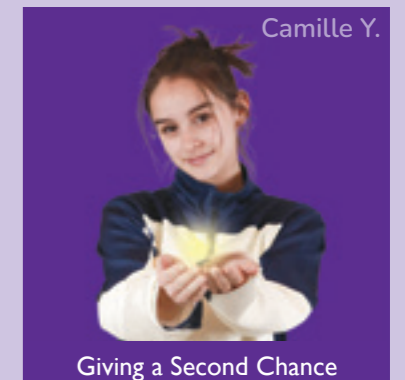
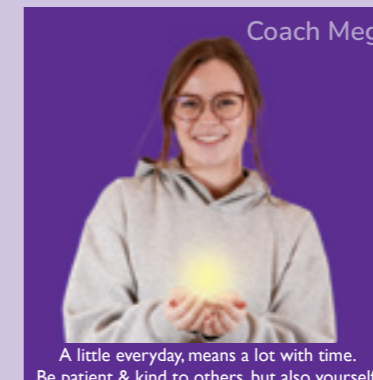
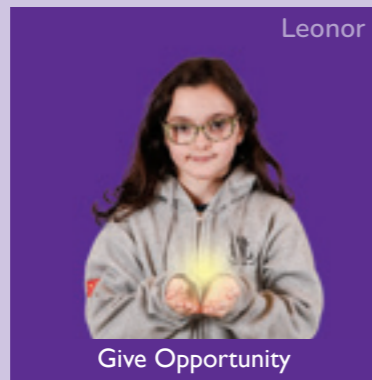
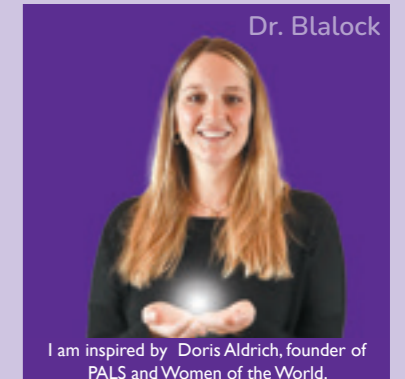
At school, at home, and in the community, we can: 在学校、家庭和社区中，我们可以

## GIVE TO GAIN — Throughout the Year “付出以收获”——贯穿全年

- Give respect 给予尊重 • Give visibility 给予关注 • Give mentoring 给予指导
- Give opportunity 给予机会 • Give safety 给予安全 • Give equal pay 给予同酬
- Give credit 给予认可 • Give growth 给予成长 • Give time 付出时间
- Give a voice 给予发声机会 • Give access 给予资源与机会

# 2026 Theme:

# #GiveToGain



When we give:

**SUPPORT • RECOGNITION • OPPORTUNITY • RESPECT**

We help others succeed — and our whole community grows stronger.

**PHOTO BOOTH REFLECTIONS** At our International Women's Day community event, students, staff, parents, and guests visited a photo booth to share reflections about women who inspire them. Participants answered one or more questions:

1. Who is a woman in your life who has inspired you?
2. If you could ask one of your female heroes any question, what would it be?
3. How can you give to gain?



# International Women's Day 2026 Honorees

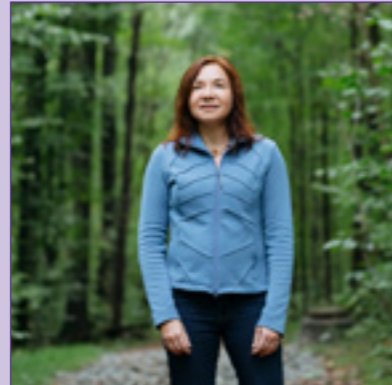
Each year around March 8, organizations across the world recognize women whose work advances science, education, culture, health, and community life.

In China, the All-China Women's Federation names outstanding individuals as National March 8 Red Banner Pacesetters, while international institutions also honor women whose achievements inspire future generations.

# #GiveToGain



**Joy Harden Bradford**  
Psychologist Dr. Joy Harden Bradford founded *Therapy for Black Girls*, promoting mental health awareness and access to therapy. Her work encourages open conversations about wellbeing. In 2026, the *American Psychological Association* recognized her public engagement in psychology.



**Katharine Hayhoe**  
Climate scientist and educator Dr. Katharine Hayhoe works to communicate climate science and sustainability education to broad audiences. In 2025, the *United Nations Environment Programme* recognized her with the *Champions of the Earth Award* for leadership in environmental education and climate communication.



**Jennifer Doudna**  
Biochemist Jennifer Doudna helped develop CRISPR gene-editing technology, transforming biological research and medicine. Her work continues shaping global biotechnology. In 2026, the *L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Programme* recognized her scientific leadership and innovation.



**Katalin Karikó**  
Biochemist Katalin Karikó helped pioneer messenger RNA technology that enabled modern vaccine development and transformed biomedical research. In 2026, the *Breakthrough Prize Foundation* honored her scientific contributions with the *Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences*.



**Fei-Fei Li**  
Computer scientist Fei-Fei Li has advanced artificial intelligence research and education worldwide. A *Stanford University* professor, she promotes human-centered AI innovation. In 2026, *IEEE* and the global AI research community recognized her leadership in artificial intelligence.



**Julie Mehretu**  
Contemporary artist Julie Mehretu creates large-scale abstract paintings exploring history, migration, and global culture. Her work appears in major museums worldwide. In 2026, her influence on contemporary art was recognized when *TIME* named her among its *Women of the Year*.



**Allyson Felix**  
Olympic champion Allyson Felix is one of the most decorated athletes in track and field history. Beyond competition, she advocates for equality in sports and youth opportunities. In 2026, the *Laureus World Sports Academy* honored her through *Sport for Good* recognition.



**Lucy Foulkes**  
Psychologist Dr. Lucy Foulkes researches youth mental health and emotional development. Her work examines how social environments influence wellbeing among young people. In 2026, the *Royal Society of Public Health* recognized her contributions to mental health research.



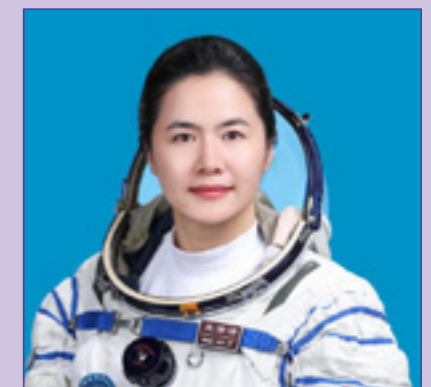
**Ayana Elizabeth Johnson**  
Marine biologist Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson works at the intersection of climate science and ocean conservation. Her research promotes sustainable environmental solutions. In 2026, the *United Nations Environment Programme* recognized her leadership in environmental sustainability.



**Ruan Xiangyan (阮祥燕)**  
Dr. Ruan Xiangyan is a specialist in reproductive medicine and gynecological endocrinology whose research advances treatment for women's health and fertility. In 2026, the *All-China Women's Federation* honored her as a *National March 8 Red Banner Pacesetter*.



**Yang Wenlu (杨文璐)**  
Yang Wenlu is an Olympic medalist in women's boxing whose achievements raised the international profile of the sport in China. In 2026, the *All-China Women's Federation* recognized her accomplishments as a *National March 8 Red Banner Pacesetter*.



**Zhang Rong (张荣)**  
Engineer Zhang Rong contributed to satellite and aerospace technology development in China. Her leadership in advanced engineering projects highlights women's growing role in scientific innovation. In 2026, the *All-China Women's Federation* named her a *National March 8 Red Banner Pacesetter*.



# ALUMNI STORIES

Class of 2020

## Alessandro Livio

by Harper Girdner

PR & Communications Specialist

***“I took with me the discipline and time management that came from the IB, as well as the importance of teamwork and building strong relationships. These values still guide how I work, how I make decisions, and how I connect with people from different cultures”***

Alum Alessandro Livio attended Hangzhou International School (HIS) from 2007 until graduation in 2020. During his 13 years at HIS, Alessandro had many fun experiences, remembering China Trips fondly, as well as the sports teams and business club. HIS taught Alessandro the importance of teamwork and building strong relationships.

**When did you attend HIS and for how long were you here?**

I joined HIS in kindergarten in 2007 and called it my home for the next 13 years, until I graduated in 2020. Before that, I was attending a Chinese school, as I had already been living in China since 2002.

**Can you share more about your experiences and journey at HIS?**

HIS was the first and only international school I ever attended, and over time, it truly became a second home.

The hardest part was the beginning: I came from a Chinese public school, spoke only Mandarin, and suddenly had to adapt to a completely new environment and language.

Once I got through that phase, though, HIS became the place I looked forward to going to every day – to see my friends, my teachers, and to find out what new things the day would bring.

Being at HIS helped me become more open-minded and more extroverted, and it made me much less nervous about sharing my ideas – all things that later became incredibly important at university and now in my working life.



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

Over 13 years, there are more memories than I can count. Starting from Grade 6, the annual China Trips were always a highlight – a week full of adventures, discoveries, and moments that turned into inside jokes and stories we still talk about.

In the later years, many weekends meant going bowling, which always became way more competitive than it needed to be, followed by the mandatory stop for Japanese food.

I also have very fond memories of Mr Strombeck’s TOK (Theory of Knowledge) and History classes and the now legendary “Pigeon Gang.” What I miss most is that every day feeling of being part of a tight-knit community.

**What kind of CCAs did you join at HIS, and how did these help you at university?**

During my time at HIS, I played badminton, football, and ultimate frisbee.

Sports taught me how to work in a team and connect quickly with people I might not have interacted with otherwise – skills that are very useful later in life.

Around Grade 10, I also helped found the HIS Business Club. We attended different events and competed with other schools in business decision-making and business plan competitions.

That experience turned out to be especially valuable when I went to business school, because it gave me a first taste of real business thinking and made my life a bit easier at university.



## Creating Connections

How HIS shaped alumni  
Alessandro Livio’s proactive  
approach to study, work and life



**After graduating, what university did you attend? Did you feel well prepared?**

Following graduation in 2020, I moved to Zurich and studied International Business Management at the University of Zurich. Later, I completed a master's in Finance at IE Business School in Madrid.

The IB prepared me well, especially in terms of time management and handling fast turnarounds for assignments. During my bachelor's, I often felt less stressed than many of my classmates, and even during my master's I sometimes thought that the IB had been more intense.

The Extended Essay was also great preparation for my thesis and thesis defense – I already had a sense of the process, so I felt more confident going into it.

**What are you currently up to?**

I'm currently working at Deloitte as an M&A and private equity associate. At the same time, I'm part of the strategy committee for Euro-China business relations, helping Chinese businesses come to Europe and European businesses enter China.

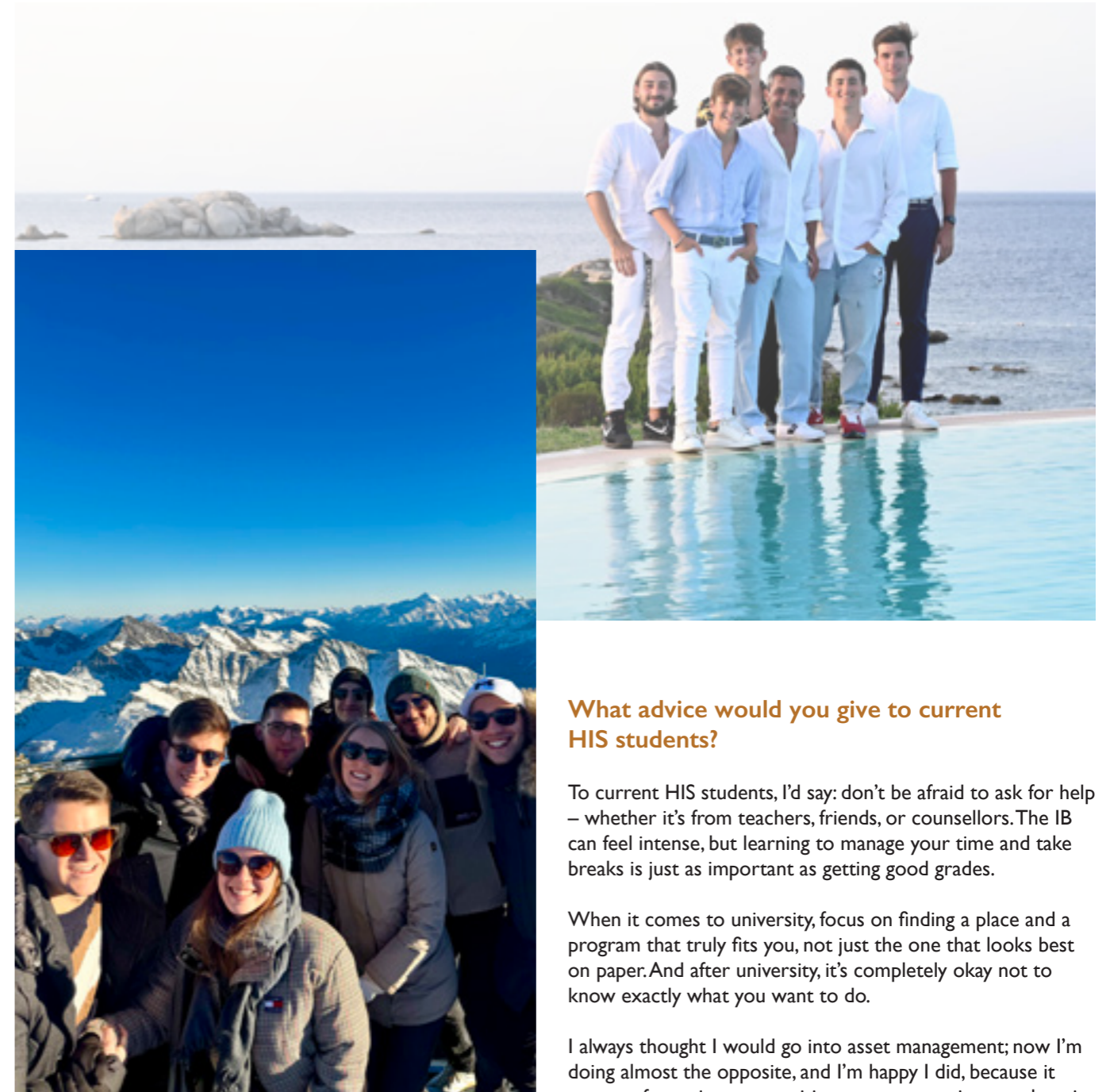
That means I spend a lot of time at events around China, discussing economic and financial topics with business leaders and looking at how Europe and China can continue to work together in the future.



**What are your plans for the future?**

In the future, I want to keep focusing on the connection between Europe and Asia – not only in terms of business, but also in relation to bigger themes like AI and other important global developments.

In the short term, I plan to continue in the M&A sector and potentially move more into wealth management later on. Long term, the big themes for me are learning, understanding the changing world, and creating value that can drive future growth.



**What advice would you give to current HIS students?**

To current HIS students, I'd say: don't be afraid to ask for help – whether it's from teachers, friends, or counsellors. The IB can feel intense, but learning to manage your time and take breaks is just as important as getting good grades.

When it comes to university, focus on finding a place and a program that truly fits you, not just the one that looks best on paper. And after university, it's completely okay not to know exactly what you want to do.

I always thought I would go into asset management; now I'm doing almost the opposite, and I'm happy I did, because it gave me fantastic opportunities to meet amazing people, gain new perspectives, and slowly figure out what I really want.


**Looking back on your time at HIS, what values or lessons do you still carry with you today?**

HIS taught me to be open-minded and curious, to be comfortable in international environments, and to speak up and share my ideas.

I also took with me the discipline and time management that came from the IB, as well as the importance of teamwork and building strong relationships. These values still guide how I work, how I make decisions, and how I connect with people from different cultures.

**Have you kept in touch with any of your HIS classmates?**

Yes, I've stayed in touch with a few classmates, even if unfortunately, not with everyone. We still talk regularly, and over the years we've managed to meet up in different parts of the world.

It's always special to reconnect with people who shared those formative years at HIS. 



Class of 2020

## Haru Sukegawa

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 Haru Sukegawa joined HIS in 2016 for 9th grade, remaining until she graduated with the Class of 2020. While at HIS, Haru participated greatly in the arts, focusing on creativity and improving her skills. Her time here also taught her how to be more open as a person, and how meaningful the connections you forge with teachers and classmates can be.

# ALUMNI STORIES

## Positive Connections

**For visual artist Haru Sukegawa, there is nothing more powerful than strong relationships**

**Tell us about your experiences and journey at HIS**

My journey at HIS was a mix of being a relaxed yet shy teenager. I would describe myself as a quiet and calm student who simply enjoyed art. By ‘quiet,’ I mean that I appreciated peaceful moments. I was not heavily involved in sports or known as one of the top academic students, so I did not particularly stand out. However, my classmates were kind and knew me as ‘that artsy girl,’ which made me feel accepted in my own way.

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

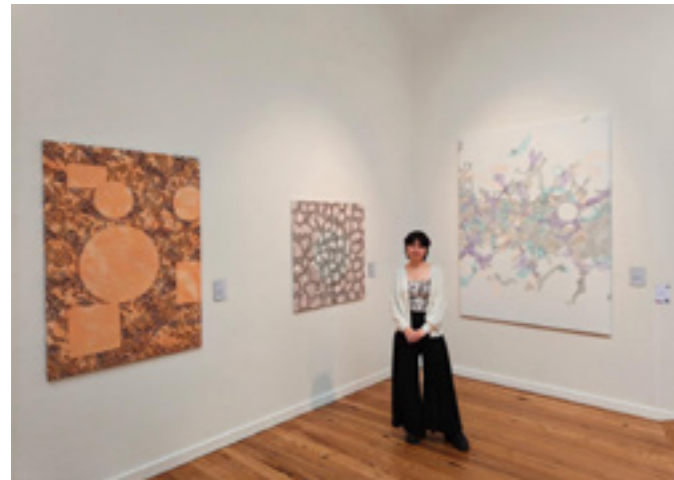
I have two favorite memories. One was spending time in the art room. Painting during study hours or after school gave me a strong sense of calmness and stress relief. At the time, the art teacher did not mind me staying in the classroom, so I was able to use the tools and materials freely to draw and create.

Another special memory was when I started making a sketch journal of my classmates. It began as a way to preserve memories and cherish our time together. Soon, my classmates knew I was drawing them, and sometimes they would ask me to show them my sketches or draw them. That became a very meaningful and heartwarming memory for me.

**What kind of CCAs (Co-curricular Activities) did you join at HIS?**

One experience that helped me in university was contributing to designing event fliers for HIS. On several occasions, teachers asked me to design school posters or promotional materials. These experiences taught me how to approach clients and respond to requests professionally. As an artist, communication and collaboration skills usually develop over time, but having these early experiences at HIS gave me a stronger foundation.





**After graduating, what university and program did you attend?**

After graduating from HIS, I pursued my artistic career in the Fine Art department at Minerva Art Academy, part of Hanze University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. The program had many unexpected challenges, and I struggled during my first year. However, over time, the experience helped me grow into a more independent thinker. Today, I am moderately active as a professional visual artist based in the Netherlands.

**Sounds intriguing, what are you currently up to?**

Currently, I am working in art curation at an experimental art gallery in The Hague. As a curator, I assist emerging artists with their solo or duo exhibitions and communicate closely with them to organize events that align with their vision and expectations.



**What are your plans for the future?**

After graduating from the Fine Art department, I gained experience as a visual artist by actively showcasing my work and hosting exhibitions. Recently, however, I discovered how much I enjoy the curatorial and museum environment. Assisting artists and understanding different perspectives in the art world is something I truly value.

Therefore, I plan to pursue a Master's degree in Art Curation and Cultural Studies next year.

Until then, I will continue working in the industry to gain more experience. In the future, I would love to work in a larger-scale museum.



**What advice would you give to current HIS students?**

The biggest advice I can give is, please value your connections and appreciate what you have.

In the art industry, connections are extremely important. I am fortunate to have a strong network of people I can reach out to for projects or events. At the same time, I deeply value my old classmates, who helped me build confidence. These lessons and relationships are priceless.

I think as we get older it can be increasingly difficult to reconnect with your former community, though I recommend you reach out once in a while, you will realize the value in future.

**Looking back on your time at HIS, what values or lessons do you still carry with you today?**

At HIS, I learned the importance of being open-minded and building confidence. As I mentioned, I was a quiet student, and at times consciously avoided classmates because I felt anxious and assumed that people would not understand me.


However, during my last two years at HIS, I began thinking more positively and reconnected with my classmates by drawing them. Through this action, I realized I needed to be more open and less afraid of approaching others.

I learned that the people around me were not as intimidating as I had imagined. In the past, I was afraid to show myself. Now, working in the industry, I confidently express my ideas and build connections without fear.

**Have you kept in touch with any of your old classmates?**

Yes, I keep in touch with many of them. Although we rarely meet, some of them have visited the Netherlands, and I always enjoy seeing them.

HIS has now grown into a well-known and larger international school. When I attended, it was smaller – my graduating class was less than 20 students, but we were strongly connected and understanding of one another.

I feel truly blessed to have graduated as part of the HIS Class of 2020. 



# LOWER SCHOOL

## Igniting Curiosity

by Kiomi Yeoman  
Kindergarten Teacher

Why questions pave the path to excellence



Every year HIS asks us, as teachers, to set goals for ourselves. This year my professional goal was to try to increase student engagement by embedding daily hands-on, interactive activities into my lesson planning.

My aim? To see at least 80% of my students actively participating in each class. After all, children are naturally curious, and I wanted to tap into that amazing curiosity to make every minute of learning with me count!

And so, my journey began. I started by

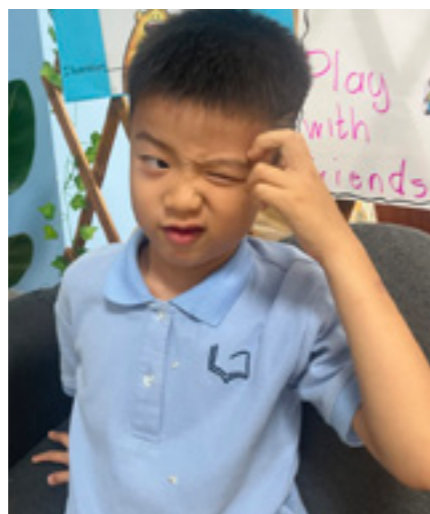
recording my lessons, hoping to catch those magical moments of interaction between myself and the students, and among themselves. I was on the lookout for activities that really got most of my students involved and excited.

What I discovered was truly amazing. Asking thoughtful questions worked wonders.

When we ask questions that inspire our little ones to think, wonder, and take brave intellectual leaps, they stay captivated and engaged. In our Kinder-

garten world, active games and spontaneous questions help build a strong foundation for inquiry.


It's heartwarming to see our young learners draw from their knowledge and inspire their classmates to do the same. The real magic also happens when, as teachers, we become guides on this exploration journey, while creating a sense of safety and respect within all our interactions with our students.



*“When we ask questions that inspire our little ones to think, wonder, and take brave intellectual leaps, they stay captivated and engaged”*

Inquiry thrives when teachers shift from giving answers to guiding exploration: “What do you notice? What patterns are emerging? What evidence supports your claim? What might be another perspective? How could we test this idea?”

How, you might ask, could you, as parents, support this process? Parents can extend learning at home with prompts like: “What surprised you at school today? What question are you still thinking about? Can you teach me one concept in your own words? Where do you see this in real life? What would you try next time?” (On a side note - This can and should be done in the child’s mother tongue, which will consolidate the concepts and make learning real-world relevant.)

Questions pave the path to excellence—one thoughtful step at a time. 

# Screens, Smiles, and Meltdowns

by Merryn Atkins  
Occupational Therapist

**When it comes to screen time, there’s a perfect balance between fun and frustration**



Screens are not going anywhere. In fact, they are everywhere – in our pockets, on our walls, in our cars, and sometimes even on our wrists. For today’s children, screens are not a special treat, they are part of everyday life.

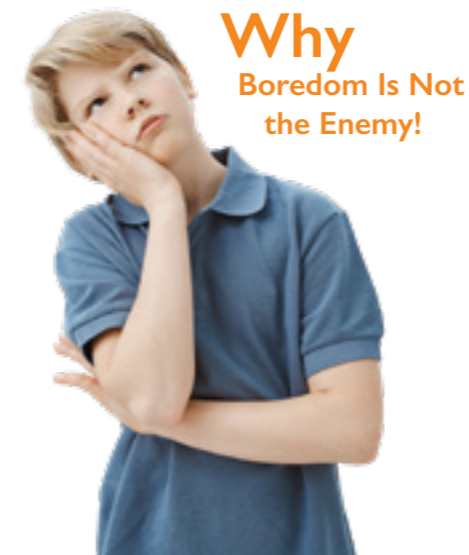
It’s easy to see why kids love them. They’re interactive, fast-moving, colorful, and full of rewards. Many apps are cleverly designed to keep attention for long periods of time. Screens aren’t bad, but they are powerful – and powerful things need thoughtful limits.

## Why Is It So Hard to Turn Them Off?

One of the most common concerns parents share is how quickly screen time can turn into tears or anger. A child who seemed calm and happy suddenly collapses into frustration the moment the device is removed.

This reaction is not simply defiance. It’s brain chemistry.



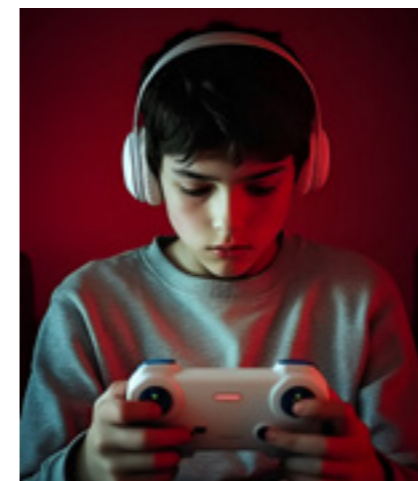


## Why Boredom Is Not the Enemy!

It can be uncomfortable to hear, “I’m bored!” Our instinct is often to fix it immediately. But boredom is where creativity begins.

When external entertainment stops, the brain has to generate its own ideas. Children build, draw, invent games, negotiate rules, and practice tolerating small amounts of discomfort. These are essential skills for attention, resilience, and emotional regulation.

Interestingly, many children who struggle to focus at school can focus on video games for long periods. The difference is that games provide constant stimulation. School requires children to generate their own attention. That skill develops over time and boredom helps build it.



## Making Screen Time Smoother

Transitions improve when expectations are predictable. Giving advance notice before turning off a device allows the brain time to prepare. Using a timer can help shift the boundary from a parent’s decision to a neutral signal.

Planning what comes next, whether that’s building, drawing, baking, or heading outside – makes the shift easier than simply removing the screen.

Daily outdoor movement remains one of the most powerful regulators of children’s nervous systems. Climbing, running, digging, and balancing support both physical strength and emotional regulation. Consistency matters more than perfection.

## Encouraging Healthy Habits

It’s not about banning screens altogether. It’s about finding a healthy balance where screens sit alongside other meaningful activities. [D](#)

Digital games and videos activate the brain’s reward system, releasing dopamine – a chemical linked to motivation and pleasure. The frequent sounds, points, animations, and instant feedback keep that system highly engaged.

When screen time ends abruptly, dopamine levels drop, and the brain experiences a kind of ‘let-down.’ For some children, that drop feels intense, and they struggle to regulate the transition.

Understanding this helps us respond with calm boundaries rather than panic or guilt.

When children spend long periods sitting with screens, they miss out on some of these foundational experiences. Over time, this can show up as fatigue during school tasks, reduced patience for slower activities, or difficulty transitioning away from highly stimulating environments.

Strong bodies support focused minds.



## What Do the Guidelines Suggest?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends avoiding screen time (except video chat) for children under 18–24 months and limiting preschool-aged children to around one hour per day of high-quality programming.

For older children and teenagers, the AAP no longer sets strict hourly limits, but instead encourages families to

ensure screen use does not interfere with sleep, physical activity, learning, or relationships.

The more important question is balance. Is your child still moving every day? Playing creatively? Talking and laughing with others? Spending time outdoors? Managing boredom occasionally?

If those experiences are still part of their world, you are likely on the right track.



## What Screens Don’t Build

While children may become very efficient at swiping and tapping, these movements don’t replace the important physical experiences children need for development.

Strong hands for buttons, zips, and handwriting are built through manipulating real objects. Core strength – the muscles that allow children to sit upright and focus in class – develops through climbing, balancing, and active play. Social skills grow through eye contact, turn-taking, and navigating real-life disagreements.

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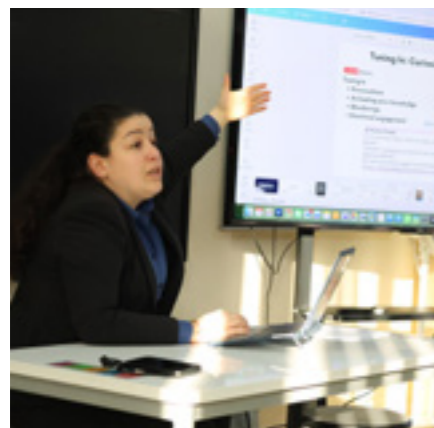
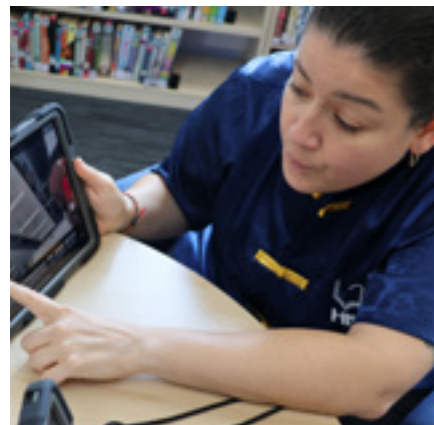
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by Sheena Eve Rubet  
Design and Technology Educator

# Super Nova

**New in-house technology initiative provides one-stop shop for investing in teacher learning**



At Hangzhou International School (HIS), we're always looking for meaningful ways to support our educators in growing professionally – especially when it comes to thoughtfully integrating technology into our IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) teaching and learning.

That's where Nova comes in: our new internal SharePoint-based hub designed specifically as a central resource and playground for teachers to explore, learn, and share around technology integration.

Nova serves as a one-stop space where educators can easily find information on school tech initiatives, internal and external professional development opportunities, and most excitingly, showcase the innovative work happening in classrooms.

It's not just a repository; it's a living platform meant to reduce the daily cognitive load on teachers by making resources accessible and inspiring, much like we aim to do for our students in their learning environments.

## Investing in teacher learning

This year, Nova's real power has shone through our dedicated professional development sessions. We've carved out time during several Wednesday staff meetings for hands-on, practical learning.

A major focus of the Nova professional development series this year has been artificial intelligence (AI) in education.

Sessions covered foundational understanding of what AI is, an overview of various AI tools tailored for education and their benefits, crafting effective prompts as educators, and aligning AI use with IB requirements for transdisciplinary learning.

At another session, teachers dove into the PICRAT model, a framework that helps educators reflect on technology use, by asking two key questions: What is the student's relationship to the technology (Passive, Interactive, or Creative)? And how does the technology influence teaching practice (Replacement, Amplification, or Transformation)?

This tool encourages moving beyond simply substituting old methods with digital ones toward creating more interactive, creative experiences for students that truly amplify or transform learning, aligning beautifully with the PYP's emphasis on inquiry, conceptual understanding, and developing



Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills like critical thinking and research.

In short, 15-minute "speed sessions," we've shared quick, actionable tips and tricks for our learning management system, Toddle; practical ways to streamline planning, assessment, reporting, and student collaboration without overwhelming busy schedules. We've also explored robotics together, giving everyone a chance to tinker and see its potential in transdisciplinary units.

We emphasized extending thinking and designing richer learning experiences, blending analog and digital tools to support deeper inquiry and student agency.

These opportunities follow a thoughtful progression: starting with the "why" (grounded in theory and the principles of effective teaching and learning), moving into practical application, and

encouraging iteration and refinement.


This mirrors the design thinking processes encouraged in the PYP and the reflective, iterative nature of developing a programme of inquiry.

## Embracing a growth mindset

Teaching is demanding work. It calls for constant mental, emotional, and physical energy, not just to manage daily tasks, but to make a genuine impact on students' growth. We cannot ask our learners to embrace challenge, take risks, reflect, and evolve if we're not willing to do the same.

Initiatives like Nova honor that reality by creating supportive, low-pressure spaces for professional growth. When we lower barriers to exploration and make learning experiences engaging and insightful for teachers (just as we strive to do for students), everyone benefits.

Nova is still evolving, fueled by teacher input and shared successes. It's a reminder that growth mindset isn't just for classrooms, it's for us as educators too.

By investing in our own learning around technology integration, we're better equipped to design dynamic, inclusive environments that empower every student in our learning community. 



# Being Present, Not Perfect

How excellence is about being a little better today than yesterday, as a learner, a thinker, and a member of a community

*“Excellence lives in the process rather than the product, in the journey rather than the destination”*



by Jeff Hart  
Lower School Principal

Recently, a student in Grade 2 spent nearly twenty minutes working on a design problem. She tried one approach, then another, then a third. None of them worked. When I checked in with her, she looked up and said, “I haven’t figured it out yet, but I think I’m getting closer.”

That moment was important because it captured something we value deeply in our Primary Years Programme (PYP) community: excellence as presence, not perfection.



A student who perseveres through a challenging task, reflects on what didn’t work, and applies new thinking is demonstrating excellence, even if the final result isn’t perfect. A child who takes a risk by sharing an idea, trying something unfamiliar, or asking for help is practicing excellence in its most authentic form. The question shifts from “Is this right?” to “What did I learn, and how did I grow?”

One of the most important messages we share with our children is that mistakes are not something to fear or avoid. Failure, when supported and reflected upon, is an essential part of deep learning. Not knowing yet is something to embrace rather than hide.

In schools, it is all too common for people to associate excellence with achievement and high standards: being one of the best, reaching the top, or working toward perfection. I tend to see excellence a little differently. For me, excellence is less about seeking perfection and more about our efforts to be present.

Excellence lives in the process rather than the product, in the journey rather than the destination.

When we talk about excellence in schools (or what we choose to highlight in our celebrations), it is easy to fall back on images of flawless work, high scores, and polished performances. Too often, excellence is confused with perfection or some idea that doing something well means doing it without mistakes or being better than others.



In our PYP community at HIS, we tend to hold a different belief. We value excellence, but we understand it in a more human and meaningful way. It’s about showing up mentally, emotionally, and ethically, even when learning feels difficult, when progress is slow, or when the path forward is unclear.

## Excellence in Practice

In our PYP classrooms, learning is rarely linear. Students explore ideas, test strategies, encounter obstacles, rethink their assumptions, and try again. This process gets messy and can feel uncomfortable, but that tension is often what sparks the most meaningful learning.

We see excellence when students keep working toward a goal even when progress feels slow, when they adjust strategies after setbacks rather than giving up, when they choose resilience over avoidance, and when they see challenges as opportunities to grow. These qualities prepare students not only for academic success but also for life beyond school.



*“A child who takes a risk by sharing an idea, trying something unfamiliar, or asking for help is practicing excellence in its most authentic form”*

### A Community Commitment

Unlike perfection, excellence has no endpoint. There is no moment when we arrive and stop learning. Excellence is about being a little better today than yesterday, as a learner, a thinker, and a member of a community. It is sustained through reflection, effort, and intentional practice over time.

This understanding of excellence doesn't apply only to students. In a PYP community, children learn as much from what adults model as from what they are taught. Teachers, staff, and parents all play an important role in shaping how children understand success, effort, and resilience.

When we, as adults, engage fully even on difficult days, reflect openly on what didn't work and why, adapt and grow rather than defend perfection, and demonstrate a commitment to learning and improvement, we send a powerful message: excellence is possible for everyone and grounded in effort.

Research shows that chasing perfection can come at a high psychological cost.

Perfectionism is often linked to anxiety, fear of failure, avoidance of risk, and a reluctance to try new things

unless success is guaranteed. When children believe they must be perfect to be valued, learning becomes unsafe. By contrast, a culture of excellence grounded in presence, effort, and reflection builds confidence, resilience, and intrinsic motivation.



### Moving Forward

Excellence, as we define it in our PYP community, is not an individual pursuit. It is a shared commitment that lives in classrooms where effort is celebrated, in assemblies that honor resilience and perseverance, in adults who model growth and humility, and in students who keep trying and keep learning.

As a community, we can all support this vision. At home, we might ask “What challenged you today?” instead of “Did you get it right?” We might share our own moments of struggle and growth. We might celebrate the effort, not just the outcome. D

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*“Excellence is not about being the best. It is about being present, committed, and willing to grow. That kind of excellence has no finish line. It simply keeps moving forward”*

# Mixing, Baking, Rising, Growing

More than baking  
— learn to collaborate,  
problem-solve, and grow

by Adeline Xie  
Mathematics Teacher



Co-curricular activities (CCA) at Hangzhou International School offer students a range of opportunities to explore their interests outside the classroom, collaborate with peers across various grade levels, and experiment with new challenges.

During CCA1 and CCA2 this school year, I had the

pleasure of leading the Upper School Baking Club with my fellow colleague Gavin Smith. The CCA offers students significant opportunities for developing and practicing real-life skills that encourage risk-taking ability, patience, and self-confidence.

Meeting every Friday afternoon, the club brought together 16 to 18 students from Grades 6 to 11 who shared a common love for creating delicious treats. The goal of Baking Club was simple yet meaningful: to teach students valuable hands-on techniques while fostering creativity and teamwork in the kitchen.

With minimal supervision from teachers, students demonstrated remarkable independence in the kitchen. From measuring ingredients precisely to managing baking times across multiple ovens, they took ownership of every step.



# UPPER SCHOOL



What made the club truly special was the agency students displayed. Through casual conversations, students suggested and voted on recipes, from classic chocolate chip cookies to more ambitious projects like matcha scones and mango vanilla muffins.

Students had the opportunity to learn about different ingredients that were in season, personalizing their creations with different add-ins and toppings, and experimenting with altering the ratios of ingredients.

The highlight of every session was undoubtedly the moment students pulled fresh bakes from the oven and saw the sense of pride and accomplishment on everyone's faces.

After participating in CCA1, two diligent DPI students, Crystal Liu and Joyce Ding, volunteered to lead the club as part of their CAS (Creativity, Activity, Service) project for CCA2.



Both students showcased excellent leadership skills by planning each session – researching recipes, creating ingredient lists, and organising work-stations beforehand.

During sessions, they circulated to support younger students, patiently demonstrating techniques like using piping bags or assembling the dessert. They also gathered feedback and adapted future sessions based on participant suggestions.

Their enthusiasm was remarkable, and they created a welcoming environment where younger students with minimal to no kitchen experience felt supported and comfortable.

Crystal and Joyce selected niche and unique recipes that challenged everyone, including teachers. For weeks, the girls moved beyond basic chocolate cake to experiment with Earl Grey marshmallow cookies, mochis and Biscoff cheesecake.



*“Leading the baking CCA alongside Crystal was an incredible and rewarding experience. We had the privilege of working with Ms. Xie, who gave us the opportunity to lead, and Mr. Smith, whose support was invaluable.”*

*“Guiding younger students through the joys and challenges of baking allowed us to not only share our passion but also develop essential skills in leadership and communication.”*

*“There were moments when we had to adapt to the resources available, which pushed us to be resourceful and creative. What made it all worthwhile, however, was seeing the students’ excitement and growth as they mastered new skills”*


*— Joyce D & Crystal, Grade 11*



CCAs in our school offer meaningful connections across grade levels where younger students learn from older peers, while DP students mentor younger learners within a caring community.

Baking Club allowed students to acquire skills beyond baking, such as transferable life skills requiring time management, problem-solving, and developing kitchen safety and hygiene knowledge – life skills they will carry into the future and other settings.

It also allowed opportunities for personal and cultural exchange, exploring recipes from other countries and from childhood memories. Several students discovered a new hobby or gained confidence in the kitchen, with some even reporting they have tried and baked a recipe for their families at home.

As CCA2 wraps up, I am incredibly proud of our bakers and the community the CCA has built together. A huge thank you to all participants and my colleague Gavin for their energy and creativity. 



*“My favourite part about baking club is that I get to make lots of yummy food”*

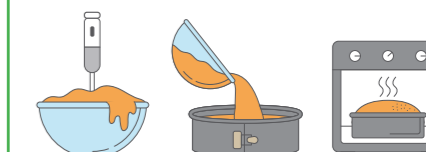
*– William L, Grade 7*

*My favourite part when baking with my friends was mixing all the ingredients together”*

*– Jayden Z, Grade 7*

*“I like baking club because I get to eat and I get to have lots of fun with my friends”*

*– Richard W, Grade 7*



*“The pizzas were so easy and so yummy that we made them again at home with our family!”*

*– Eason & Wilson J, Grade 6*



# Sixth Grade Success

**A reflection on how to manage the transition from elementary school to middle school**

by OiA C

Grade 6 student

Each day at Hangzhou International School (HIS) is like a compelling train ride: you pass many destinations, encounter extraordinary wonders and inquire into vast subjects.

The people around you accompany you on this unforgettable journey, yet you never knew that you were creating memories and gaining experiences, you were just having fun.

So, dear students, teachers, and parents, with not a moment to spare and nothing to lose I say, “Full steam ahead!”

Hi I am OiA, a grade 6 student and this is my eighth year at HIS.

Every day at this phenomenal school is still a new adventure for me, yet none of these thrilling events compares to the completion of elementary and the starting of middle school.

Throughout my learning journey I was able to find my voice and glimpse the golden future that awaits all of us. All my classes went along like roses blooming in the warm rays of sunlight,



my teachers were ready to reach out and help me at any time, and my classmates and friends were caring and thoughtful in their own unique way.

From the first day of middle school to the official end of the first semester, I was able to finally understand all the opportunities, possibilities, and the unity HIS offers to all students.

For those and other reasons I valued the bonds that I created and the amazing aspects of Hangzhou International School even more.



### Don't trip in the hallway (essential tips for acing Middle School)

Behind all the good grades and outstanding growth are all the secrets for a successful middle school, real growth is not only about getting eights on summatives, it's about the management you give yourself.

As a middle schooler one essential tip is about your organization skills. Clean out your bag at least once a week, check for emails and tasks constantly.

Secondly, join sports team and HIS activities to build dragon spirit and meet new people that have the same hobbies as you.

Thirdly, set strong goals for yourself – having a clear objective gives you a specific standard to aim for and creates room for improvement.

Furthermore, be a digital citizen, check your information sources, manage your digital footprint, and have digital breaks often. Lastly, relate to your peers and community, be an up-stander and show kindness to others.

### The weight of my backpack (a day in sixth grade, my thoughts and feelings)

I still remember my first day of sixth grade, I vividly recall walking to find all the right classrooms, socializing with

my peers; many of whom I had not contacted and met with for an entire summer.

I do admit that I was a bit anxious and sometimes frantically wished that I could get used to this new way of school, as if I was navigating through stormy waters.

Though it was not as easy as I hoped at first, I was constantly guided by my hardworking and passionate teachers and steered through these confusing times by very enthusiastic friends and classmates.

Then, slowly I started to grip my “steering wheel” more firmly, my studies were fascinating and my breaktimes were entertaining and

*“We have the power  
to shape the world we  
want to live in”*



lively, filled with laughter and shared with exceptional friends.

The bitter became the sweet as I explored various elements of my forthcoming middle school years. I let myself live in the moment, with the feeling of walking on top of the world. It was an era of homework, joy and discovery.

### Planting the future, together we grow (towards the future)

All of these events and emotions come back to one thing; Hangzhou International School, where our first and most important mission is ‘to provide international learners with opportunities to pursue academic and personal excellence within a caring community’.

For my last words I want to offer everyone my best wishes and a soulful reminder: We are not immortal, we cannot predict the future, but we do have the power to shape the world we want to live in, so I love this quote from Audrey Hepburn:

“To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.”

And I believe that though growth and change we will find our voices and succeed in what we want to achieve, giving the road ahead of us the best versions of ourselves. [D](#)

by Kingsley C

Grade 8 student

# The Meaning of Excellence

How success can mean much more than the best grades, or the championship win

Walk into any school hallway at HIS, and you will see the word “excellence”.

It is painted on gym walls, printed on mission statements, and repeated at assemblies. But for all its presence, excellence often feels abstract – a summit so distant that many students never believe they can reach it.

We imagine excellent students as those who collect straight A's like stamps in a passport, who win trophies without sweating, who seem to have been born with some genetic gift for success.

But if we strip away the posters and the platitudes, a different picture of excellence emerges. It is not a fixed trait or a final score. It is a direction. And it is available to every single one of us – not in spite of our struggles, but because of them.

### The Misconception of Perfection

Our culture sells us a dangerous lie: that excellence means perfection. Social media shows us highlight reels of pristine achievements – the valedictorian's speech, the game-winning shot, the scholarship acceptance letter.

What we do not see are the hours of failures and redoes, the drafts that were thrown away, the evenings when giving up seemed like the only reasonable option.



When we equate excellence with error-free performance, we paralyze ourselves. We become afraid to try because trying might reveal that we are not yet excellent.

We forget that every expert was once a beginner, and every polished performance was once uncertain.

### The Anatomy of Excellence

What, then, does excellence actually look like in the daily life of a student at HIS?

*“An excellent school is not one where every student competes to be the best, but one where every student is supported in becoming better than they were yesterday”*

First, excellence is consistency over intensity. It is showing up every day, even when motivation is low. It is completing the homework assignment even when no one will grade it. It is reviewing notes from last week's lesson before starting today's.

Grand gestures of effort – the all-nighter before the exam, the frantic rewriting of a paper hours before the deadline – are less reliable than small, repeated investments of attention.

Second, excellence is resilience in the face of failure. A student who acquires an unsatisfying grade can respond in two ways.

One is to interpret the grade as a verdict on their ability and retreat. The other is to interpret the grade as feedback – information about what they have not yet mastered – and adjust. Excellence does not mean never failing, it means never being defined by failure.

Third, excellence is attention to craft. It is caring about the margins of your essay, the precision of your scientific diagram, the clarity of your explanation to a classmate.

It is the refusal to submit work that you know could be better if you spent just ten more minutes on it. This is not perfectionism: it is pride in your own labor.



*“To pay attention,  
this is our endless  
and proper  
work”*

— Mary Oliver

### Excellence in Community

We often frame excellence as an individual pursuit – the solitary scholar, the lone athlete. But some of the most powerful forms of excellence are collective. A successful group project requires not one brilliant student but several who communicate clearly, share responsibility, and respect each other's contributions.

Excellence in community means holding yourself to high standards while extending grace to others. It means celebrating a classmate's success without interpreting it as your own failure. It means offering help when you see someone struggling and accepting help when you need it.

An excellent school is not one where every student competes to be the best, but one where every student is supported in becoming better than they were yesterday.

### The Role of Teachers and Environment

While excellence is ultimately a personal commitment, it is cultivated by environment. Teachers who communicate high expectations – and provide the scaffolding to meet them – signal to students that they are capable of more than they realize.

As students, we also shape each other's environments. When we mock effort or dismiss academic engagement



as “trying too hard,” we poison the culture for everyone.

When we normalize seeking help, collaborating, and taking intellectual risks, we build a community where excellence can flourish.


### Excellence as a Practice

The poet Mary Oliver once wrote, “To pay attention, this is our endless and proper work.” Excellence is not a trophy to be displayed or a box to be ticked. It is a daily practice of paying attention – to our work, to our growth, to each other.

At Hangzhou International school, we are constantly exposed to excellence – not because we are the smartest or most talented generation to walk these halls, but because we are still here, still trying, still growing.

Excellence is not the exclusive property of valedictorians and captains. It belongs to the student who stays after class to ask one more question, the athlete who stays late to run one more drill, the artist who sketches the same hand for the hundredth time.

It belongs to anyone who refuses to believe that who they are today is all they will ever be.

Let us redefine excellence, not as a distant peak reserved for the few, but as a direction available to all. Let us practice it daily, imperfectly, together. And let us recognize that the pursuit itself – persistent, humble, and collective – is already a form of achievement. 

# Destination Doha

## Student leaders display winning leadership skills at Harvard Model Congress in Qatar

by Joey L

Grade 11 student

Recently, six student leaders at Hangzhou International School (HIS) were chosen via a stringent application process for the Harvard Model Congress Middle East 2026 being held in Doha, Qatar. Luckily, I was selected to go.

As soon as I received the email, I knew that this trip would not be a four-day vacation, but rather a rigorous competition that would make me better as a person and improve my academic skills.





**Independent Leadership**

The traveling time was tough for all members of the trip as we struggled with the long flights and jet lag. However, I believe all the challenges outside of the conference room also required leadership skills to resolve, as the teachers let the students be completely in charge for making decisions in our own time.

Students chose what time to wake up, where to visit, and where to eat through open dialogue, each showcasing their own unique leadership skills. It was a great experience to visit Doha's marketplace and walk around by the ocean to enjoy Qatar's majestic views.

**Winning Best Delegation**

Inside the conference, our HIS delegates dominated the rooms. Even though I didn't get recognized in my own committee, I was happy to see other delegates from our school actively engage with their committee topic and win awards at the closing ceremony.

Among the six delegates from HIS, Joshua and Derek were awarded 'Best Delegate' and Simeon and Preston received 'Honorable Mentions'. I went for the Harvard Model Congress's Inner Speech contest and unluckily was only a finalist.

At the finale, out of all the international schools attending, including many from around the Mediterranean – there were representatives from Greece, Jordan, Lebanon, and Qatar – Hangzhou International School was named 'Best Delegation', the most prestigious award.



This was impressive as we were the only school from East Asia and also had the least number of students of any delegation.

I believe this award went to us because of our consistency. All our delegates, whether they won an award or not, showed active participation inside and outside the committee rooms.

**Showcasing Our Skills**

Harvard Model Congress is not only a place for debate, it's a venue to showcase your leadership and social skills. I can confidently say that HIS students were best in both.

Overall, attending the Harvard Model Congress Middle East 2026 changed my perspective on how I view the world. I was able to experience something I've never seen or heard of before, and overcame numerous challenges to showcase excellence on this trip.



# Find Your Passion

Meet three HIS seniors as they prepare for university and the future to come

by Harper Girdner  
PR & Communications Specialist

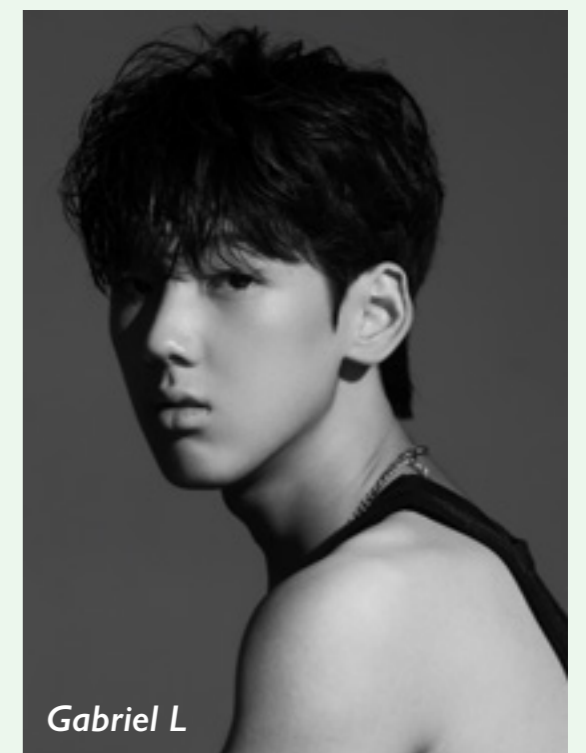
No matter how long you spend at Hangzhou International School, you can always try new things and discover your passion. Eventually, it will be your turn to go off into the world on your own and explore the possibilities, which is exactly what our seniors are getting ready to do. We sat down with Candy, Gabriel, and Raina to ask them what the future holds.



Raina C



Candy Z



Gabriel L

# Candy Z

Grade 12

At HIS since Grade 7

*“If I have any advice for Grade 10s choosing DP subjects, it’s just to follow your heart”*



Candy Z. is an HIS senior who has played a large role in sports at school, being a part of the volleyball, basketball and track and field teams over multiple years. As she looks to the future outside of Hangzhou, Candy is planning to pursue sports management at New York University. In this article, we discuss how HIS has helped foster her passion for sports.

**Hi Candy, what universities have you been accepted to currently?**

For the U.S., I think it was Pepperdine and NYU, and then I applied for Toronto and PolyU in Hong Kong, as well as Loughborough, Edinburgh, and Durham.



**What program are you looking at?**

I already got into my early decision, so I’m probably going to New York for sports management.

**What made you decide to go into sports management?**

I think in the beginning, I was leaning towards marketing or maybe just business, because it made sense for my dad’s work, but then I think, it just felt

way too not my style. I think I’m more of a creative person, and I also like to do sports. So, sports management felt like a good decision in terms of combining all my interests.



**How has HIS inspired you to think about this pathway?**

I think our school offers a really good athletics program, and I think it also gives a lot of support, not only in terms of media promotion, but also just rallying the community around the teams. We had pep rallies, we have really supportive parents (shout out to the Cheer Squad!), and I think all of those elements have made sports a really big part of my life.

**What are the favorite sports you’ve done at HIS?**

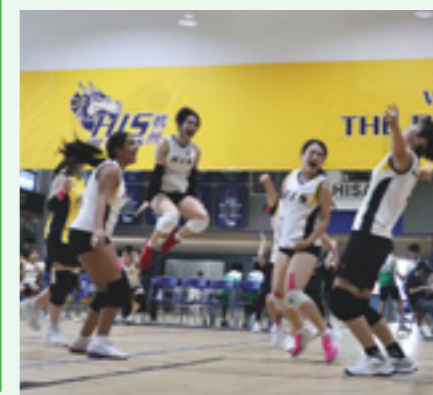
My favorite is definitely volleyball. Volleyball is just different in terms of team spirit. I like track too, but it’s more of an individual sport and I like the way that in volleyball I can cheer with my team, and we make up all these chants, and we act like cheerleaders on the court.

**What are you most excited for at university?**

I think I’m excited for the city. I’m going to New York, which I’m kind of scared about, but it’s also been my dream. I have wanted to go there since elementary, and I’m also excited just to live by myself and actually get to make decisions by myself. But we’ll see how it goes.

**What are you most excited to learn there?**

It’s been a while since I’ve had PE (they finish in Grade 10), but I just remember I always loved PE class, just because you got to do so many things, and sometimes the teachers assigned us to do leadership roles, sometimes you were supporting, and I just hope in this course, in sports management, I can learn more about technical stuff in sports, but also be able to maybe have some internship opportunities to witness professional sports teams.




**Has anything else influenced you to take this path?**

I actually didn’t come into school knowing I wanted to do sports management. I feel like it was more during the first year of DP (DPI), when I started shifting towards it, because in DPI, I realized the importance of sports in my life in the way that it helped with my mindset. It was just a very relieving activity that I thought I would have fun studying at university.

Even when I chose my DP classes, I wasn’t set on sports management, so when I did decide that’s what I wanted to do, I think I just rolled with the subjects I was interested in, and ultimately, the school still accepted me because they were still relevant.

I took economics and art, because I was interested in them. And while this combination of subjects doesn’t make sense, to me, they did. In the end, I feel like art and economics work well for marketing, and the management major.

If I have any advice for Grade 10s choosing DP subjects, it’s just to follow your heart. 

# Gabriel L

Grade 12  
At HIS since Grade 9

*“My time here has really helped me balance between the fashion industry, real society, and my school life. HIS has helped make me who I am”*

Gabriel L. is a senior at Hangzhou International School (HIS) who, in his time at HIS, has been able to pursue his own passions within the arts. Balancing his school life and his artistic work in the fashion industry, Gabriel has been able to discover the importance of diversity in education, and how you can apply things you learn in high school to the arts.

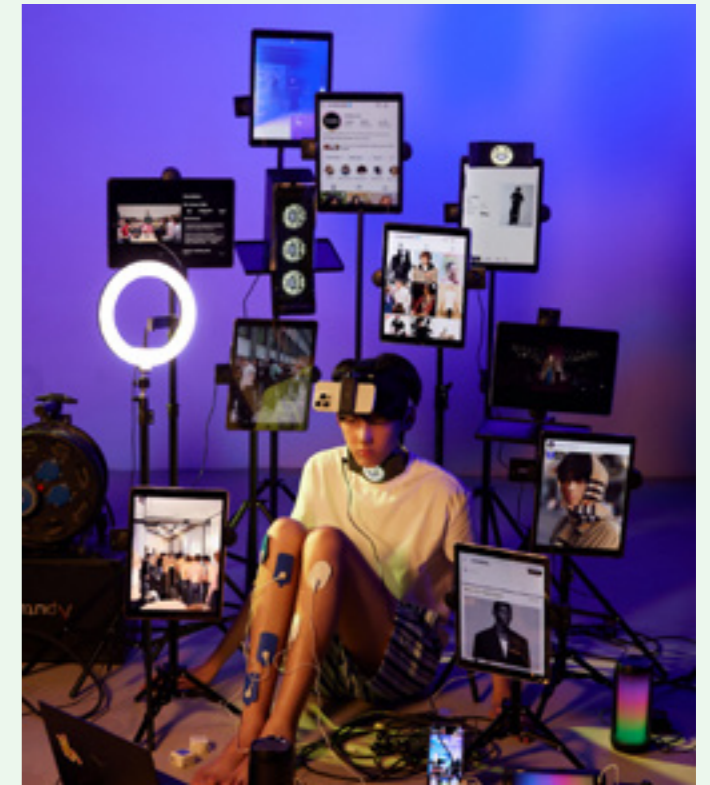
## Hi Gabriel, can you introduce yourself?

Hi, so I'm Gabriel, I'm a senior student at Hangzhou International School. I've recently been accepted by Parsons School of Art and Design as a Fashion Design major, and I also got a conditional offer from the University of Michigan as an Art and Design major.

## What made you want to pick these programs?

Honestly, I feel like I've been interested in art ever since I was in kindergarten, but during my artistic journey, I have really felt like there's huge power behind the arts.

Art and design are not always about beauty – they have the power to communicate with society at large. You can use art as a tool to make our community or world a better place. You can use art to express yourself, but at the same time, you can also use art to fight for what you believe in.



## How has your time at HIS inspired this choice?

I would say there was definitely a huge moment in Grade 10 because we had to do a personal project for the MYP (Middle Years Programme).

You had to choose what subject you're really interested in and make an independent community project tied to your passion. I remember I chose arts and did a fashion design program, also related to social studies and sociology.

I would say the moment that I finished the project is kind of the moment I felt like fashion design and arts generally was what I wanted to do in the future. After that, I started my own business, my own fashion brand, and became an entrepreneur.

I really think at HIS, there has been a lot of opportunity to teach me how to be successful, how to help people, and how to make the global community a better place.

## What are you most excited for about going to university?

I want to say there's definitely some small things.

It'll be my first time living in a boarding home, having a roommate, and living in a different country. So, I really think HIS has helped me to build a very strong foundation for that through making friends here from around the world.

Right now, when I travel internationally or when I meet people from different cultures, I feel really confident to make friends and communicate with them. At university I'm sure that'll continue.

## Do you have a specific career you want to go into yet?

From a very young age, since junior high, I've been an editorial model in the Chinese fashion industry.

During my experience flying around the world, going to different fashion weeks as a model, shooting campaigns, runways, designing clothing, running my own business, I really think the industry has taught me a lot.

At the same time, I think my time in high school at HIS has also helped me, because in the fashion industry, some values are not very correct, like body shaming, or the different classes of society. It's very obvious in a bad way.

However, in high school, the teachers and the HIS values are much more correct and much more valuable. So, I think my time here has really helped me balance between the fashion industry, real society, and my school life. HIS has helped make me who I am.

Right now, when I see something unfair in the fashion industry, I would stand up and fight against it because of the values I learned here.

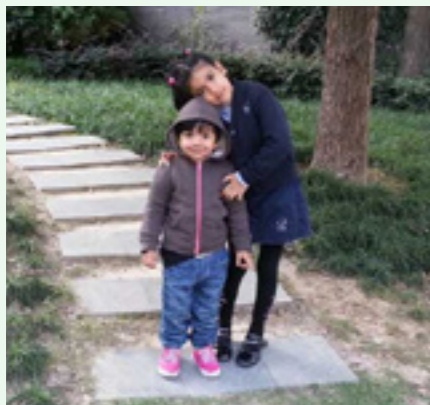
So in the future I will keep working on my fashion brand, my business, and I'll also be interested in studying politics, international relations, and perhaps helping to manage other people's work and at the same time creating my own art pieces. [D](#)



# Raina C

## Grade 12 At HIS since Kindergarten

*“For DP I have biology and chemistry as my higher levels, so all of these classes coming together opens new topics and new understandings that I otherwise wouldn’t have had”*



Raina C. is in her 13th year at Hangzhou International School (HIS). As part of the community for more than a decade, Raina has had many opportunities to try out different things at HIS and find her own passion. She’s set to pursue neuroscience and biology at university, a decision shaped by her HIS experiences leading up to her senior year.

### What universities did you decide to apply to?

I applied around the world, including universities in Canada, the US, and the UK. So far I’ve been accepted to the University of Toronto, University of Bristol, Boston University, UC Davis, and the University of Washington (Seattle), and King’s College London.

### What programs have you applied for?

I’ve applied for neuroscience in the U.K. and general biology in the U.S.

### What made you pick these subjects?

At HIS, back in 7th grade, I participated in a TEDx Youth Event and gave a speech on biomimicry, which is how designs are inspired by nature and all things biology, and how biology and technology come together to make

our world more sustainable. I think this helped spark an interest throughout my Upper School years.

Initially, for neuroscience, I wasn’t really interested in it, but after taking IB Psychology for the past few years, I’ve become more interested in psychology and how the brain works.

Neuroscience is a natural combination with my interest in biology, so I applied for neuroscience in the U.K. and then for the U.S., since it’s more flexible, I chose general biology first, and I can decide later what to pursue.



### Do you think the IB solidified that interest, or did it open new pathways?

For DP I have biology and chemistry as my higher levels, so all these classes coming together opens new topics and new understandings that I otherwise wouldn’t have had.

### How do you feel about leaving HIS?

It’s many mixed emotions, including nervousness, and excitement. I’m excited for university for all the new things, new cultures, new foods, new people, and new friends. I’ve been in this school for a long time and, of course, I love it and the people here, but the experiences that come from



meeting new people is something I’m going to learn a lot from.

### Do you think HIS has helped prepare you for that journey to meet new people in a completely new environment?


I think so, because I’ve always helped at new student orientations, and gone to sports tournaments like ACAMIS, where I’ve met students from different schools, countries and cultures.

### What are you most excited to learn about at university?

I’m excited to learn about things outside of China. Of course, I chose biology as my major, and I’m going to learn all things biology, but it’s the little things that come with it, like taking care of myself and being independent.

Right now, my parents and my sister are a big part of how I survive. But at university, obviously I have them supporting me, but they’ll be a 10 hour flight away. So having that independence is going to be something I learn.

### Do you have an idea of what track you want to do as a career yet?

Biology majors usually go into pre-med and research, so likely it will be that. 



# Excellence in Motion

by Meg Shaul  
Assistant Aquatics Coordinator

How to achieve an attitude built for success

*“No one knows how much effort you put into achieving this result,” Jean explains. “Training is never easy. Only by giving more time to it will you receive more”*

— Jean



Jean at the ACAMIS Senior Swim Championships in December



Competitive swimming is often described as a funnel: thousands of young athletes enter, but only a rare few rise to the highest levels. For most, the journey is not defined by Olympic podiums but by early mornings, endless lengths, and quiet victories that rarely make headlines.

At our school, one swimmer has

emerged as a symbol of what dedication and community can achieve. At just 14 years old, Grade 8 student Jean M is already rewriting records and inspiring teammates with his modesty and drive. I sat down with him a few weeks ago to talk about his recent successes, his motivation, and the realities of balancing life as both a middle schooler and a competitive swimmer.

# SPORTS

Jean's HIS season began with a statement performance at the ACAMIS Senior Swim Championships – one of the biggest meets in our annual calendar.

After a difficult national meet earlier in the year, he delivered a rare “all-kill,” winning every individual event in his age group and breaking long standing records. “It felt normal, but I was also a bit proud of myself,” he said. “Breaking these records was all within expectations.” The calmness of that reflection captures his mindset – success is acknowledged, then quickly put back into perspective.

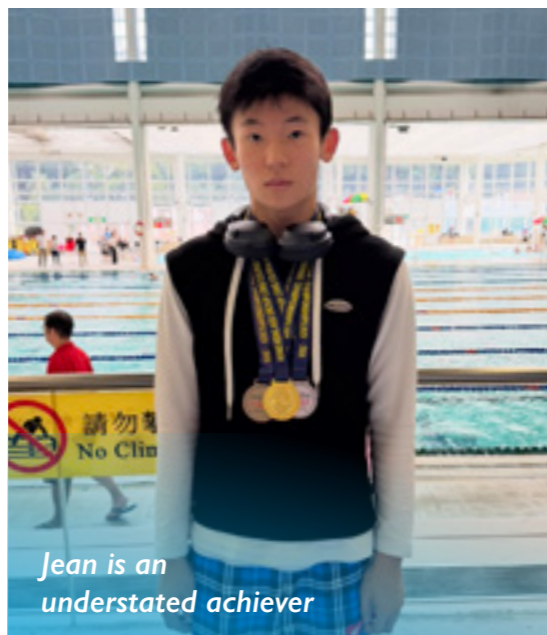
That composure was hard-earned. At the 2025 U-Series National Championships, Jean entered with a time that could have placed him among the top three nationally. He finished fifth – an exceptional result at that level, and one many swimmers would celebrate outright. Yet for Jean, the performance left him unhappy.

“My confidence was not firm enough,” he admits. “After the U-Series competition, I went through a slump. I communicated a lot with my coach and my training partner and trained even harder. Then during ACAMIS I got PBs [personal bests] in all my events – I let it all out at this moment.” His reaction speaks volumes.

He carried that momentum into SSL (Shanghai Swim League) Round 3, where he won all of his individual events, broke his own records, and captured the prestigious FINA High Point Trophy for boys.



Jean at SSL Round 3 after winning the Boys 15 & Over 200m Freestyle Relay. With HIS teammates Evan H, Anderson L and Flynn Y (left to right)



Jean is an understated achiever

This award, given to the swimmer whose performance ranks closest (in a relative sense) to a world record, recognized his 50m backstroke time of 26.73 seconds – worth 985 FINA points. It was further proof that his ACAMIS breakthrough was no one-off performance.

For Jean, motivation runs deeper than medals. “First of all, I love swimming – have loved water since I was very young,” he says. “Secondly, because of my coach, he spends most of the time

with us and really cares about me. Then it was because of my training teammates, especially Anderson, Flynn, and Evan – we all worked hard and improved together.”

His answer says as much about team culture as it does about him. Behind every record stands a network of coaches, teammates, and families who share the work.

Those sacrifices are real. Competitive swimmers often train seven days a week, balancing school with long hours in the pool. “No one knows how much effort you put into achieving this result,” Jean explains. “Training is never easy. Only by giving more time to it will you receive more.”



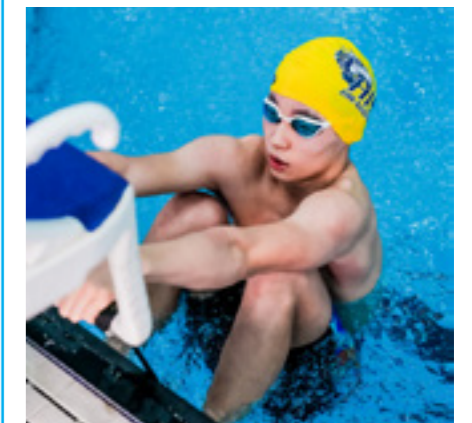
It means fewer weekends off and constant discipline. What it builds, however, is resilience – the ability to absorb setbacks and return stronger.

The wider reality of youth swimming in China is a fiercely competitive one, where children are identified young and only a fraction progress to national level. Fewer still ever approach international podiums. Against that backdrop, what Jean is achieving at school and regional level is already exceptional – even if he carries it lightly.

In the classroom, Jean can be unassuming. On the pool deck, he is formidable – travelling at 2.18 meters per second at his fastest and setting standards that raise those around him. Ask what he would do if swimming disappeared for a week and the answer is simple: study, spend time with friends, train on land at home. It is the response of someone grounded and self-aware.



They are achievements that reflect years of steady commitment. And as a community that values this commitment and character, we should stand behind him, celebrate him, and recognize that what he is accomplishing is something truly special. It's excellence in motion. [D](#)



As a school built on strong community values, moments like this give us something special to appreciate together. Many students know Jean as a classmate. Teachers know him as a thoughtful and diligent learner. Some may have heard about his success in the pool. What is easy to miss, unless you follow the sport closely, is just how significant these performances are within the wider swimming world.

# Exploring New Depths

New scuba diving class expands learning beyond the classroom to below the waves

by Natalio Liores IV  
Aquatics Coordinator



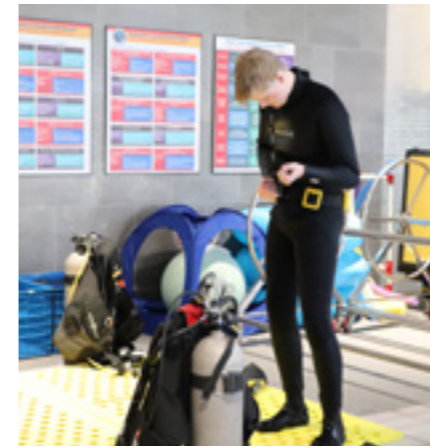
The introduction of scuba diving at HIS marks a bold step towards redefining what learning can look like for our students.

Underwater education offers a powerful combination of adventure, discipline, and environmental responsibility – an opportunity for students to broaden their horizons in ways that extend far beyond traditional aquatics.

Through the PADI program, students are introduced to the science and

safety systems that make underwater exploration possible. Each lesson demands focus, preparation, and calm decision-making – skills that translate directly into academic and personal growth.

What makes scuba diving particularly meaningful for HIS is its alignment with our General Learning Targets. Fostering global citizenship and opening pathways to future careers in science, exploration, and sustainability, it is hands-on learning with a purpose.



## Learning underwater

The vision behind introducing scuba diving at HIS is simple: learning becomes deeper when students are invited to explore unfamiliar environments.

Water, movement, pressure, and breathing all function differently underwater – and with those changes come rich educational opportunities. Scuba diving challenges students to think critically, stay calm in new situations, and develop habits of readiness and safety; expanding learning beyond the pool and into real-world, skill-based education.

## How Scuba builds skills

Through structured knowledge development, confined-water sessions, and supervised skill development, students learn:

- The physics and physiology of diving
- Proper equipment setup, inspection, and care
- Buoyancy, trim, finning techniques, and underwater navigation
- Clear and purposeful underwater communication
- Risk management, emergency response, and responsible dive planning

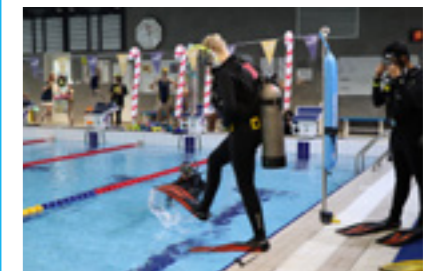
Each component requires preparation, practice, and personal accountability. Students quickly discover that successful diving relies on discipline, teamwork, and trust.

## Environmental awareness

Perhaps most importantly, scuba diving opens students' eyes to the beauty and fragility of the marine world.

Experiencing underwater life firsthand builds environmental awareness and inspires a sense of stewardship. Students quickly understand the importance of protecting oceans, reducing waste, and respecting natural habitats.

Learning proper buoyancy control, respectful marine interaction, and sustainable diving habits helps students appreciate their role in protecting underwater environments.






### Pathways for the future

By offering scuba diving as part of our aquatics program, HIS empowers students to explore new interests. It opens doors to new academic and career pathways.

Students may discover interests in marine biology, environmental science, ocean exploration, tourism and outdoor leadership, search-and-rescue, or conservation work.

Even for those who end up simply enjoying diving recreationally, the skills they gain will benefit them throughout their lives.

As HIS Aquatics continues to explore new horizons in student development, underwater education stands as a powerful reminder of the opportunities that emerge when we give young people the chance to dive a little deeper into the world around them. 



Disney · PIXAR

# FINDING NEMO JR.



Join us for the aquatic adventure of a lifetime!

Thursday 28 May  
Friday 29 May

THE THEATER  
Hangzhou International School





# Hangzhou International School 杭州国际学校

## SEMESTER ONE

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

SEPTEMBER				
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28	29	30		

OCTOBER				
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NOVEMBER				
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30				

DECEMBER				
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28	29	30	31	

- New Family Orientation Day
- Beginning/End of Semester
- New Faculty Inservice (no school for students)

## School Calendar 2026-2027

### IMPORTANT DATES:

#### SEMESTER ONE

- AUGUST** 5-7 New Faculty Inservice (no school for students)
- 10-17 All Faculty Inservice (no school for students)
- 18 New Family Orientation Day & Open House
- 19 First Day of Semester One
- SEPTEMBER** 11 Professional Inservice (no school for students)
- 25 Mid-Autumn Festival
- 28-30 Fall Break
- OCTOBER** 1-2 National Day Holiday
- 16 Mid-Semester Progress Reports
- 20 Parent-Student-Teacher Conferences
- 26 Professional Inservice (no school for students)
- NOVEMBER** 27 Professional Inservice (no school for students)
- DECEMBER** 18 End of Semester One & Semester Reports

#### SEMESTER TWO

- JANUARY** 11 Professional Inservice (no school for students) & New Family Orientation Day
- 12 First Day of Semester Two
- FEBRUARY** 5-12 Chinese New Year Holiday
- MARCH** 8 Professional Inservice (no school for students)
- 26 Mid-Semester Progress Reports
- APRIL** 5-9 Qingming "Tomb Sweeping" Festival Holiday and Spring Break
- MAY** 3 Labor Day Holiday
- 4 Professional Inservice (no school for students)
- JUNE** 1 Student-Led Conferences
- 9 Duanwu "Dragon Boat" Festival Holiday
- 24 End of Semester Two & Semester Reports
- 25 Professional Inservice (no school for students)

- Legal Holidays (no school)
- School Holidays (no school)
- Conferences
- Professional Inservice (no school for students)

## SEMESTER TWO

JANUARY				
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FEBRUARY				
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8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26

MARCH				
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		

APRIL				
M	T	W	TH	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

MAY				
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
31				

JUNE				
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		



# IBDP VISUAL ARTS EXHIBITION

## APRIL 1ST-16TH



**CANDY. Z**



**SANYUKTA. S**



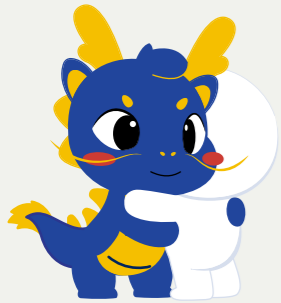
**GABRIEL. L**



**SHAUNA. M**

OPENING 5:00PM WEDNESDAY APRIL 1ST, 4TH FLOOR, MAIN BUILDING

# HIS Word Search



D B F U N S N B A A T I Y U G W  
 M K V P X C W A I R J Q L I Z P  
 A T R A V E L Y Z T E E S A V D  
 N F S N B N E K L X L E K S Q D  
 D B Q A F J A L G Z K O T P E E  
 A V W T H E R P N N H G E O W X  
 R I C U A V N L V Z X H A R Q P  
 I P U R P T I A U D T N C T U L  
 N I J E P E N Y H G Q C H S G O  
 R A P K Y A G Z K D X L E K Y R  
 A P M J M M F Z E U L Z R S V E  
 U U U L V B D E J G A M E S C S  
 U N S J T V S C V U B O O K S M  
 X M I G D R A G O N D W J V M I  
 K Y C C K F R I E N D S W G G L  
 J P T S C H O O L C U L T U R E

## Find these words:

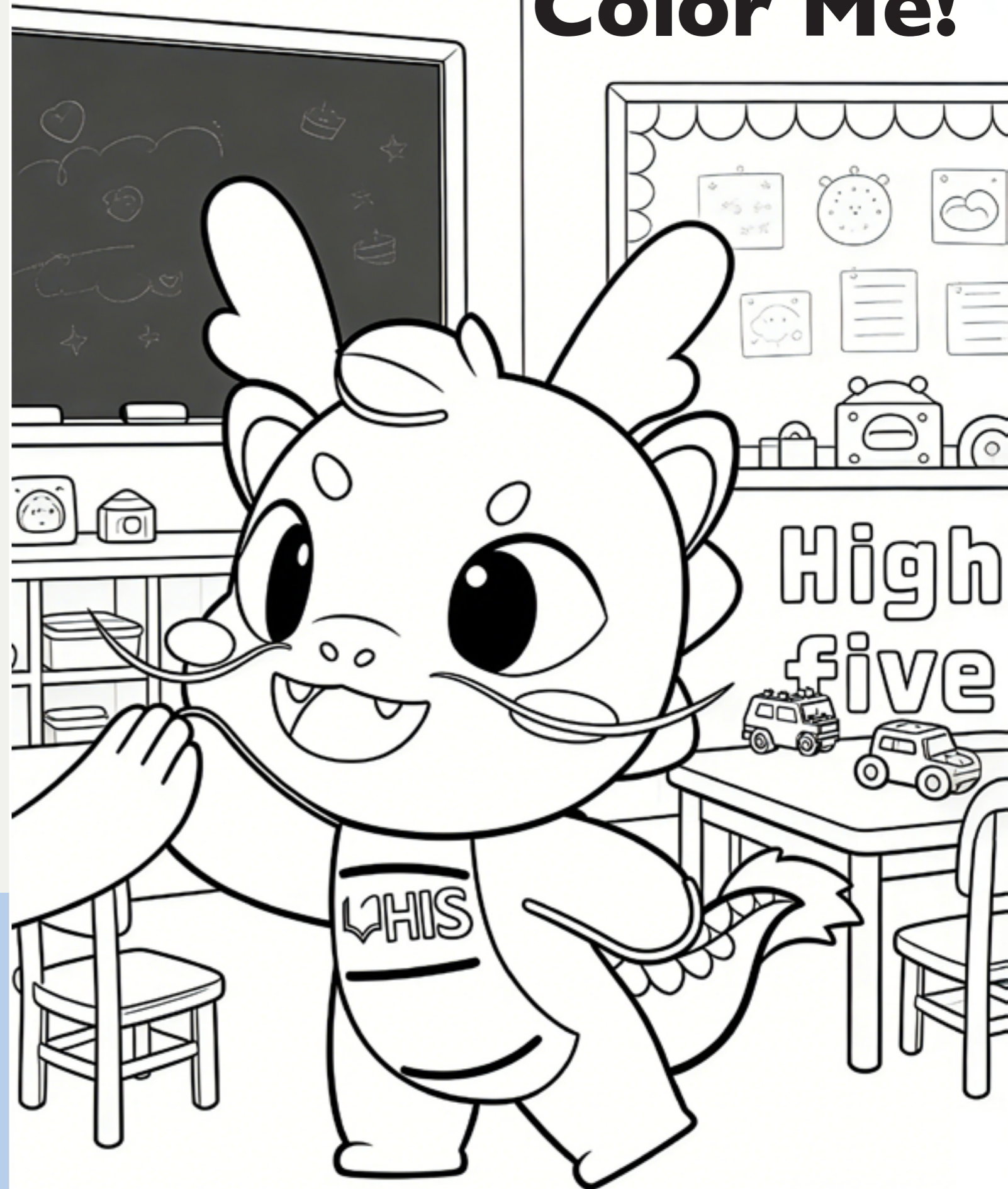
DRAGON  
 SCHOOL  
 FRIENDS  
 TEACHER  
 LEARNING

FUN  
 PLAY  
 BOOKS  
 ART  
 MUSIC

SPORTS  
 EXPLORE  
 MANDARIN  
 CULTURE  
 HAPPY

TEAM  
 TRAVEL  
 NATURE  
 SMILE  
 GAMES

# Color Me!



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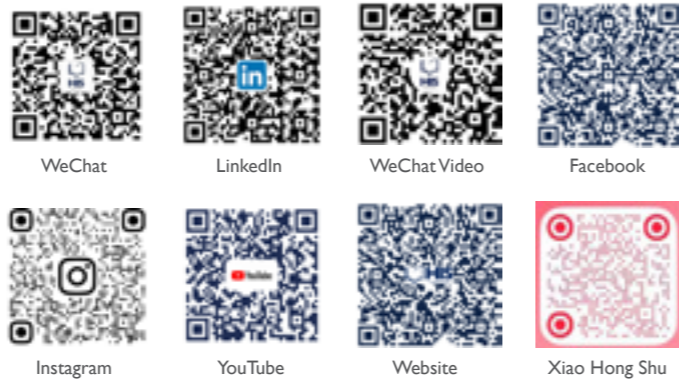
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Editor: Simon Ostheimer

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