

# COMMUNITAS



Beyond  
**Boundaries.**  
Beyond  
**Expectations.**

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It reflects a shared belief that meaningful learning happens when students are trusted to take ownership, when they are challenged and supported in equal measure, and when they are given opportunities to apply their thinking in authentic, real-world contexts.

# PAFA NEWS

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

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## communitas

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

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

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

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

We are social! Feel free to visit us on the web at [www.scis-china.org](http://www.scis-china.org) and follow us!



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# Beyond Boundaries. Beyond Expectations.

There are moments in a school year that stay with you, not because they are planned, but because they reveal something essential about who we are as a community.

Recently, I found myself reflecting on one such moment during the Pudong Lower School musical performance of "The Little Witch." What stood out was not only the talent of our students on the stage, but the incredible work and collaboration that happened before the spotlights turned on. The musical was written by one of our own upper school students, who went on to direct the performance as well. Watching our younger students take cues from an older

peer in that way made the experience feel especially meaningful. I was struck by how our students approached the experience, with confidence, curiosity, and a willingness to move beyond what was familiar. It was a quiet but powerful reminder that learning at SCIS is not confined to classrooms, nor is it defined by traditional expectations.

The theme of this issue of *Communitas*, "Beyond Boundaries. Beyond Expectations," captures something we see every day across our campuses. It reflects a shared belief that meaningful learning happens when students are trusted to take ownership, when they are challenged and supported in equal

measure, and when they are given opportunities to apply their thinking in authentic, real-world contexts.

At SCIS, going beyond boundaries often begins with student agency. Whether through their experiences in the PYP, MYP, or DP classrooms, where students engage in sustained, real-world inquiry, or through student-led initiatives, where ideas are shaped and driven by students themselves, we see young people learning that their voices matter. They are not waiting to be told what to think or do. Instead, they are asking questions, testing ideas, and navigating complexity with increasing confidence, which is what agency looks like in practice.

This kind of learning does not happen by accident. It is the result of intentional design, where disciplines intersect, where innovation and design thinking are embedded within the curriculum, and where Shanghai itself becomes an extension of the classroom. Through experiences such as a recent MYP research project on urban sustainability, our students combined science, mathematics, and humanities to study Shanghai's environmental challenges, and then proposed evidence-based solutions to real-world issues. In doing so, they begin to see connections, not just between subjects, but between their learning and the world around them.

At the same time, going beyond expectations requires us to reconsider what success looks like. While academic achievement remains important, it is not the sole measure of growth. We are increasingly focused on helping students develop the capacity to adapt,

to collaborate, and to lead with empathy. These are the qualities that will enable them to thrive, not only in university, but in a world that continues to evolve in unpredictable ways.

Our recent WASC accreditation process has also prompted us to reflect on and refine our strategic direction for the next phase of our journey. This work has been another expression of our commitment, as a community, to continually ask how we can better align our programs, our practices, and our culture so that learning truly matters, students experience a strong sense of belonging, and each individual is both challenged and supported.

What gives me the greatest confidence in this work is our community itself. Our students are willing to take risks. Our faculty are thoughtful and innovative in their practice. And our parents are deeply engaged partners in the learning

journey. Together, we are creating an environment where boundaries are not barriers, but invitations to explore, and where expectations are not limits, but starting points.

As you read through this issue, I hope you will see these ideas brought to life through the experiences and achievements of our students. More importantly, I hope you will recognize the collective effort behind them, a community committed to learning that matters, and to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to go beyond what they thought possible.

Thank you for being part of this journey.



*By Daniel Eschtruth,  
Director of Schools  
at SCIS*



# Investigate, Innovate, Impact: The MYP in Action

In the last issue of *Communitas*, we talked about rigor. In mathematics, especially, that word can quickly become shorthand for harder problems or more work. **In the MYP, rigor isn't about volume — it's about thinking.**

The updated IB guide *From Principles into Practice* (2022) describes the programme as “concept-driven and inquiry-based.” In practice, that means students are expected to do more than complete tasks. They are expected to notice, question, test, and justify.

Recently, while preparing students for Criterion B: Investigating Patterns, they began to notice trends in the data and almost immediately asked, “Is this the right answer?”

It's a familiar question.

Instead of confirming an answer, the response was to ask what evidence they had. What did they notice in the pattern? What was repeated? Would it always work? How could they show it?

The shift was subtle but important. The focus moved away from the teacher and back to the mathematics. Students revised their thinking. They tested their ideas to see if the pattern still held in different cases. They questioned whether something was always true or only sometimes true. **The language changed too — from “I think” to “I can show.”**

That's where understanding starts to develop.





Ron Ritchhart writes that learning is a consequence of thinking. If that's true, then inquiry isn't something extra — it's the core. The MYP makes that expectation visible. In mathematics, especially, students aren't rewarded simply for arriving at an answer; they are expected to justify their reasoning.

Over time, those moments accumulate. Students begin to understand that speed isn't the goal. Being able to clearly explain their thinking matters more. Revision becomes normal, and uncertainty is part of the process.

By the time students reach the Personal Project in Grade 10, that expectation

has developed. The structure is lighter, but the responsibility is heavier. Students choose a focus, set goals, manage their time, adjust when things don't go as planned, and communicate their decisions. By that point, the inquiry belongs to them.

The impact isn't loud. It doesn't always look impressive from the outside. It's the student who stops asking, "Is this right?" and starts asking, "Does this make sense?" It's the student who trusts their reasoning enough to stand behind it.

The MYP provides a structure. **What it asks is that we push beyond surface performance toward real understanding.**

When students investigate carefully, test their reasoning, and justify their conclusions, they're not just finishing work. They are thinking critically and creatively. These are the learners we aim to develop at SCIS.



**By Alia Awad,  
IB MYP Coordinator  
at SCIS Hongqiao**



# Foundations Without Borders

## Global Citizenship in the Primary Years

Often, when global issues are discussed in educational spaces, there is hesitation around involving younger learners. Phrases such as “They’re too young to understand” or “That can’t be discussed with small learners” frequently surface. Yet this assumption underestimates both the lived experiences and the perspectives of children. When given the opportunity, primary students demonstrate an impressive capacity to engage thoughtfully with complex ideas.

This is evident in our Lower School Model United Nations (MUN) programme, now in its third year. What began as an exploration of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the planning of an International Day of Play has evolved into a deeper inquiry around the Rights of the Child and how those rights are experienced within our own school community.

From the outset, students engaged in examining the 2030 Global Goals, discussing root causes, considering possible solutions, and wrestling with ethical decision-making. In doing so, they developed key Approaches to Learning: research skills, communication skills, collaboration, negotiation, and purposeful speaking. They learned to advocate with intention and to take risks in sharing their perspectives.

Crucially, this learning has never happened in isolation. Lower School students work alongside Upper School MUN students, who mentor and guide them in building these skills. This cross-divisional collaboration models leadership as service and positions older students as principled communicators and caring mentors. Leadership becomes something practiced across ages, not reserved for the oldest learners.

This year, our focus shifted to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Students examined the difference between rights and privileges, considered how rights may be interpreted across cultures, and explored global responses to the Convention. Their discussions were thoughtful and, at times, passionate—particularly when examining countries that have not ratified the CRC. These conversations required open-mindedness, reflection, and respect for differing perspectives—core attributes of the IB Learner Profile.

Learning has extended beyond discussion. Students are currently designing an information campaign to educate peers about children’s rights. They are developing videos and presentations tailored to younger audiences, creating surveys to gather student perspectives, and preparing to analyse the data they collect. Through this process, they are strengthening transferable thinking and communication skills while exercising authentic agency.

Cross-divisional collaboration continues as Upper School MUN students plan to host an in-school conference for Grades 6–8. Lower School MUN students are involved in elements of the planning process, gaining insight into how MUN evolves across the learner continuum. They are also serving on committees for the International Day of Play—advocating for Article 31, the right to rest and leisure—and contributing to the planning of UNIDOP. These opportunities reinforce that action is a natural extension of learning.

Through these experiences, students are not simply learning about global citizenship; they are practicing it. They are exploring fairness and democratic principles in lived contexts. They are engaging with global issues through human stories rather than abstract facts. They are learning that empathy, collaboration, and principled action form the foundation of international-mindedness.

Borders—whether between age groups, perspectives, or nations—are learned constructs. Through Lower School MUN, students begin to challenge those boundaries. They practice leadership early. They advocate ethically for issues that matter to them. They negotiate ideas, collaborate across divisions, and develop hope grounded in responsibility.

In doing so, they embody the vision of the IB: young people who are knowledgeable, caring, and empowered to contribute meaningfully to their communities and to the wider world.



*By Veronica Clough, Lower School EAL  
(English as an Additional Language)  
Coordinator at SCIS Pudong*



# Shift the Narrative: From Deficit to Asset

Many of our youngest students are already on their way to becoming trilingual, while languaging in English, Mandarin, and their home languages. After living in many countries and interacting with many students of diverse language backgrounds, I know a little of a lot of languages, but I don't speak any other languages besides English fluently. I always tell my students how I envy them for being multilingual, some at just seven years

old, and how I wish that one day I could be fluent in another language too. It is a gift to be cherished and to feel proud of. However, for many of our emergent English speakers, this is not always how they feel.

I have started using students' home languages and prior knowledge as an anchor in our Unit of Inquiry vocabulary lessons. I started this practice last year with

the Grade 1 team and have continued this year with Grades 2 and 3. When learning a new word, we translate it into Mandarin—which all students at SCIS are learning—as well as other languages spoken in the classroom. The students get so excited when they get to share the word in their home languages and become the language experts in our classroom. It is one of the only times that nearly all students feel confident enough to raise their hands to share.

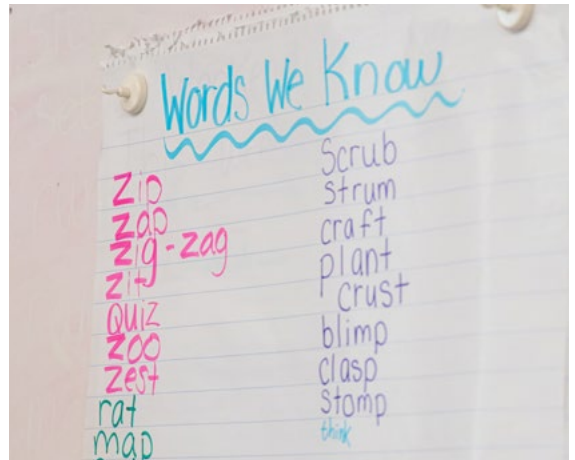
As language researcher Eowyn Crisfield explains, *"The home language is not a barrier to learning; it is the foundation for all future learning."* When students are given the opportunity to connect new vocabulary to the languages they



already know, they are not only building understanding but also confidence and pride in who they are.

Culture and language are inseparable. When you speak the language of where you come from, the language of where you live, and languages that connect you to people around the world, think about the impact this has on your identity and sense of belonging. Think of all the doors that open when you feel seen, heard, and understood. Think about being able to help others feel seen, heard, and understood, too. Languages are keys that unlock doors to new connections, cultures, and global understanding.

Multilingualism is a strength for the future, and our future is right here in our SCIS classrooms. I challenge you: the next time someone seems to struggle in one language, think about all the skills, knowledge, and experiences they already have in one or more other languages. If multilingualism is the future, there is no doubt that SCIS and its students have a bright future ahead.



Megan Freiburger, Lower School English as an Additional Language (EAL) Team Lead at SCIS Hongqiao

# One Meaningful Conversation Per Day



Living in China, many of us understand first-hand the stress and isolation of not being able to communicate with those around us – and the avoidant behaviour it can lead to. It can turn simple tasks into things we dread, and now that there's an app for everything, it's easy to opt out of scary situations where we might fail. Even once we master a few basics to get our needs met, there is a constant barrier to connecting on a deeper level when you're not fluent in a language.

Now imagine that barrier never disappeared, not even when you got home, or returned to the people who speak the same language as you.

For students with communication disorders, this can be the reality. Language learning is disrupted in these students, meaning that even acquiring their home language can be difficult. This can make interacting with others confusing or stressful for them. Adding to this challenge, it can be hard for parents and peers to know how to communicate with someone who struggles to communicate back, or whose responses are unexpected or harder to understand. This leads to a vicious cycle – these students need more exposure to language to learn, but sometimes they end up getting less.

Conversation is vital for our mental health, because conversation is a connection. Everyone needs to have positive interactions to feel connected and happy.

A conversation is also the best way to learn how conversations work! Language and conversation are different than other things we learn in school. They aren't taught skills, they are natural behaviours. While some of my students do need direct instruction in how conversations work, it can quickly become very unnatural if I'm prompting them all the time, or if it's turning into an interview where I just ask question after question. It's better if we can learn by doing.

For this reason, a lot of my speech and language therapy sessions kick off with a conversation – whatever that means to the student. The only rule is that it must bring them genuine enjoyment. For some students, that involves me taking an interest in their news, or their special interests. Sometimes it's as simple as going slower and giving space for them to be the ones in charge for a change. For students who are minimally verbal, it might look more like playing – play is a lot like a conversation, as both involve two people going back and forth, interacting and having fun.

These are simple actions that you don't need specialist training for. Just enough patience to slow down, enough empathy to think about what makes someone else happy, and enough grace to forgive things that are awkward or confusing. Nothing brings me



greater joy that seeing my students have positive interactions in the community – whether with teachers, parents, or especially peers. You're doing more than you realise every time you make space for someone to have a successful interaction with you.



*Paula Willis, Speech Language Pathologist at SCIS Pudong*





# Beyond the Transcript

## The Modern Toolkit

### Every Student Needs

Day to day, we help students navigate everything from friendship and peer conflicts to academic stress and personal well-being. These conversations, however, consistently point to a deeper need. Beyond managing immediate concerns, the most vital preparation we can offer centers on the practical, human skills required to thrive. In essence, while academic knowledge grants you entry to post-secondary studies, it is these core competencies that secure your success as a student and in the workforce.

#### **The Irreplaceable Human in an AI World**

Senior executives at major companies like Microsoft and Google consistently highlight a suite of “uniquely human” skills as non-negotiable. In a world being reshaped by artificial intelligence, capabilities like emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, complex problem-solving, and persuasive communication are the new currency. A World Economic Forum report echoes this, listing

“analytical thinking, resilience, curiosity, and leadership among the top skills needed by 2025.”

This matches what I believe every student needs in their personal toolkit. Think of it as a combination of inner strength and outer skills.

#### **The Foundational Five: Building Your Professional Persona**

So, what are these essential skills? Based on research and feedback from employers and alumni, career readiness is built on these five interconnected abilities:

**1. Adaptive Resilience:** This is the super-skill of our time. It combines the ability to handle stress with adaptability and resilience. Can you recover from a setback, pivot when a project changes, and manage pressure without burning out? This skill turns challenges into growth opportunities.

**2. Relational Intelligence:** This goes beyond simple teamwork. It's active listening, emotional intelligence, and the ability to relate to others. It means reading a room, navigating diverse personalities with empathy, and building trust through honesty and accountability. As one executive noted, "it's the key to collaboration and avoiding unnecessary conflict."

**3. Proactive Communication:** This isn't just about speaking clearly. It's the confident, proactive articulation of ideas and questions. It's communicating needs before they become crises, advocating for yourself, and using positive language to foster solutions. It's the bridge between your good work and others' recognition of it.

**4. Ownership & Drive:** Employers crave individuals who demonstrate a strong work ethic and proactiveness. This means taking accountability for your tasks and mistakes, showing self-confidence in your abilities, and seeking out the next challenge without waiting to be told. It's the difference between an employee who does a job and one who owns their role.

**5. Critical Problem-Solving:** This is the practical application of classroom learning. It's analytical thinking applied to real-world glitches. It requires curiosity to dig into the "why," creativity to brainstorm solutions, and the reasoning skills to choose the best path forward.

### Build Your Toolkit Now

The perfect time to build these skills isn't when students graduate from High School—it's before.

- **Students:** Let group projects be your safe space for mastering collaboration and teamwork. Use community service, an internship, and/or a part-time job to practice accountability and work ethic. View a stressful exam week as a training ground for resilience. Ask questions—this shows confidence, not weakness.
- **Parents:** Encourage this growth by shifting from problem-solving for your child to coaching them through it. Discuss your personal experiences when you were in school and workplace scenarios. Let them manage their own schedule and face the



natural consequences of poor time management. Your role is to be the guide, not the executor.

Mastering this toolkit doesn't happen overnight. It's a practice. But by focusing on these human skills alongside academic goals, students won't just be ready for university or their first job interview—they'll be equipped to build a fulfilling, dynamic career, no matter how the world changes.

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*By Sophia Kim, Student Support Counselor at SCIS Hongqiao*

# Building Resilient Learners in a Complex World



Today's students are growing up in a world that is more connected, more fast-paced, and often more demanding than ever before. They navigate academic pressures, social dynamics shaped by technology, cultural transitions, and an ever-changing global landscape. In such a complex world, success is no longer defined only by what students know, but by how they adapt, recover, and continue learning when things feel difficult.

This is where resilience becomes essential — and where student support plays a powerful role.

## Resilience is Built, Not Born

Resilience is sometimes mistaken for toughness or independence. In reality, resilience grows when students feel supported, understood, and equipped with the tools to face challenges with confidence. It develops when young people experience manageable struggles, learn strategies to overcome

them, and begin to see themselves as capable problem-solvers.

At school, resilience is not left to chance. It is intentionally nurtured through a coordinated network of support that addresses academic, linguistic, social, and emotional growth. Student support services are designed not only to help students when they are in difficulty, but to proactively build the skills and mindsets that allow them to thrive long term.

## Learning Support: Turning Struggle into Strategy

In Learning Support, resilience often begins with a shift in perspective. Students learn that needing support is not a weakness but part of how everyone grows. By helping students understand how they learn best, educators empower them to move from “I can't do this” to “I can't do this yet — but I have strategies to try.”

Through targeted interventions, scaffolded

instruction, and close collaboration with classroom teachers, students experience success after effort. They learn to break tasks into manageable steps, use tools and accommodations effectively, and reflect on their progress. These moments build more than academic skills; they build perseverance, self-awareness, and confidence in the face of challenge.

## Multilingual Learners: Everyday Acts of Courage

For students learning an additional language, resilience is practiced daily. Participating in class discussions, reading complex texts, or expressing ideas in a new language requires risk-taking and determination. English as an Additional Language (EAL) support ensures these students are not navigating this journey alone.

By valuing students' home languages and cultures while developing their English proficiency, we reinforce a powerful message: multilingualism is an asset, not a barrier. With the right language scaffolds and a supportive classroom environment, students learn that mistakes are part of



growth. Each time a multilingual learner shares an idea, asks a question, or tries again after not being understood, they are strengthening both their language skills and their resilience.

### Counseling: Building Emotional Tools for Life

Academic resilience cannot be separated from emotional wellbeing. School counselors play a vital role in helping students develop the self-regulation, coping strategies, and emotional literacy they need to navigate both school and life.

Through individual sessions, small groups, classroom guidance, and collaboration with families and teachers, counselors help students name their feelings, manage stress, resolve conflicts, and build healthy relationships. Students learn that setbacks, friendship difficulties, performance anxiety, and big life changes are part of being human — and that there are tools and supportive adults to help them through.

When students understand their emotions and know how to seek help, they are better able to return to learning after challenges. This ability to recover and re-engage is a cornerstone of resilience.

### High Expectations, Flexible Pathways

Supporting resilience does not mean lowering expectations. In fact, resilience grows best in environments where students are encouraged to aim high while being given multiple pathways to get there.

By working together — classroom teachers, specialists, counselors, and families — we ensure that students are both challenged and supported. Whether through differentiated instruction, language support, social-emotional guidance, or targeted interventions, we help students meet high standards in ways that recognize their individual strengths and needs.

This balance of high expectations and responsive support reflects a belief at the heart of student services: every student can grow, and every student deserves the tools to do so.

### Preparing Learners for an Unpredictable Future

The world our students will enter after graduation will continue to evolve in ways we cannot fully predict. Careers will change, technologies will advance, and global connections will deepen. In this context, the most important outcome we can offer students is not just content

knowledge, but the capacity to adapt, reflect, and keep learning.

By building strong academic foundations, supporting multilingual development, and prioritizing emotional wellbeing, student support services help shape learners who are not only successful today but prepared for tomorrow. These are students who understand themselves, seek help when needed, persevere through difficulty, and approach new situations with confidence.

That is what it means to go beyond boundaries and beyond expectations — not by removing challenges, but by ensuring every student has the support to rise to them.



*By Kristi Dahlstrom,  
Director of Student  
Support Services at SCIS*





**Rooted Locally, Reaching Globally**

# *Blending Chinese Traditions with an International Mindset*

In the weeks surrounding the Spring Festival, our MYP Chinese Language and Literature classrooms became a place where students rooted themselves in local traditions while reaching outward with global perspectives. Across different year levels, learners from diverse backgrounds immersed themselves in Chinese customs—not as outsiders looking in, but as young creators who would filter these traditions through their own experiences and turn them into something new.

In MYP Year 1, students explored Chinese New Year traditions by writing original plays. Each story centered on a first Chinese New Year's Eve dinner in a local family, with characters from different parts of the world coming together around the table. The plots grew from small moments of cultural misunderstanding and the connections that follow. On the page, we met a student confused by the reversed



"Fú" character, another surprised by the different fillings of Chinese dumplings, a classmate puzzled by the "unfinished fish" left on the plate, and another in awe of firecrackers. These moments were not just for drama - they grew from the students' own curiosity about customs they had witnessed or wondered about.

What touched me most was how the young writers turned these small misunderstandings into bridges. They wrote about Chinese families, gently explaining the meaning of red envelopes, the wish for "nián nián yǒu yú" (may there be surplus year after year)," and the joy of coming together. In return, their characters shared New Year foods and traditions from their own cultures. The dinner table, once a place of confusion, became a meeting point - rooted in Chinese custom, yet open to the world.

In MYP Year 3, students created short videos using their phones, with the Chinese New Year as their theme. Through their lenses, they explored family bonds from a global perspective. One video followed a student's long journey home for reunion, weaving together departures and homecomings across different time zones. Another showed the quiet healing of a family conflict, reminding us that celebration can bring people back together. Most moving was a student's reflection on the idea that "family is where you are" - a thought that speaks to many in our community of globally mobile families. Through their eyes, the tradition of reunion, rooted in Chinese culture, became a story of belonging that reaches across any distance.

In MYP Year 5, students turned to the

beauty of Song-dynasty Ci poetry to express their own feelings about youth and life. Working within classical forms, they wrote verses about friendship across distances, staying strong through hard times, and not letting unkind words shake them. One student wrote of saying goodbye to a close friend moving far away, finding new meaning in an ancient tradition. Another used images of wind and rain to stand for hardship, reminding us that storms pass and we remain. In their hands, a thousand-year-old poetic form became a way to speak about the lives of young people today, navigating friendship, identity, and belonging across cultures.

Together, these plays, videos, and poems are more than just school projects. They show that when students root themselves in a tradition - a New Year's

Eve dinner, a family reunion, a classical poem - they find within it something that reaches everyone. For these young global citizens, learning about Chinese traditions is not about memorizing facts. It is about learning to listen, to respect, and to embrace difference. In this classroom, Chinese traditions become a shared language, one that crosses borders and brings people together. Here, local roots grow into global understanding, and cultural exchange blooms in the most beautiful ways.



By Xiating Fang, CAS Coordinator, MYP & DP Mandarin Teacher at SCIS Pudong

<p><b>EXPOSITION</b></p>  <p>SHOT: 电影感远景 ACTION: 一名年轻男子独自坐在狭小凌乱的出租屋里，在桌上数着零钱的零钱和旧硬币，神情无奈又伤感。 CAMERA MOVEMENT: 固定镜头，轻微俯拍，突出孤独感。 LOCATION/SCENE: 城市廉价的出租屋。夜晚，与窗外的繁华形成对比。冬天的冷色调，昏黄的黄色灯光照亮零钱，冬天。</p>	<p><b>CONFLICT</b></p>  <p>SHOT: 中近景 ACTION: 男子接听母亲的电话，脸上勉强露出笑容，另一只手摩挲着皱巴巴的车票。 CAMERA MOVEMENT: 镜头缓慢推近特写，突出人物表情。 LOCATION/SCENE: 出租屋里，手机屏幕在黑暗里暗发光。</p>	<p><b>RISING ACTION</b></p>  <p>SHOT: 中景 ACTION: 在老家门口，母亲郑重地把一颗红红的苹果递给主角，儿子神情庄重且难堪，两人可以进行对话。 CAMERA MOVEMENT: 轻微推镜头特写，焦点落在苹果上，再一次特写母亲和儿子的神情。 LOCATION/SCENE: 春节期间的老房子内，屋内暖光，屋外冷色调，对比主角的格格不入以及这个家庭的艰辛。为后续打下铺垫。</p>
<p><b>CLIMAX</b></p>  <p>SHOT: 特写 ACTION: 在返回出租屋的路上，我儿子咬了一口苹果，然后突然停了下来，目不转睛地盯着它，眼中闪过一丝灵感。 CAMERA MOVEMENT: 缓慢推近，背景虚化。电影模式先对苹果对焦再对男子专注的神情，帮助观众想象时间，故事高潮。 LOCATION/SCENE: 回城路边车站黄昏，冷暖色交替。</p>	<p><b>FALLING ACTION</b></p>  <p>SHOT: 蒙太奇式中景 ACTION: 男子继续工作，设计品牌标志，漸漸意識到放棄盲目的目標。蒙太奇剪輯多項工作任務從而快速回神。包裝上出現蘋果元素，事業逐漸起步。 CAMERA MOVEMENT: 快速剪輯，感越來越快，增加影片節奏。 LOCATION/SCENE: 办公室，簡陋的办公室。夜晚与白天交替暗示时间的流逝。</p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION</b></p>  <p>SHOT: 远景，中景 ACTION: 第三年春节，一家人团聚吃年夜饭，桌上摆着苹果，父母慈祥微笑，气氛温馨安定。父母向儿子说了声“儿子突然懂事，又有出息了”。 CAMERA MOVEMENT: 缓慢拉远，画面定格。 LOCATION/SCENE: 老家餐桌，浓厚家庭气息，暖色调灯光以及背景。</p>



# Beyond Boundaries, Beyond Expectations

## Small Groups, Big Growth

At the SCIS Early Childhood Education campus, learning often looks like play. Walk into a classroom and you will see children building, exploring materials, engaging in imaginative scenarios, and collaborating with peers. These experiences are part of our inquiry-based approach to learning, where children ask questions, test ideas, and develop their understanding of the world through exploration and interaction.

Because this learning environment is active and play-based, there can sometimes be a misconception that inquiry learning does not involve direct instruction or detailed assessment. In reality, strong inquiry classrooms rely on both. Teachers carefully observe, document, and assess children's learning so that they can provide the right support at the right time. This commitment reflects our theme of going beyond boundaries and beyond expectations in how we support each child's development.

Across SCIS, an important step in strengthening our literacy instruction has been the adoption of a new reading benchmark assessment. In Fall 2024, SCIS implemented the Dynamic Indicators

of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) for all students in Kindergarten through Grade 5. This change aligns our practices with the most current evidence-based research on reading instruction.

DIBELS is a brief, one-on-one reading screener that helps teachers understand how students are developing key early literacy skills. The assessment looks at foundational skills such as recognizing letter sounds and reading words accurately and smoothly. These early skills are essential building blocks that help children become confident and fluent readers. Because the assessment is short and focused, it provides teachers with clear information about whether students are meeting grade-level expectations, performing above grade level expectations, or may

benefit from additional support. This information plays an important role in guiding instruction. The data is used by teachers to inform daily classroom teaching for individual students and also helps us organize targeted small groups across each grade level.

These intervention blocks are known as What I Need (WIN) time. WIN time is carefully planned by the entire grade-level team, including classroom teachers, the Learning Support teacher, the principal, and the English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher for Grade 1. Together, the team reviews student data and determines how to organize small groups so that each child receives the support that will have the greatest impact on their reading development.

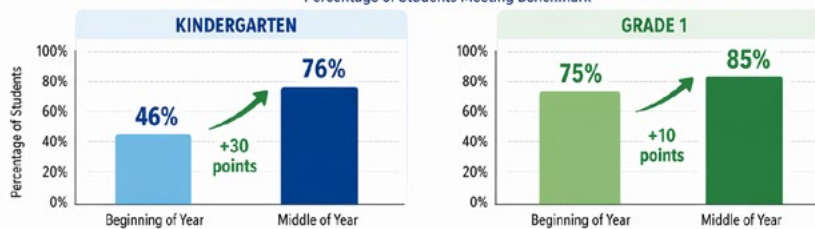




## Kindergarten & Grade 1 Reading Growth

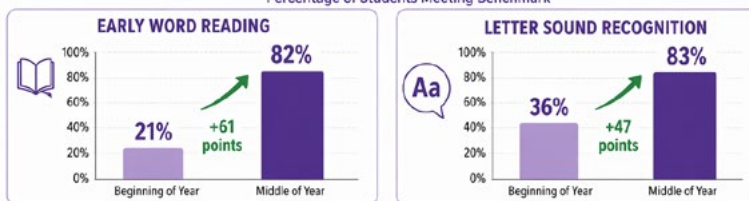
### OVERALL LITERACY BENCHMARKS

Percentage of Students Meeting Benchmark



### SPECIFIC LITERACY SKILLS – KINDERGARTEN

Percentage of Students Meeting Benchmark



the middle of the year. In Grade 1, the percentage of students meeting benchmark increased from 75% to 85% during the same period. When examining specific literacy skills, the progress is even more striking. In Kindergarten, students demonstrating strong early word reading skills increased from 21% to 82%, and those meeting the letter sound recognition benchmark increased from 36% to 83%. These gains highlight the impact of targeted instruction and the focused support students receive during WIN time.

Data-informed instruction groups such as WIN time allow teachers to respond quickly and intentionally to student needs. By working in small groups, educators can provide more individualized feedback, increased opportunities for practice, and instruction that is closely matched to each student’s current stage of development. This targeted support helps students build confidence in their reading abilities while ensuring that learning challenges are addressed early.

WIN time represents just one of many ways that SCIS uses data to inform teaching and learning. Across our campuses, teachers regularly review assessment information, classroom observations, and student work to guide instructional decisions. These practices ensure that learning experiences remain responsive, intentional, and focused on helping every child grow.

By combining inquiry-based learning, thoughtful assessment, and targeted intervention, SCIS continues to move beyond boundaries and beyond expectations—ensuring that every child develops the strong foundations they need for lifelong learning.

While DIBELS provides important benchmark data, teachers also incorporate their ongoing observations and anecdotal records when forming these groups. This ensures that instruction reflects both formal assessment data and what teachers see students demonstrating in their everyday learning. The intervention groups focus on specific foundational reading skills that will have the greatest impact on each child’s progress. For students who are already meeting or exceeding the reading benchmark for that assessment period, teachers identify other areas where additional instruction may be beneficial. These enrichment groups may

focus on writing, mathematics, or social skills, ensuring that every child continues to grow.

Reading benchmarks are administered three times each year across the SCIS system—at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. While all students are expected to make progress between assessment periods, our recent data shows particularly strong growth among our Kindergarten and Grade 1 students.

In Kindergarten, the percentage of students meeting overall literacy benchmarks increased from 46% at the beginning of the year to 76% by



**By Heather Knight,  
ECE Principal at SCIS  
Hongqiao**

# Learning How to Learn

How the Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills help students take ownership of their learning



Imagine your child has just graduated from university. As they step into the workplace and the wider world, what do you hope for them?

Certainly, knowledge matters. But beyond knowledge, most parents hope their children will be able to think critically, communicate clearly, collaborate with others, manage challenges, and continue learning throughout their lives. In other words, we hope they will become caring, capable, and increasingly independent global citizens.

These are not skills that suddenly appear in adulthood. They are built over years of learning. In the Primary Years Programme (PYP), we focus not only on what students learn, but on how they learn. Understanding the process of learning allows students to take increasing ownership of it.

## Framework for Learning

The International Baccalaureate® (IB) Approaches to Learning (ATL) provides the framework through which this happens. These skills are not the icing on the cake. They are core ingredients baked into learning itself, shaping how students engage with complexity and challenge.

The framework is organized into five skill areas that guide how students approach learning:

- Thinking
- Communication
- Research
- Self-management
- Social



Together, these skills help students develop the habits that allow them to learn with increasing independence.



### How ATLs Shape Learning

Each ATL category includes a continuum of skills that students develop over time. The examples below illustrate the kinds of abilities students build as learners rather than a complete list.

When students strengthen thinking skills, they move beyond recall toward conceptual understanding by analyzing ideas, generating possibilities, and considering different perspectives. Research skills help students ask purposeful questions, gather information, and evaluate sources with discernment. Communication skills allow them to express ideas clearly and adapt their message for different audiences. Social skills support productive collaboration, encouraging students to listen to others and navigate differing viewpoints. Self-management skills build the discipline to plan, prioritize, persevere, and regulate emotion when work becomes demanding.

Students also reflect on the strategies that helped them learn most effectively. This metacognitive practice reflects the level of intellectual engagement expected at SCIS. When these skills are intentionally embedded within subjects and standards, rigor is defined by depth of understanding rather than workload or completion speed. In turn, students build the habits that support lifelong learning.

### Building Independence

Over time, students begin to understand themselves as learners. They develop the ability to make informed decisions about how they approach their work, from setting goals to selecting strategies that help them make progress. Teachers continue to guide and support this process, but students increasingly take responsibility for planning their work, monitoring their progress, and adjusting when challenges arise.

As students follow their curiosity and pursue questions that matter to them, they build confidence and develop a growth mindset. Independence grows not through working alone, but through developing the judgment and self-awareness to manage one's own learning and well-being.

### ATLs in Action

This development occurs across the IB continuum. One example can be seen during the Grade 5 PYP Exhibition, where students apply the Approaches to Learning skills they have been developing over time.

Often described as a culminating project, the Exhibition is a demonstration of years of skill development in action. Students determine which inquiry can sustain deep investigation, organize long-term timelines, collaborate with new peers, navigate disagreement, and communicate their

learning with clarity. The quality of their work reflects not only what they know, but how effectively they apply the learning skills they have built.

### Learning Beyond the Classroom

These capacities extend well beyond any single unit or grade level. They equip students to approach unfamiliar challenges with strategy and confidence, articulate their understanding clearly, and make informed choices based on an awareness of how they learn best.

Our responsibility is not limited to delivering curriculum. It is also to cultivate learners who understand how they learn and can apply those habits independently across contexts and over time.

When students internalize how they learn, they gain the capacity to direct their own future. And when that day comes—when your child graduates and steps into the next stage of life—they carry with them not only knowledge, but the skills and self-awareness to respond thoughtfully to whatever lies ahead.



**Susan Cole, Lower School  
Vice Principal at SCIS  
Hongqiao**

# Honoring the Whole Child

## Wellness, Movement, and the Power of Structured Recess

At our school, we believe that learning extends far beyond the classroom walls. This year, one of our most impactful initiatives has been the integration of wellness, social-emotional learning (SEL), and structured recess as a meaningful way to honor students' needs to connect, move, and have the skills to solve all problems. Through the collaborative efforts of our Lower School PE teacher, Mr. S., and the Positive School Culture Committee, we have strengthened our commitment to supporting the whole child in alignment with the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) and Personal, Social, and Physical Education (PSPE) standards.

A cornerstone of this work has been the development of the *Dragon's Wheel of Choice* for students in Kindergarten

through Grade 5. This student-generated, teacher-supported solutions system empowers children to focus on constructive problem-solving strategies. Rooted in the principles of Positive Discipline, the Wheel of Choice invites students to identify practical solutions they can use when conflicts arise. By involving students directly in creating and practicing these strategies, we are nurturing independence, accountability, and resilience. The Wheel has become a visible and celebrated part of our culture—even appearing as stickers on water bottles—serving as a daily reminder that students have the tools to manage challenges thoughtfully and respectfully.

This initiative beautifully reflects the PSPE strands of **Identity, Interactions,**

**Wellness,** and **Movement.** Students are developing a deeper understanding of who they are—their values, emotions, strengths, and areas for growth. They are learning how their self-image impacts their interactions and how to manage both in-person and digital relationships with integrity. By practicing conflict resolution skills in authentic playground situations, they are strengthening their ability to collaborate, communicate, and appreciate diversity within our community.

Structured recess has been a powerful vehicle for bringing these concepts to life. As one of our students, Izzy, shared in the Lower School Publications, structured recess begins each week with a “word of the week” and a “game of the week.” Students gather together, learn new games, and are encouraged to include others. The purpose is not to replace free play, but to enrich it—providing options, building skills, and ensuring that every child feels a sense of belonging.

Students' voices affirm the impact. Maddie in Grade 4 shared, “It’s like regular recess, except there are options you didn’t even know you had.” Lea, in Grade 3, enjoys learning new games that connect her to friends' interests, while Yolie, in Grade 5, appreciates how games like tag help build control and speed. Through structured play, students develop fundamental movement skills, cardiovascular fitness, coordination, and body awareness—key elements of the Movement strand of PSPE. At the same time, they build friendships, practice empathy, and strengthen communication skills.

We are proud to report that since implementing structured recess and





explicitly teaching problem-solving strategies, playground incidents have decreased significantly. Students are better equipped to navigate disagreements, seek solutions, and restore relationships when needed. The Dragon Keeper recognition further reinforces positive behavior, celebrating students who embody our shared values of being safe, respectful, and responsible.

Personal, social, and physical education is not an “extra”—it is interwoven into every aspect of school life. By intentionally integrating wellness, movement, and structured opportunities for collaboration, we are fostering balanced, healthy learners who understand their responsibilities to themselves, to others, and to the world around them.

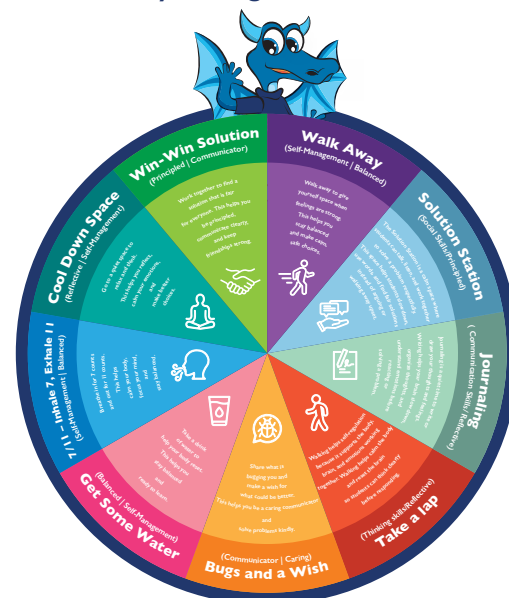
As we continue refining these initiatives, we remain committed to honoring the whole child. Through structured recess and the Dragon’s Wheel of Choice, our students are not only moving their bodies—they are strengthening their identities, deepening their relationships, and growing into thoughtful, capable problem-solvers.

### 3-5 Dragon’s Wheel of Choice

Do you have a small problem?  
Try 2 Dragon Choices!



By Molly Myers, Lower School Principal at SCIS Pudong



Do you have a big problem? **Tell an adult you trust.**

# One Beat, One Global Community



The xylophone begins softly, performed by a student from Brazil. A steady beat fills the room. A Korean student adds a rhythm on the djembe. Another responds. Soon, the entire circle joins in, singing in chorus and playing together — listening, adjusting, smiling.

There are students from all continents of the world, but no translation is needed.

In that moment, music becomes a shared language.

In our PYP classrooms, students bring diverse cultures, home languages, and experiences. For some, English is still developing. For others, confidence takes time. Music offers an immediate way to belong. A rhythm does not require vocabulary. A melody can be understood before it is explained. Through shared sound and movement, students connect long before they feel fully confident expressing themselves in words.

These moments reflect our mission in action: to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring learners who contribute positively to their communities.

Through music, students are inquiring — exploring sounds from different cultures, asking questions about traditions,



and experimenting with rhythm and composition. They become knowledgeable as they learn how music expresses history, identity, and emotion across the world. Most importantly, they grow as caring learners — listening carefully to one another, encouraging peers, and respecting diverse perspectives.

When students hear music from a classmate's culture, they begin to understand community in a deeper way. Students are encouraged to share songs from their own cultures with the class. When students experience music connected to their own backgrounds, identity is affirmed. When they explore unfamiliar musical traditions, curiosity grows into respect. Music builds empathy and belonging. It gives quieter students leadership opportunities and allows every child to participate fully, regardless of language proficiency.

These are not just musical skills — they are life skills that empower children to contribute positively to the communities they are part of now and in the future.

When the final beat fades, something remains — a shared sense of understanding.

And in that shared pulse, our school community's mission lives and breathes.



*By Dave Matthews, Lower School Music Teacher at SCIS*

# AI Tools to Thinking

## How SCIS is Using AI to Enhance Teaching and Learning



At SCIS, we approach emerging technologies with both curiosity and care. Artificial Intelligence is no exception. Rather than asking whether AI belongs in our school, we believe the more important question is how it can be used responsibly to support learning, strengthen teaching practice, and empower students to think more deeply and independently.

Our approach to AI is grounded in purpose and in line with the IB. AI is not a replacement for teachers, nor is it a shortcut for learning. Instead, it is a tool that, if used well, can make things better for students, give them more chances to get feedback and think about their learning, and free up more time for real human connection in the classroom.

A significant part of this work sits within our learning management system, Toddle. Toddle already supports curriculum planning, school-home communication, assessment, feedback, and reporting across our IB programs. With the introduction of Toddle AI this year, teachers now have access to tools that help streamline planning, generate draft feedback aligned to learning criteria, assist with feedback, and support reflective practice. These tools do not replace professional judgement, they enhance it. Toddle AI allows teachers to focus more fully on knowing their students, refining instruction, and responding to individualized learning needs.

For students, we are equally intentional. Toddle AI Tutors provide structured, teacher-guided support that helps students engage with learning more independently. Rather than simply giving answers, the AI Tutors prompt thinking, ask questions, and adapt feedback to each student's



pace and level of understanding. This allows students to revisit concepts, clarify misunderstandings, and build confidence through personalized 1:1 support. At the same time, teacher oversight, configurable AI Tutor settings, and built-in safety measures help ensure that this support remains purposeful, visible, and aligned with learning goals.

Student engagement data shows strong and growing adoption. Analysis indicates that over 50 percent of students in Grades 2–10 have been assigned at least one Toddle AI Tutor task, reflecting widespread teacher adoption and purposeful classroom integration. When examining active participation, approximately 38 percent of students in Grades 2–10 have submitted at least one AI Tutor task, providing a more conservative and meaningful measure of student engagement. Together, these figures help us distinguish between access, instructional intent, and student follow through.

Beyond Toddle, all SCIS teachers and upper school students can also use Microsoft 365 Copilot. This gives everyone access to AI in a way that is secure, school-managed, and PRC-compliant, while working inside familiar Microsoft tools. For teachers, Copilot can help with things like drafting materials, summarizing information, and organizing ideas. For students, it can support brainstorming, planning, and reflecting on their learning. Like all school AI tools, it is meant to be used responsibly, with clear expectations about when and how it is appropriate to use it.

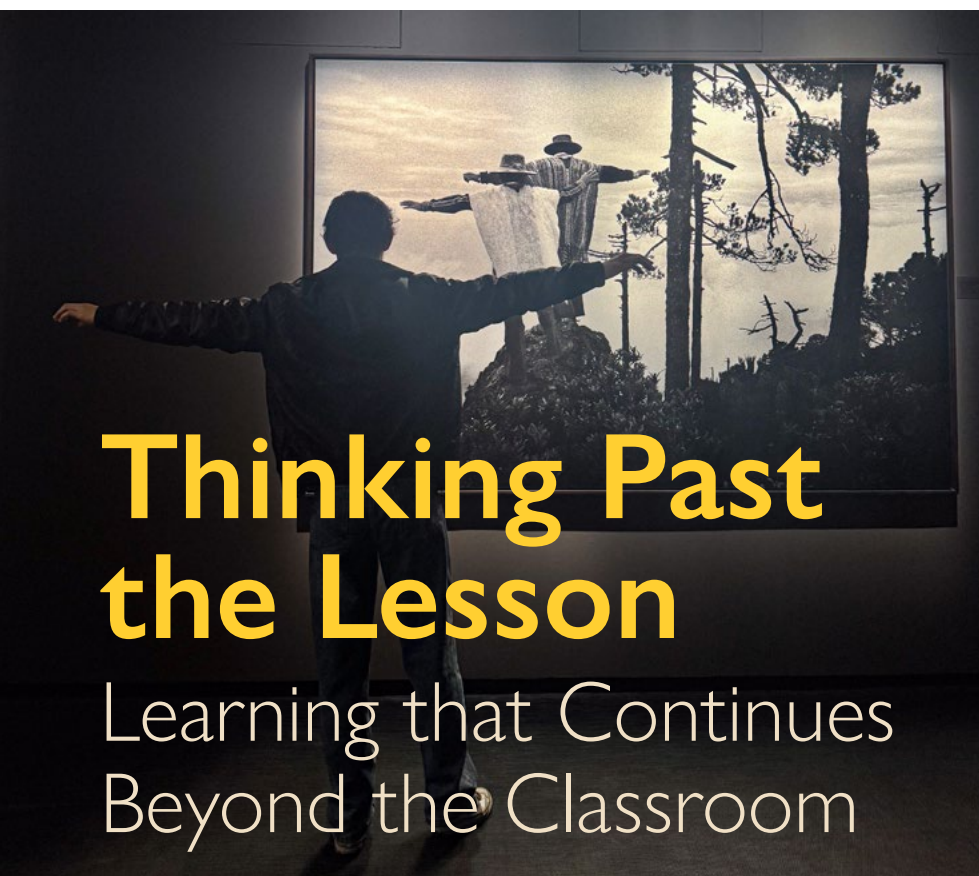
At the center of all this work is our commitment to using AI in an ethical and responsible way. SCIS has just completed the development of a strong new AI Responsible Use Agreement for students, teachers, staff, and community members. It is based on IB guidance and good practice in international schools, and it will work alongside our existing data privacy and academic integrity policies. The agreement clearly explains expectations for honesty

about AI use, who is responsible for the work created, protecting personal data, and using AI appropriately. It also stresses the importance of critical thinking and human judgment.

At SCIS, we see AI as something we keep learning about and improving over time. By keeping teachers and students at the center, we use AI to support thinking, learning, and relationships, not replace them. When used carefully, safely, and ethically, AI can help spark curiosity, give more useful feedback, and create more time for real human connection. In this way, AI supports SCIS in helping students grow into thoughtful, capable, and principled learners in a changing world.



*By Gregory Read,  
Director of Technology  
and Innovation at SCIS*



# Thinking Past the Lesson

## Learning that Continues Beyond the Classroom

At SCIS Pudong, conversations with Hector (Class of 2026) rarely stay within the boundaries of a single subject for long. A discussion that begins with a mathematics problem may soon drift toward philosophy; a debate about global politics might lead to questions about economics or financial systems. For him, ideas are rarely isolated—they connect, challenge one another, and often lead somewhere unexpected.

Since joining SCIS in Grade 9, Hector has developed a way of learning shaped by exploration and dialogue. Rather than treating subjects as separate academic tracks, he approaches them as part of a larger intellectual landscape, where questions in one field often open the door to another.

### Arrival.

When Hector first joined SCIS in 2022, what struck him most was not only the diversity of cultures at school, but the sense of community that held those differences together.

"I distinctly remember that even on my first day there, I did not have

trouble finding others to sit with during lunchtime," he recalls.

Extracurricular activities quickly became one of the ways he connected with the community. In Grade 9, he joined the Art Factory, despite having little experience with painting or sketching. An older student took the time to teach him basic techniques, from mixing paint to choosing the right brush.

"It was a singular instance of kindness," Hector says, "but it's also emblematic of the broader, supportive school culture."

### Learning.

At SCIS, Hector's academic experience developed gradually through both the IB framework and the mentorship of his teachers.

Toward the end of his Grade 10 MYP year, conversations with teachers helped him recognize a natural strength in mathematics and the sciences. His performance in class, participation in the Math Club, and involvement in competitions such as the Canadian Waterloo and Suzhou High School Team

Maths (HSTM) mathematics contests all pointed in a similar direction.

At the same time, the structure of the IB programme shaped the way he approached learning. Ideas introduced early in a course often reappeared later in more complex forms, encouraging students to build knowledge cumulatively. Hector found himself focusing less on memorizing procedures and more on understanding the reasoning behind them.

SCIS also supported this process in practical ways. With study halls built into the school day, students are often able to complete much of their coursework at school. For Hector, this created space to explore other interests independently while maintaining a demanding academic schedule—an environment that gradually reinforced the habits of a self-directed learner.

### Reflection.

Some of Hector's most meaningful learning moments happen in quieter moments between classes. He often finds himself pausing to think through ideas that surfaced earlier in the day. A mathematical proof might still be unfolding in his mind, or a concept from a recent reading might spark a new question.

"I have a habit of daydreaming or dazing off into the distance," he says. "Sometimes I'm thinking about ideas from *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, reconstructing mathematical proofs, or just recalling melodies."

These reflections often continue in conversation. Discussions with friends move easily between academic subjects and broader questions about society,





ethics, and decision-making. Over time, those exchanges became an informal extension of the classroom, where ideas are tested through dialogue rather than assignments.

### Focus.

Hector's academic interests did not develop within a single discipline. Instead, they gradually took shape at the intersection of several different fields.

Alongside his strengths in mathematics and science, he found himself increasingly drawn to questions about how people think, make decisions, and understand complex systems. Philosophy became one avenue for exploring those ideas. Borrowing books from the school library, he read works such as *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Republic*, and *Fear and Trembling*, encountering perspectives on ethics, meaning, and human behavior that extended far beyond the classroom.

Music offered another form of exploration. Hector began teaching himself guitar and occasionally composing piano melodies, drawn to the patterns and structures that connect music and mathematics in unexpected ways.

As he moved further into the IB Diploma Programme, these different interests began to align more clearly. Conversations with his college counselor helped him reflect on how his analytical strengths in mathematics might connect with broader questions about human behavior and decision-making.

In his senior year, that curiosity led him to establish a student investment club, where he and other students explored market trends and experimented

with simplified portfolio models using quantitative analysis.

### Diplomacy.

If the classroom sparked ideas, the Model United Nations (MUN) gave Hector the opportunity to bring them into debate.

He joined the club shortly after arriving at SCIS, at a time when only two students regularly attended meetings. Despite the small group, their supervising teacher continued preparing them for regional conferences. Over time, what began as a modest club became one of the most formative parts of Hector's high school experience.

MUN demanded careful research, quick thinking, and the ability to understand global issues from multiple perspectives. As Hector became more involved, he began writing extensive background papers—sometimes exceeding 3,000 words—on topics ranging from the economic impact of artificial intelligence to debates surrounding human rights.

Standing at the podium in front of hundreds of students was intimidating at first. But over time, he grew more confident navigating debate and negotiation.

By his senior year, Hector had taken on a leadership role within the MUN community. Delivering the closing speech for the Human Rights Council at CISSMUN, a conference attended by more than 600 students, felt like a full-circle moment.

"I started my Model UN journey at that same conference as a nervous delegate who barely spoke," he says. "Ending it as a President Chair felt like a meaningful conclusion."

Throughout his time at SCIS, Hector's interests have rarely stayed within clear boundaries. The IB programme at SCIS encouraged him to think across disciplines, while the school's emphasis on independent learning gave him the space to explore ideas beyond the curriculum.

"They taught me that concepts rarely stand alone," he says. "They build on each other."

For Hector, the most valuable outcome of these years may not be any single achievement, but the habit of asking better questions—examining ideas from multiple perspectives before arriving at an answer.



# A Childhood Between Cultures

## How Family and SCIS Shape a Global Learner

SCIS is a community shaped by families from diverse cultural backgrounds, each bringing their own traditions, languages, and perspectives into the life of the school.

We invited a Chinese–French family from SCIS Pudong to share how their son Lucas, a Kindergarten student, is growing up between cultures, how they found their place within the SCIS community, and how his learning journey continues to connect his experiences at school with everyday life at home.

**Between Cultures at Home**  
**Your family brings together different cultural backgrounds.**  
**Could you share a little about your international journey?**

We are a Chinese–French family. We met in Shanghai 11 years ago, shortly after my husband arrived, and we have now been together for almost 10 years.

Both of us have international backgrounds. I have lived in China, the UK, and the USA, while my husband has lived in France, the USA, and the Czech Republic. These experiences helped us develop a strong appreciation for different cultures and environments.

Lucas was born during COVID, which made it difficult at first to share many of these experiences with him, but we tried to make the most of that time. Today, Lucas couldn't be happier to go to school—he is probably the only one in the family who looks forward to Monday mornings. He is always excited about school and especially enjoys participating in his after-school activities.

**How would you describe Lucas as a learner and as a child at home?**

Like many children his age, Lucas loves dinosaurs, monsters, Lego, and Pokémon. At the same time, he also enjoys singing, reading, and anything related to storytelling.

He has a very vivid imagination, which makes playtime very interesting. One thing that surprises us often is his incredible memory. He is able to remember very small details that we sometimes forget ourselves.

**What does growing up in a multilingual home look like in everyday life?**

At home, we use three languages, and it has been fascinating to see Lucas not only learning the languages but also naturally absorbing the cultures behind them.

We now see him adapting depending on the situation and the people he interacts with. As parents, we place a lot of importance on adaptability, empathy, and developing a global mindset, so it is very rewarding to see him already showing these qualities.

Our daily life reflects this cultural mix in simple ways, from bedtime stories that range from *Petit Loup* to *Journey to the West* or *The Polar Express*, to celebrations throughout the year. Lucas especially enjoys receiving hongbao during Chinese New Year and, of course, Christmas presents later in the year.

**Finding a Place at SCIS**

**When you were exploring schools, what mattered most to your family?**

When we were looking for schools, we wanted a diverse and international community as well as an educational approach that matched our beliefs about learning.

SCIS stood out to us because it met both of these expectations. It is also conveniently located near our home, but more importantly, we appreciated the strong sense of community. We also liked that the school is not extremely large, which we felt would help Lucas integrate more easily and build relationships.

**What was most meaningful about Lucas's transition into SCIS?**

Lucas had already attended another nursery school, so he was somewhat familiar with a school environment. Even so, changing schools is never easy.

However, he adapted very quickly. By his second week, he was already very proud to take the school bus independently every day. We felt this reflected the self-management skills that SCIS encourages through the PYP approach.



Lucas has a very hands-on personality, so learning through doing, exploring, and playing has been a very good fit for him.

### Learning and Growth in Action How have you seen Lucas grow through his learning experience at SCIS so far?

It has been very interesting to see how Lucas brings home the concepts he learns at school. He often talks about being a “risk-taker,” one of the IB learner profile traits, and reminds us that it is important to try new things. Sometimes he even encourages us to try new food or new experiences because being a risk-taker means being open-minded. He also likes to describe himself as an inquirer and knowledgeable, which always makes us smile.

Last year, during a Unit of Inquiry about the solar system, he became very curious and started asking many questions at home. Around the same time, he received a telescope for his birthday, which created a perfect opportunity to continue that learning together as a family. Using an app to guide us, we spent several evenings exploring the night sky together. Even with all the lights in Shanghai, we were lucky enough to observe Venus, Mars, and even Jupiter. It was a wonderful example of how learning at school can spark curiosity that continues at home.

A smaller but very memorable example happened during Yuan Xiao Jie, the final day of the Chinese New Year celebrations. Lucas had learned at SCIS that it is traditional to eat tang yuan on that day. The dish was served at lunch at school, but he refused to eat it because he told his teachers he would eat many of them at home for dinner. Since we had not discussed this with him beforehand, we were quite surprised when he told us about it. Fortunately, we had actually prepared tang yuan that evening, which made the moment even more meaningful. It was a small moment, but it showed us how Lucas is beginning to connect what he learns about culture at SCIS with traditions in his own family life.

Communication with Lucas’s teachers has also been very easy, whether through Toodle or during Parent-Teacher Conferences. We always feel informed about what he is learning and what is

happening in the classroom. This insight into his daily school life allows us to better support his learning at home. Seeing Lucas so happy and engaged also gives us a strong sense of trust and confidence in his teachers.

### How does Lucas’s learning continue to show during family time?

Lucas is still at an age where playing is very important. He understands that weekends mean more free time and more time together as a family. He actually likes to call these days our “Family Days.”

Recently, we have enjoyed playing board games together such as Uno, The Game of Life, and Monopoly. His growing reading skills have made these games more accessible and enjoyable for him, and we can already see how they help him develop problem-solving skills.

### Have any of his interests recently grown from his learning experiences?

His growing interest in reading has also inspired a new passion. His favorite book character is Sun Wukong, the Monkey

King, which made him determined to learn Kung Fu.

It was not easy to find the right class, as we found many options for jiu-jitsu or karate, but Lucas was very clear that he wanted to learn Kung Fu. His determination was quite impressive and even helped him when preparing for the Chinese New Year performance this year.

### Looking Ahead As parents, what hopes do you have as Lucas continues his learning journey?

We hope Lucas will continue to keep his enthusiasm for learning and discovering new ideas. We want him to keep asking questions, stay curious, and remain open to new experiences.

We hope he will grow into someone who feels confident pursuing his aspirations in an ever-changing world. We are also very grateful that SCIS provides an environment that keeps him engaged and emphasizes openness, curiosity, and community—qualities that we believe will stay with him for many years to come.



# Dragons Finish Season with **Fire** and **Grit**



## Boys Battle Through Adversity to Claim Thrilling Fifth-Place Victory

The SCIS Pudong boys' basketball team closed out their season in dramatic fashion, clawing their way to a hard-fought victory in the SISAC tournament finale—proving that heart can sometimes outweigh numbers on the scoreboard.

The season began with fireworks. At the Dragon Cup in Suzhou, the boys stormed out of the gate, winning two of three high-octane matchups. Eric and Graco lit up the scoreboard, while Eino owned the paint, snatching rebound after rebound. At the helm, point guard Phiwa orchestrated the offense with surgical precision, constantly finding the open man for easy buckets.

When conference play began, the Dragons carried that momentum forward. They opened SISAC league play with a blistering 2-0 record, highlighted by a nail-biting four-point thriller. Graco caught fire from beyond the arc, raining down triples that left the crowd roaring. Another gritty win followed, and hopes were high.

Then came the toughest stretch. Injuries and illness whittled the roster down to just five available players by the time the SISAC tournament arrived. Short-handed but unshaken, the Dragons took the court and battled relentlessly, falling by 15 points in their opener—a defeat that only steeled their resolve.

In the fifth-place consolation match, the "Iron Five" got their shot at redemption. The game swung like a pendulum, neither side yielding an inch. Then, with the clock winding down, MJ rose to the occasion. A mid-range jumper. Nothing but net. The Dragons seized a four-point lead and held on through a frantic final minute, securing a victory that felt more like a championship.

This wasn't just a win. It was a statement. A year after struggling to even field a team, the boys' program has risen from the ashes. With young talent developing fast, the future is blindingly bright for the green and blue.

## Girls Soar to Season-Ending Victory Behind Relentless Defense

The SCIS Pudong girls' basketball team wrote their own thrilling final chapter, closing the season with a statement win and a 6-3 record.

The Dragons came out roaring at the Dragon Cup, sweeping all three games in dominant fashion. Allison was unstoppable, leading the entire tournament in scoring. Ariana hounded ball handlers all over the court, forcing turnover after turnover and igniting fast breaks that left opponents scrambling.

SISAC regular season play brought tougher battles. The Dragons finished 2-2, but saved their best for last. In a must-win final regular season clash, Francesca and Nina anchored a relentless defensive effort that propelled the Green Dragons to victory—locking up a spot in the Cup division of the SISAC tournament.

The tournament opener was a wake-up call, a 20-point loss that could have broken their spirit. Instead, it lit a fire.

In the second round, the Dragons unleashed chaos. Coach Collett sprung

a high-pressure 1-3-1 defense, and guards Naomi and Allison executed it to perfection. The press forced turnover after turnover, fueling wave after wave of fast breaks. The Dragons didn't just compete—they soared, cruising to a 15-point victory that sent the seniors off in style.

As the final buzzer sounded, the team celebrated not just a win, but the end of an era. Seniors Giovanna, Allison, Francesca, and Ariana will graduate and move on to university—leaving behind a legacy of tenacity, growth, and unforgettable moments on the court.

The SCIS Pudong basketball program is built on toughness, heart, and a rising standard of excellence. If this season proved anything, it's that the Dragons never stop fighting—and the best is yet to come.



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



# *Our Swim Team is a Big Team*

Since late August, 125 Dragons Swim Team members have been focusing their team time on setting goals, refining skills, improving fitness, setting personal best times (PBTs), hoping someday their names will be recognized for all the hard work they put into competitive swimming, and building friendship bonds that extend beyond the walls of the pool and the school. These are the things propelling our swimmers' year-long dedication to our team.

We are a team committed to growing and celebrating diversity, creating environments where differences are embraced, and everyone feels welcome, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. The team is unique in that it combines students from the Lower School and Upper School. We have the Rainbow Team Grades 2-3, the Pink Team Grades 4-5, the Red Team Grades 6-7, and the Varsity White Team Grades 8-12.

Competitions and events run from September to June, with 5 Shanghai Swim League (SSL) meets punctuating the

structure of the season. Recently at the SSL Championships in April our team placed 5th overall out of 23 SSL teams. Just before CNY, at a two-day meet at HIS, 99% of our swimmers achieved at least one personal best time (PBT), 88% had PBTs in 3 or more events, and 62% of our Team had PBTs in ALL their individual events, which is the highest PBT percentage in the 2.5 years I've been here at SCIS!!!

29 Varsity White and Red Swim Team members had an impressive performance at ACAMIS in December, placing 7th out of 32 Teams from International schools across China. This was up three positions up from our 10th place finish last year. And if there was an award for the overall Girls' Team, we would have placed 2nd.

For the third year in a row our team ran a Swimathon for Heart 2 Heart in conjunction with SCIS's One Love One Heart campaign to raise money for lifesaving heart surgery for less fortunate local children. This year, 68 swimmers lapped it up in three days in March, swimming a





total of 167,000 meters or 167.1 kilometers, the distance from our school to Hangzhou International School. Our goal this year was to raise 66,666 RMB, enough for two heart surgeries. We're proud to have surpassed that goal, raising over 79,237 RMB.

With three fun and mildly competitive SSL Rainbow Team events, four in-house fun and energetic relay events, a 3-day swimathon, two prestigious invitational meets one at the world-class Oriental Sports Center, another at the International School of Bangkok, and a few Spring water polo matches, our Dragons Swim Team is kept motivated as competitors, student athletes, and global ambassadors of our great school.



*By Jon Biros, Aquatics  
Coordinator at SCIS Hongqiao*



# SCIS Hongqiao



## DI Boys Basketball team

This season was nothing short of amazing and exciting from start to finish. As a coach, what stood out most was how this team truly learned to play together and for each other. Every possession reflected tremendous effort, with players giving their all on every play, whether it showed up on the stat sheet or not. Just as importantly, the team consistently demonstrated outstanding sportsmanship on the court, representing our program with pride and respect in every game.

Our second-place finish is a testament to the progress we are making, and it shows that we are taking meaningful strides forward each year.

I also want to extend a special thank you to our seniors—Dylan, Sean, Giacomo, Jun, and Zhiheng. Your leadership, commitment, and dedication have been invaluable, and you have left a lasting impact on this team. This season will be remembered not just for the results, but for the unity, growth, and heart this team displayed every step of the way.

## DI Girls Basketball team

This season was about growth, resilience, and learning to compete together. The girls showed steady improvement in communication, toughness, and trust, and they represented our program with pride and sportsmanship. They learned to respond to adversity with effort, support one another through challenges, and celebrate each other's successes. While the scoreboard didn't always reflect their progress, their commitment to improving and playing for one another never wavered. We thank our senior Ella for her leadership and lasting impact, and we look forward with excitement to building on this foundation next season.



By Coach Andre Sun



By Daniel Hager



# Basketball Recap



## D2 Girls Basketball team

This year, our D2 Girls Basketball team came together with returning players, newcomers, and several students from our Middle School top level program. From the first practice, the team started on the right foot and kept their spirit and energy through the entire season.

We began at the Dragon Cup with a tough loss, but responded with inspiring wins. During the regular season, we faced a very strong squad and delivered a dominant performance. Entering the SISAC Cup Tournament for our division as the second seed from the west, the girls won a nail biter to reach the final. In the championship rematch, they played their best game of the season and finished as SISAC runners up.

Securing second place at SISAC is a fantastic accomplishment. Congratulations to every team member for your attitude, enthusiasm, and commitment, and for an incredible season!

Go Dragons!



By Coach Kirk Thomas

## D2 Boys Basketball team

This year's Division 2 basketball season was defined by growth, inspiration, and commitment. Heading into the season, the team displayed incredible grit and fight during our opening games at the Dragon Cup tournament. Throughout the season, we battled through several close contests—securing hard-fought wins and enduring tough losses that taught us exactly where we needed to grow. It all culminated during the SISAC tournament, where we battled our way to the final game, finishing just two points shy of the championship title. Overall, it was a highly successful season. Go Dragons!



By Coach: Sy Prescott



# Learning to Build Between Cultures: Noah on Architecture and Possibility



For Noah Lenz (Class of 2021, SCIS Hongqiao), architecture has never been just about buildings. It is a way of thinking shaped by movement across countries, constant negotiation between ideas, and constraints.

At the Politecnico di Torino, that way of thinking takes concrete form in structural calculations and long-term design projects that require both creativity and technical precision. Noah's academic path reflects habits formed early: intellectual curiosity, cultural openness, and a willingness to engage with complexity.

## Architecture As a Way of Thinking

Architecture at the Politecnico di Torino is structured around integration.

"Architecture studies combine many different fields. My studies range from Mathematics and Physics, through Design and Technologies, and to History and Social Studies, thus making my studying experience quite diverse," Noah explains.

Rather than approaching subjects separately, he finds himself moving constantly between structural reasoning, spatial composition, technical detail, and contextual analysis within a single project.

Each discipline feeds into the others, creating a learning rhythm that is part technical, part creative, and part social.

Most design projects extend across an entire semester and are often developed in groups. Ideas are presented, questioned, revised, and recalculated. Explaining a structural choice or defending a spatial strategy requires clarity as much as imagination.

Over time, Noah has come to understand that architecture is less about producing a singular vision and more about managing relationships: between form and function, concept and construction, individual ideas and collective work.

## From Preparation to Practice

Before beginning university, Noah took a gap year that proved decisive in shaping his academic path. "I wanted to gain more life experience by working, doing internships, and travelling before continuing my studies," he says. During this time, he prepared portfolios and completed internships in the construction sector. Living and working across Germany, Italy, and China, he encountered a variety of approaches, materials, and cultural attitudes toward

design, broadening both his perspective and his ambitions.

After his first year at university, he completed an internship in a small German architecture office and worked with his first real client. "Taking into account their needs, tastes, and financial situation completely changed how I approached a project," Noah recalls. This experience shifted his understanding of architecture from an academic exercise to a real-world practice. Design was no longer purely conceptual—it had to respond to actual people, contexts, and limitations. As Noah puts it, "Architecture is about learning how to respond—to place, to people, and to the world as it is, not as imagined."

## Foundations Formed at SCIS

Looking back, Noah credits SCIS with laying much of the groundwork for his adaptability and readiness for international study. Growing up in a highly international school environment made navigating different cultures, academic systems, and collaborative work feel natural rather than intimidating. "Being familiar with many different cultures made it easier for me to understand different ways of thinking—and, in architecture, different ways of designing," he reflects.

Courses such as Design & Technology introduced him early to both technical and creative problem-solving. The hands-on experience with materials, CAD tools, and iterative design processes acted almost like a preparatory workshop for architecture, teaching students how to test materials,



prototype designs, and troubleshoot problems. Beyond technical skills, habits such as essay writing, structured problem solving, and time management continue to guide how Noah approaches complex academic projects. These skills, developed at SCIS, remain central to how he manages collaborative work at university. Combined with exposure to diverse perspectives, these experiences provided a strong foundation that shapes his approach to challenges both in architecture and beyond.

### Architecture, Forward

Now pursuing his master's degree at the Politecnico di Torino, Noah spends his days immersed in design projects, technical coursework, and collaborative studio work. Each project challenges him to balance imagination with practical constraints, while also considering cultural and environmental context. Soon, he will take part in an exchange program with Tsinghua University, completing a joint thesis that bridges the two institutions and allows him to explore design approaches, materials, and construction practices from multiple perspectives. These experiences are helping him build a professional mindset capable of navigating architectural practice across countries and cultures.

Noah is especially passionate about contemporary vernacular architecture, which adapts traditional techniques to modern standards, preserves local identity, and promotes sustainability. "This kind of architecture reduces environmental impact," he explains, "but it also allows designs to be more deeply rooted in each specific place." He hopes to continue exploring this approach in both academic research and professional projects, testing how thoughtful design can harmonize with local culture and ecology.

For Noah, architecture is a continuous dialogue between imagination and reality. Looking ahead, he plans to gain professional experience in regional architectural offices, complete the required certification exams, and ultimately establish his own architectural practice that reflects his commitment to sustainability, cultural sensitivity, and innovative design. His journey illustrates that architecture is never just about designing buildings—it is about observing, collaborating, and responding thoughtfully to the world, while shaping a career guided by both personal vision and real-world responsibility.



## THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

### Alumni Mission:

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

### Alumni Contact:

[alumni@scis-china.org](mailto:alumni@scis-china.org)

### Alumni Requirements:

I. Graduated from a SCIS Campus

OR

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

### Social Media



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



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

# Growing Global Learners Together

When SCIS speaks about “Beyond Boundaries. Beyond Expectations.”, it reflects more than innovative classrooms or ambitious IB outcomes. It reflects partnership, the powerful intersection between school and home. Few people experience this intersection as vividly as members of the community who stand on both sides of it: parents who are also staff members.

From PAFA’s perspective, education at SCIS is not something delivered to families; it is something co-created with them. Parent–staff families see learning unfold during the school day, and then continue in living rooms, on city walks, and around dinner tables.





The Goulds: Jackie, Haakon, Sophia, and Freya



Curiosity is nurtured through space and imagination. Their daughters' room regularly transforms into Magnetile cities, cardboard shops, or a "classroom" where they play school. For their family, weekends often mean wandering Shanghai together.

"Our girls are very observant," Jackie reflects. "They notice little details and beauty in the city that we might otherwise miss."

**The Brennan Family**

For Nic Brennan, experiencing SCIS both as a staff member and as a parent offers a unique perspective on the school's global character. Originally from Oxford in the UK, Nic and his wife Kangjoo, who is from Seoul; have watched their daughter Millie grow into the international spirit of the community since joining in Grade 3.

"Working as the Head of Marketing and Communications gives me insight into what makes SCIS special," Nic says. "But being a parent reminds me that I also have a responsibility to share what the school truly stands for, an international learning environment that prepares students for any kind of future."

The diversity of friendships has been especially powerful to witness. "A few weeks ago, Millie brought three friends home to study together," he recalls. "All four girls could speak at least three languages each, which really amazed me."

Those friendships have broadened Millie's curiosity about the world. "She's constantly telling me about food she tried at a friend's house or music she discovered from another culture. Being a student at SCIS is like being a global student. Cultures blend so naturally here that students become more aware of who they are and where they fit in the world."

Across both families, one theme emerges clearly: learning does not stop when the school day ends. It continues through conversations, friendships, exploration, and shared curiosity; proving that when families and educators work together, the boundaries of education quietly disappear.



The Brennans: Nic, Kangjoo and Millie

**The Gould Family**

For the Goulds, the boundary between school and home is naturally blurred. Jackie Gould and her husband Haakon Gould have been part of the SCIS community for eight and a half years. Their daughters - Sophia (Grade 3) and Freya (Kindergarten) - have grown up here, with Sophia arriving in Shanghai at just 1.5 years old and Freya born in the city.

Reflecting on the IB philosophy, Jackie explains how it shapes family life in simple, everyday moments. "At home, we encourage our girls to be curious and ask questions," she shares. "We keep a small box of conversation cards at our dinner table called Little Talk. They spark questions and help us slow down and listen to each other."

The language of the IB learner profile often surfaces naturally in family life. "You'll hear our daughters talking about being caring at school, or trying to be principled when sharing toys," Jackie says. "Sometimes we even talk about being risk-takers as a family by trying a new hobby together."



By May Botha,  
PAFA Communications  
at SCIS Hongqiao

# Book Recommendations for All Ages

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



## Ashley Simmons, Media Specialist at SCIS

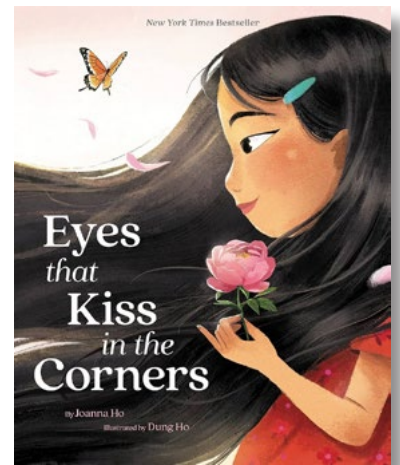
The power of story lies in its ability to carry us beyond what we know—beyond familiar places, beyond comfortable assumptions, and beyond the limits we sometimes place on ourselves. Each of these books invites readers to cross borders of identity, imagination, time, and possibility. Together, they remind us that growth often begins where certainty ends.

### Early Childhood (Ages 3-6)

#### *Eyes That Kiss in the Corners*

By Joanna Ho

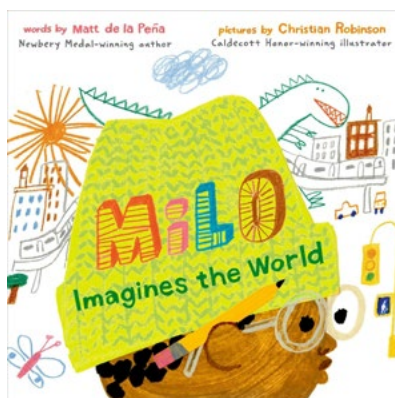
In this luminous and affirming picture book, a young girl notices that her eyes don't look like those of her classmates. Yet as she studies her reflection, she begins to recognize the familiar shape of her mother's, grandmother's, and sister's eyes—eyes that “kiss in the corners” and hold generations of memory and love. Joanna Ho's poetic language and Dung Ho's radiant illustrations celebrate heritage as a living, breathing source of strength. Rather than conforming to narrow standards, the girl discovers beauty rooted in family and cultural identity. This gentle yet powerful story invites readers to look beyond comparison and embrace the ways their differences connect them to something larger.



#### *Tomorrow Most Likely*

By Dave Eggers

Tomorrow unfolds as a landscape of possibility in this contemplative and quietly whimsical picture book. As a child settles into bed, the narrator imagines what the next day might hold: unexpected discoveries, fleeting moments of kindness, and small acts that ripple outward in unseen ways. Lane Smith's textured illustrations drift between the ordinary and the surreal, mirroring the uncertainty and promise of what lies ahead. Rather than predicting a single future, Eggers celebrates openness itself—the idea that each new day offers chances to grow, connect, and surprise ourselves. It's an invitation for young readers to see their lives not as fixed paths, but as stories still being written.

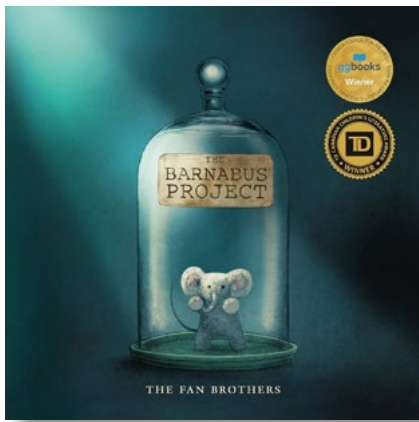


### Lower Primary (Ages 6-8)

#### *Milo Imagines the World*

by Matt de la Peña

During a long subway ride, Milo sketches the strangers around him, inventing elaborate lives for each one. In his drawings, commuters become actors, adventurers, and heroes—until a chance encounter reveals how far his assumptions have strayed from reality. Christian Robinson's layered, expressive illustrations mirror Milo's shifting perceptions, moving between imagination and truth. As Milo's understanding deepens, so does the reader's awareness of how easily we construct stories about others without knowing their full humanity. This thoughtful, compassionate book encourages readers to move beyond surface impressions and recognize the complexity of the lives unfolding all around them—and within themselves.



### ***The Barnabus Project***

by The Fan Brothers

Deep beneath a pristine pet shop, Barnabus lives among a collection of “Failed Projects”—creatures deemed too strange, too flawed, or simply not perfect enough. But Barnabus refuses to accept a life confined to a jar. With quiet determination and the help of his fellow misfits, he dares to imagine freedom. The Fan Brothers’ cinematic illustrations bring this hidden world to life in shadows and light, capturing both its beauty and its constraints. Barnabus’s escape becomes more than a physical journey—it’s a declaration that worth cannot be engineered or assigned. His story celebrates the courage it takes to defy expectations and find belonging beyond the boundaries others impose.



### **Upper Primary (Ages 8-11)**

#### ***The Skull***

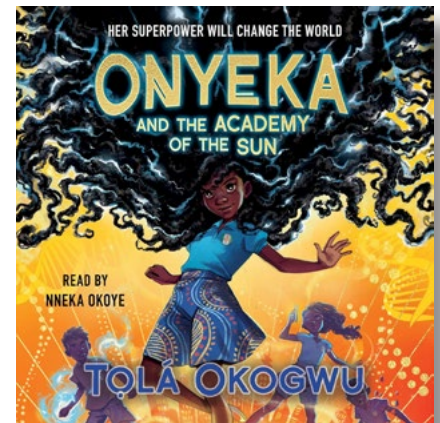
By Jon Klassen

When Otilla runs away into the night, she finds shelter in a strange house inhabited by a talking skull. Their uneasy companionship unfolds in muted tones and careful silences, blending eerie tension with unexpected tenderness. As danger approaches, Otilla must decide whether to flee again or stay and protect the fragile friendship she has found. Jon Klassen’s restrained storytelling invites readers to sit with uncertainty, exploring fear not as something to escape, but something to understand. In choosing connection over safety, Otilla discovers that courage often emerges in the quietest moments—when we choose to remain present, even at the edge of the unknown.

### ***Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun***

By Tolá Okogwu

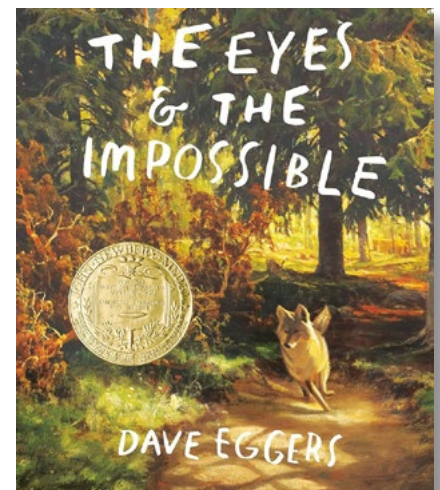
Onyeka has spent her life trying to hide her unruly hair—until she discovers it holds extraordinary power. Transported to a secret academy in Nigeria for others like her, she enters a world where what once made her feel different becomes her greatest strength. Yet with power comes responsibility, and Onyeka must learn to navigate friendships, expectations, and dangers she never imagined. Okogwu’s fast-paced adventure pulses with energy while exploring deeper questions about identity and belonging. Onyeka’s journey challenges the boundaries placed on her by others—and herself—reminding readers that the qualities we’re taught to suppress may hold the key to who we truly are.

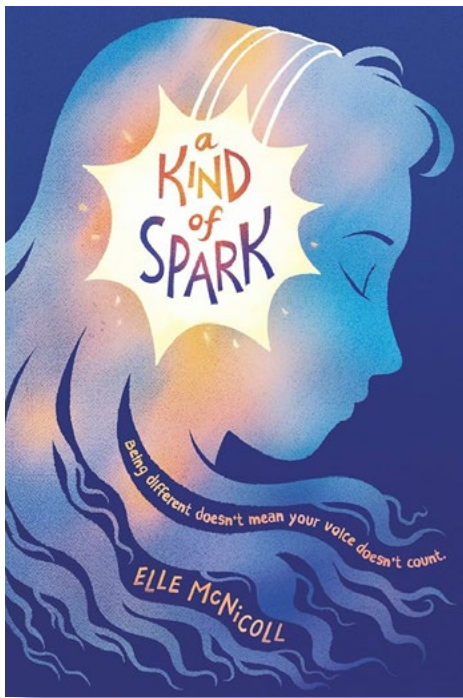


### ***The Eyes and the Impossible***

By Dave Eggers

Johannes is a dog who runs faster than anything else in his seaside park—and who sees everything. From his hidden vantage points, he observes the delicate balance between humans and animals, freedom and control. But when that balance is threatened, Johannes must decide whether to remain a watcher or become something more. Told in a voice both playful and philosophical, this novel explores what it means to belong to a place and to protect it. Johannes’s journey carries him beyond the limits of speed and independence toward something deeper: connection, sacrifice, and the realization that true freedom often depends on what we’re willing to fight for.





## Middle Grades (Ages 11-14)

### *A Kind of Spark*

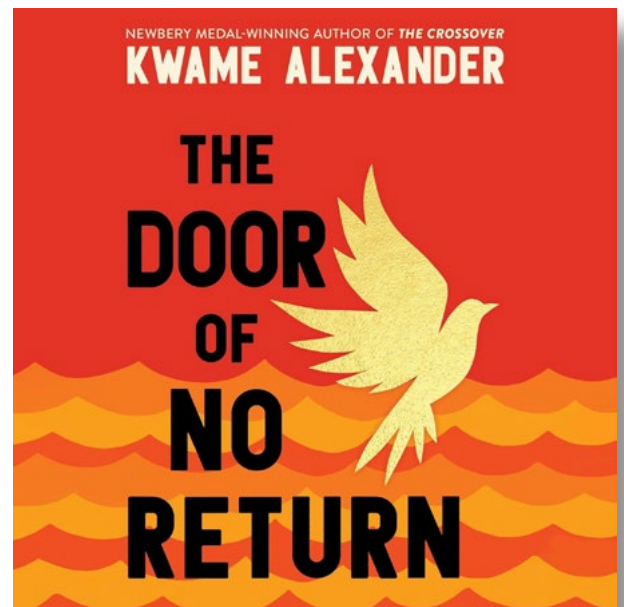
By Elle McNicoll

Addie has always felt out of step with the world around her. As an autistic girl in a small Scottish town, she struggles against misunderstanding and dismissal. When she learns about women in her town's history who were persecuted as witches, she recognizes a shared story of difference and exclusion. Determined to honor them, Addie finds her voice as an advocate. McNicoll's deeply empathetic novel explores neurodivergence not as something to overcome, but as a way of seeing that brings clarity and truth. Addie's quiet determination pushes beyond societal expectations, showing that change often begins with those brave enough to insist on being heard.

### *The Door of No Return*

By Kwame Alexander

Kofi's world is defined by familiar rhythms: family, friendship, and dreams for the future. But when those rhythms are shattered, he is forced into a journey that carries him far beyond everything he knows. Told in luminous verse, Alexander's novel captures both the beauty of Kofi's childhood and the brutality of its disruption. As Kofi struggles to hold onto his identity, memory becomes his anchor. This powerful story invites readers to witness history through deeply personal experience, revealing how resilience and hope can survive even in the face of unimaginable loss—and how the human spirit refuses to remain confined.



### *The Last Mapmaker*

By Christina Soontornvat

Sai has spent her life hiding her origins, reinventing herself to escape the limits of her past. When she joins an expedition to chart unknown waters, she sees a chance to finally belong. But as the journey unfolds, Sai discovers that maps do more than describe the world—they shape how it's understood and who holds power within it. Set in a richly imagined Southeast Asian-inspired landscape, this novel blends adventure with questions of truth, history, and identity. Sai's journey beyond physical boundaries becomes a journey toward self-acceptance, reminding readers that finding your place often begins with embracing your whole story.

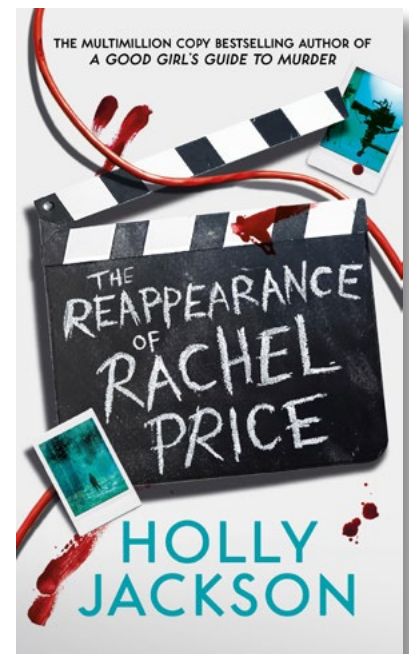


## Young Adult (Ages 15-18)

### *The Reappearance of Rachel Price*

By Holly Jackson

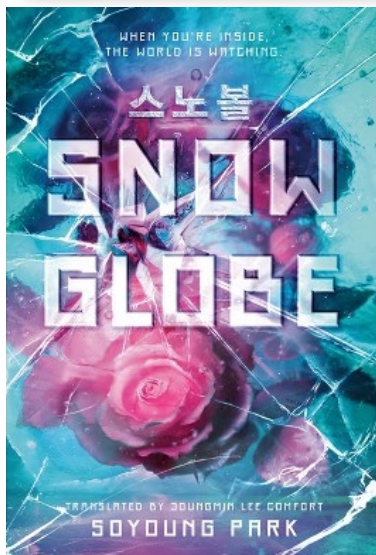
Bel Price has grown up defined by absence—her mother vanished years ago, leaving only questions behind. When Rachel Price suddenly returns, her reappearance should bring closure. Instead, it raises new uncertainties. As Bel searches for answers, she begins to see how stories can be shaped, manipulated, and hidden. Jackson's gripping mystery explores truth as something fragile and contested, rather than fixed. Bel's investigation becomes more than a search for facts—it's a journey toward independence, forcing her to step beyond the narratives others have created. In questioning the past, she begins to claim her own future.



### *Clap When You Land*

By Elizabeth Acevedo

When a plane crash reveals that their father lived two separate lives, Camino and Yahaira must confront not only their grief but each other. Told in lyrical verse that moves between New York City and the Dominican Republic, their voices reflect different worlds shaped by distance, culture, and expectation. As they navigate anger, betrayal, and loss, the sisters begin to imagine new forms of family and belonging. Acevedo's novel explores how identity stretches across borders, shaped by both absence and connection. It's a story about crossing emotional and physical boundaries—and discovering that love can exist even where trust has been broken.



### *Snowglobe*

By Soyoung Park

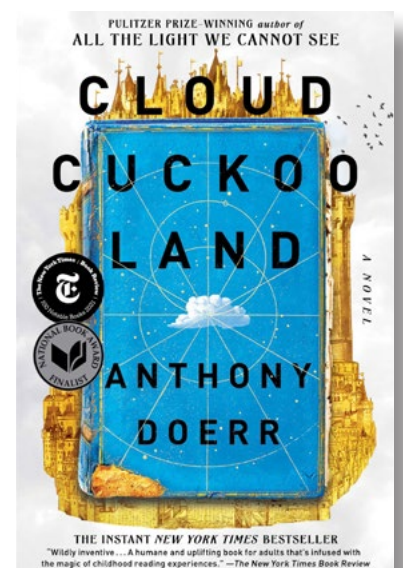
In a frozen future, the Snowglobe offers warmth, luxury, and endless entertainment—but only for a privileged few. Outside its walls, survival is harsh and uncertain. When Chobahm enters this glittering world, she quickly discovers the illusion behind its perfection. Beneath the spectacle lies a system built on surveillance, control, and sacrifice. Park's dystopian novel explores the tension between performance and authenticity, asking what happens when reality itself becomes a product. Chobahm's journey beyond the boundaries of her assigned role becomes an act of resistance, challenging a world that profits from keeping its truths hidden.

## Adult

### *Cloud Cuckoo Land*

By Anthony Doerr

Across centuries, continents, and even worlds, a single ancient story connects lives that might otherwise never touch. From medieval Constantinople to a modern library to a spacecraft bound for distant stars, each character carries fragments of a narrative that refuses to disappear. Doerr's sweeping novel explores how stories survive destruction, displacement, and time itself. Through war, loss, and uncertainty, his characters reach beyond their circumstances through imagination and memory. *Cloud Cuckoo Land* becomes a meditation on the power of storytelling—not as escape, but as connection, carrying human hope across every boundary we face.





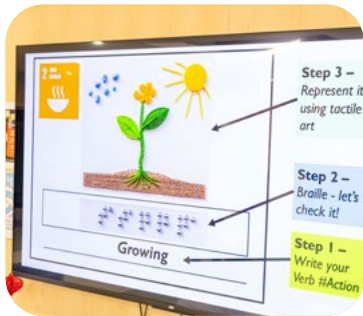
**Defining**  
What does it mean?

**Engaging**  
How do we do it?



**Community Engaged Learning**





**Modeling**  
The process - What it looks, sounds, feels like



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