The Common Thread

TCT

ISSUE 15

IS IT THE END OR JUST A NEW BEGINNING?

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Dear UWCT,

Welcome to the first Common Thread issue of the 2026/2027 school year! This issue is focusing on the cycles, ends, and beginnings that regulate our lives and the world around us. In light of this, view this as a welcome letter. Whether this is your fifteenth or first year at UWCT, it's still a new year.

First of all, welcome to The Common Thread! We consist of a group of students with two amazing advisors that work together to practice the art of storytelling. Our goal is to combine both heard and unheard voices in order to connect our community. This year, we aspire to increase that connection and to continue to create engaging issues that cover important, entertaining, and impactful topics.

Second, welcome to the new school year. Whether you're a staff member, new or old, a returning student, an MYP moving up to DP, a Grade 11 coming from far away for their first year, or a Grade 12 finishing what they've started, it's an opportunity to begin again or continue with what you've already been working towards. It's easy to feel separated from all the different parts of the school with EY, PYP, MYP and DP as the year moves on and school gets hectic, but it's at the beginning and end of the year that the appreciation for our school and for those around us feels strongest. This is a cycle that we go through, and while all grade levels and areas of the school go through their own unique one each year, everyone in the school experiences a beginning and an end. So welcome to the beginning.



–Ainsley

ISSUE 15

THE COMMON THREAD



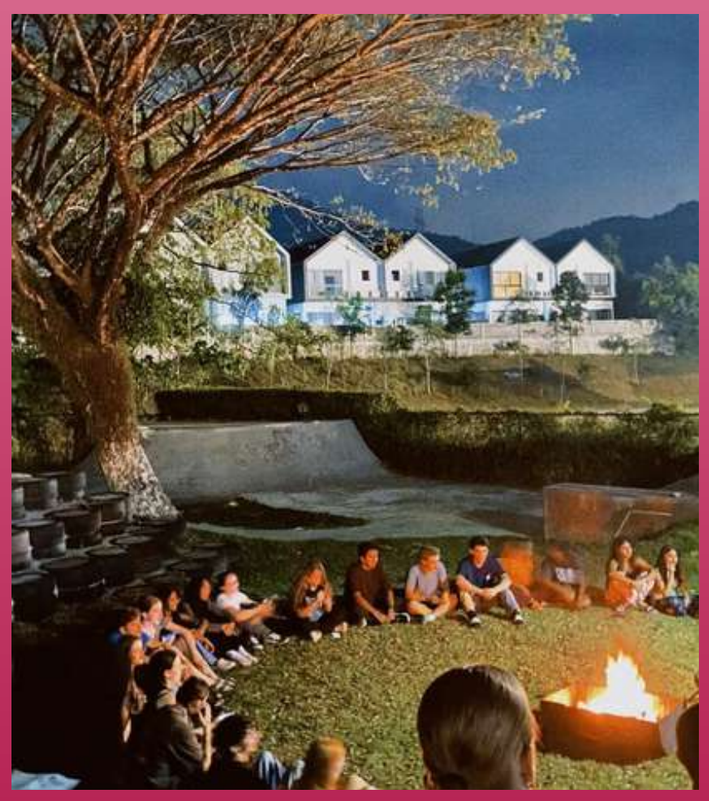
WELCOME BACK!
Here's a recap

Welcome back to School! While we all are excited for this year, let's make a recap of the peak moments of the year 2025/2026. We sent a form last year to hear your opinions, so here is what we've got from you!

Top Events Of Last Year

- Prom
- Intercultural Day
- Holi and 24 Hour Race
- Song Kran
- Festive Fair





Some of the best teachers quotes:

"Remember this exam doesn't determine your worth as an individual" - Kru Mark

"If it doesn't make sense, just pretend it does" -Kru Demeke

"Ideal gasses are like perfect boyfriends, they don't exist." - Kru Mike

your new common thread heads!!!



The most popular description of the year in one word:

- Long
- Rollercoaster





Out of all subjects statistically math caused the most of the stress!

The Drag Race event is winning the nomination of the funniest event of the year.

The average studying time per day was 2-3 hours.

All in all previous Grade 11s are recommending to keep your sleeping schedule healthy and manage the time properly. Lets make the most out of this year!

UWC EVENT UPDATES

Beginnings, Endings, Beginnings

Nothing in nature is still. The sun rises and sets. The seasons change. Trees lose their leaves in autumn, only to grow them again in spring.

On the surface, these cycles may seem repetitive, and yet it is repetition that makes life possible. Without change, we wouldn't grow. Maybe our own lives are not so different. Endings are something we often think of as inherently negative. Finishing school, leaving a friendship behind, moving away or growing out of a chapter of our lives can feel like a kind of loss. We cling to what we know because it's comfortable. But change is ultimately unavoidable. Just as winter cannot hold on forever, neither can we. The cycles of nature show us that an ending is not necessarily the end. When autumn comes, the leaves falling from the trees may look like something is being lost. And yet their disappearance is part of a greater process that leads, eventually, to new growth. In the same way, the endings we face have the potential to make room for something different. Leaving one place may be what allows us to find another. Growing out of a past version of ourselves can allow us to become a new one. Change offers perspective too. In the midst of an experience, it can be difficult to comprehend what it means. Sometimes only once something has ended can we see what it was trying to show us. Maybe a difficult time in our lives taught us resilience, or leaving home allowed us to appreciate where we came from.



Time gives us the space to look back and see ourselves differently. But that's not to say every change is easy. Some changes are painful, unexpected and unwillingly made. And yet cycles remind us that even if we feel stuck, hard times are not necessarily permanent. A new day begins again, winter turns to spring, and eventually summer. Maybe the most important thing that cycles bring, then, is perspective, and possibility. They remind us that life is not supposed to stay exactly as it is. We are constantly becoming different versions of ourselves, affected by the things we experience and the things we leave behind. A new beginning does not erase the ending that came before it. We might return to the same seasons, the same places, or even the same questions, but we never return as exactly the same person. We move through cycles, but we never move through them unchanged.

–Sophia Vaa

GROWING OLD SKIN

And then we were running. Sprinting through the field. The wheat whacked at us as we came, a spurring paint of gold on canvas; It was the muddied hem of a lace-ruffle skirt, the loose button on a doll for an eye, the saluting toy soldier holding his rifle, and the scent of chocolate cookies right out the oven. Furiously, we ravaged through and raced the horizon, daring it to set before we ever reached it. Our feet were blistered, our hair was tangled, and our throats were sore—but we didn't care.
We were gaining on it.

The setting sun posed in front of us, beckoning. Its slender fingers etched across the horizon, soaking blood into the clouds. Everything was ruby-red in its touch. It extended itself infinitely beyond the horizon as we steadily approached it. It seems so close, and yet it is unreachable. The growing heat in the air was the only indication of our advancements against this invisible barrier.

Slowly, we came to a stop. The glow rustled against our skin, caressing us like an ancient lullaby and rooting us to the ground. We were tired. We've come a long way from home. Carefully but visibly, the sun started to expand, enclosing us in its embrace. Little red dots dug into our arms and thighs, alerting us of an inherent threat: It begins at the small of the back, but soon it spreads, like wildfire, throughout the body. It rips through our skin and claws against the bones, yanking on the ligaments between our joints. The heat engulfs us whole in its fury, and we are grabbed from behind the neck and held off the ground, our heads dangling from the tendons of our neck. Overhead, a murder of crows cawed, and whilst sand snakes scurried away, the calls of the hyenas echoed in the distance.

But we are not dead. In fact, we're very much alive, you see. For when we are on the other side of the horizon, air will flow once again through our lungs and blood will pump underneath our flesh. We will live once more because we accept ourselves, are kind to ourselves, and stand by ourselves. Growing up is the inevitable process of change, but you must stay true to yourself throughout those changes, and you must do so with much respect for yourself. It is this acceptance and self-recognition that will accept us into our future worlds, allowing our old skins to disintegrate and rebuild a more formidable and confident structure that welcomes any future challenges.

—Amber



PARALLEL bEGiNNiNGs

Scarlett~

Last May, Scarlett's UWC Thailand journey came to a sweet end when she graduated with the class of 2026.

Having spent 16 years at this school - two of them being in the IBDP - I've had the opportunity to learn from a lot of experiences. Ranging from meeting students from different backgrounds to submitting IAs on time, the IBDP has conditioned me to become a better individual. As I sat on the stage at graduation, one particular question made itself evident in my mind: What now? After I walk out these doors, what do I want to do?

The transition from being a high school student to being an independent adult was not at all what I expected. I pictured it being frightening, heartbreaking, feeling like a compass with no North point. Lost. I thought I'd feel lost.

But to my surprise, the transition out of high school was just like any other day. Yes, there were certain days where my heart broke a little as I remembered that I won't be gossiping in the back of biology class with my best friends, but being surrounded by my family and people I love made this transition easier.

I thought it'd feel like being thrown off a cliff, people expecting me to fly to save myself from crashing. But little did I know, I'd have people by my side teaching me how to use my wings before jumping off that cliff. Those people were my family, my teachers, and my friends. And I'm infinitely grateful to every single one of them.

Meanwhile, as this chapter for me has just ended, it is only starting now for Stella.

Stella~

This year, I am going into Grade 11. It's quite strange to think that I will be in the DP and that I've reached this advanced milestone in my UWC journey. For me, this was a long-awaited moment that once seemed so distant during my years as a younger UWCT student.

I remember looking up greatly to the students in white shirts back when I was in primary school, seeing them as role models and adults. Now, as I begin to take this step, it feels exciting and important, but not overwhelmingly. I am filled with joy and enthusiasm for the upcoming years, and somehow, I don't feel worried or nervous about this journey, because I know that there are many others experiencing it for the first time by my side.

I think that sometimes, we like to dramatize changes and make them seem bigger and more stressful than they need to be. However, when the transition is smooth between chapters of our lives, I think that we are able to adapt easily and thrive in times of change. These moments are refreshing, even purifying new beginnings that help us to transform into newer, better versions of ourselves.

It also helps that we are never alone, and there are also many others experiencing different new beginnings. My older sister, Scarlett, is going through a new chapter of her own, as she recently graduated from UWCT and is now preparing to enter a very exciting and independent part of her life.

When we take a step back to look at our experiences, we see how new opportunities and beginnings keep presenting themselves, and how every time a journey seems to end, a new one unravels. And even though we are going through different stages and adventures, we experience it all together and stand by each other through it all.

As we both are undergoing these new chapters, we learn to cherish each moment. While change can be bittersweet, we also learn to be grateful for each moment we spend.

It's when we reach important milestones like this in our lives that we notice the cyclical nature of new beginnings. Each moment that we live and each step that we take is a new beginning in its own form. We are constantly transforming and evolving, taking on new challenges and experiences, and by realizing this, we are able to embrace change to the fullest.

-Scarlett & Stella

What is a UWC movement? What are the cycles of UWCT? - continued growth and development amongst those cycles

"UWC makes education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future" is something that we have likely heard, read or even maybe said. It's even plastered at the side of our school as a giant reminder. But very few have taken the time to reflect on these words and what they mean. Many of us skimmed through it while filling out our application. Through the pictures and the videos, the websites and the stories, UWC became a Utopia. It became something perfect. But like any other place on this earth, UWC isn't perfect. And just like people, it goes through cycles too.

People will go through different stages at different times, but that doesn't mean that there aren't some universal stages. For example, the "Orientation Effect" where everyone seems nice and everything seems perfect and everyone is just extremely happy and likely at the Friday night market a lot. There is also a "Wait, IB is Actually Hard" stage, which is when your classes get serious, and suddenly the Math AA HL and Physics HL students start regretting their life choices. There is also an inevitable stage of "I just want to go home." Homesickness is real. And there are moments where you just can't take it anymore. You miss your friends, your family, and probably your home food. There is the stage where suddenly everything collapses for a second and it becomes "I hate it here," and that's not unusual. It happens to every UWC student. And that's part of the cycle. And something that I hear a lot, as a former firstie that speaks to their second years after grad, is the "I miss it so much" stage. Even through the struggles, the EEs, the IAs, and the curfews, UWC somehow still becomes home.

The movement here and at any other UWC still remains the same. We have the same goals, and we have similar visions, but our experiences will no doubt be different, as we are in different countries with different people and different traditions. But that doesn't make our school any worse or any less special. Our school may not be perfect, but neither are we. It is what you make it.

So to leave this with a little note for our incoming firsties: enjoy that first semester to the fullest. Be free and visit every place on the island. Make friends and explore. Stay positive even when it's hard. And lastly, don't forget who you are and why you came. Feel every cycle, explore every wave, and if you ever need us, we are always here to help.

Lots of love on behalf of your second years,

-Manuela

BEFORE THE SKY CLEARS



THE SUMMERSALT (HOT & DRY)

The dry season with its endless colours and shimmering heat

TROPICAL HEATWAVE!

...

fresh air!

FUN FACT: Phuket is only 8 degrees north of the equator!

THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

It's not the end, just a new begining

Just like the weather, life transforms

FUN FACT: The Golden Birdwing has a complex lifecycle and Phuket's rainforests support incredible insect diversity

It's a continuous cycle... the heat, the rain, the calm. Every sunset promises another sunrise.

The storm gave way! I'm ready for what's next

EMBRACE THE CYCLE.
Phuket's unpredictable weather is its strength.

letters from...

Kian

I joined UWCT in nursery, so I've been here for almost 15 years. When I first joined, everything was really different. The school population was much smaller.

I do not remember much because I was only about three or four years old. However, I remember meeting one of my best friends, Jaden. He was new and slightly late to class because the anthem had already gone off. He was with his dad on one of the playground motorbike things and did not want to get off, but I went over and told him to come with me. He did, and we still talk now—he is still one of my best friends. There is also a photo of me in the second-ever yearbook the school made, waving goodbye to my parents.

The school has expanded a lot. The student population has increased dramatically, and all the buildings are different now. Despite that, I still think we are a tight-knit community.

When I first came here, we were called PIA rather than UWCT. However, I feel that the values were very similar, so I do not think too much has changed in that sense. There are always new people arriving and others leaving, which is part of life. It is nice to see the community change throughout the years.

We also have annual fairs and events, such as Multicultural Day and holiday events, including Christmas. They are always fun, and even when people come from the same countries, each year feels different because there are always different people involved.

Yes. Students graduate, move in, and move out, so something new is always happening. At the same time, annual events and traditions continue to return every year. Yes, I think UWCT is always going through cycles of change. As students come and go, they bring new ideas, while the students already here maintain what makes UWCT Thailand what it is. New students become part of the community while still bringing their own perspectives. The same applies to teachers and school principals. They all bring something new to the school. Sometimes it has been done before, but they can find a new twist on it.

Imogen

I've been at UWC Thailand for 13 years now. And when I first joined the school, it was much smaller. And it was actually called Phuket International Academy. And I was so young. So everything seemed so new and exciting to me.
I remember thinking how much I loved how outdoorsy our school was, especially coming from an environment where I grew up more in a city-like area. And I remember seeing the playgrounds built around our school and just being so excited to have such an open, beautiful space and being able to meet many people from so many different cultures, even at such a young, young age.
I think what has changed the most is the fact that our school has grown immensely with more new people coming. There have been way more opportunities in terms of academics, sports, and just events. There's a lot more happening that has grown over the years. And it's so exciting to be in such a thriving environment where a community is such an important thing.

When I hear the word cycles, it makes me think that there are things that you have to go through continuously in order to become a better person and to better yourself in many aspects of your life. And I think cycles are important in the sense that they help you grow and they give you opportunities for practice that are necessary in life.
I think being at a school like UWC, it's very common to see people coming and going, and that's just a thing with international schools. But I think that makes a community that much more welcoming and friendly, and it allows everyone to feel welcome in an environment where you're so used to meeting new people, which I think is a really good thing. And I think traditions in Thailand have been super prominent in our schools, such as Loy Krathong, Wai Kru, and Songkran celebrations. And these are ones that I've grown up with and traditions that have been repeated throughout the years. And it's something that I'm so grateful that I've got to experience every year and that our school holds on to. I definitely think UWC goes through cycles of change, as the school's constantly changing in terms of students and teachers and constantly growing in the sense of building up and creating more opportunities for the students that attend the school.
I think that, of course, environments change as well on a personal level, but overall, I think the school has kept its values and kept its motto in such a great way that it has stuck with me throughout the many years I've been here and continues to do so.

Message from Imogen:

If you're a new student here, I encourage you to fully embrace Thai culture. Visit as many places as you can, and seize every opportunity, because Thailand is truly a beautiful country, and you're very fortunate to have grown up in one. Immerse yourself in the culture, grab every chance you get to be in Thailand and explore as much as you can. Don't be afraid to go out, don't be afraid to try new things, especially when you're from all over the world. Remember to meet new people and show interest in other cultures, as it will beautifully change your perspective and broaden your horizons. All those experiences will stay with you for a lifetime.



—Boling

IT'S A WRAP!



Everyone has taken some type of learning and turned it into growth this past year in grade six, whether it has been from a friendship, a task, a school trip, or a lesson. Regardless if it has been inside or outside of the classroom or if it has been big or small, I believe everyone can say they have taken some knowledge away from grade six.

Starting the year was surely a challenge for everyone in our grade: adjusting to new classmates, new teachers, a new building to navigate, and new routines. Although at first it all felt unfamiliar and overwhelming, settling in just took more patience than previous years.

There were activities and events throughout the past year that have taught us to grow in areas of independence, such as the Documantaray project. Even with some help from others during the experience, making the documentary was still difficult for everyone. To come up with a film individually, including writing a script, learning how to organise it, taking footage- as well as losing that same footage and having to take it again- was all part of the process. But all the challenges just added more to the relief and satisfaction of finishing very well, which we all did. As well as being put at ease after finishing the project, we all felt a sense of accomplishment throughout our journeys.

Hopefully we can all take something different from this coming year!



~Maytté

On Endings and Beginnings

Paco Vazquez, Primary School Counselor at UWC Thailand



As a new school year starts, our community changes one more time. Different transitions take place: some new staff, students, and families arrive; others who were here last year didn't return; and each student is moving into a new grade, a new classroom, and sometimes will have new teachers. Endings and beginnings arrive together, and they arrive often.

If you are familiar with the *Safe Passage* framework, you may already have learned from Dr. Doug Ota an important point: how well we arrive somewhere new depends a great deal on how well we were helped to leave the place before. Sometimes goodbyes are rushed or unspoken, so they make the next hello harder. A person who has not been able to close one chapter well often struggles to open the next one.

Dr. Ota also highlights the importance of continuity, the sense that a part of who we are, and of the people and places we've loved, carries across the transition rather than being broken by it. Continuity protects a person's wellbeing and belonging through a move. This is the idea behind the Goodbye Book, a tool we use with students from Kindergarten to Grade 6 who leave the school.

So how do students use this book? They start by reflecting on their feelings about the transition. A reminder states that all feelings are valid, that it's completely normal to feel sad, nervous, excited, or all of those at once. Then, the book turns toward what comes next, making space for the child to write or draw about their new school. After that, there is a section related to what they'll miss and what they are looking forward to, balancing the sadness of leaving with excitement and anticipation for the new chapter. In a different part of the book, the child is invited to think about what will change and what will stay the same, emphasizing the idea of continuity we saw earlier. There is also space for the child to describe what their life in Phuket was like, so they can share their story with their new friends. And at the end, there are pages for Goodbye Notes, inviting friends and teachers to add their own messages, so the farewell is shared rather than carried alone — this is what *leaving well* looks like.

But *leaving well* is only half of a transition. For it to be complete, the community receiving a student has to do its part — arriving well depends just as much on being welcomed well. At UWC Thailand, every new student takes part in small welcome groups, organized by grade. The aim of these sessions is to support new students through their transition, helping them feel welcomed, connected, and reassured as they begin their journey in an unfamiliar place. One of the activities we do in these groups is to read messages written by last year's new students: advice, suggestions, and encouraging words they wanted to pass on to whoever would come next. These welcome cards show this year's newcomers that someone sat exactly where they are now, felt what they're feeling, and settled in. Before the sessions end, the new students write their own welcome cards in turn, and those become the prompts for next year's arrivals.

And what about those who stay? When a friend leaves, the ones who remain also carry a loss, yet they are often the people we pay least attention to during transitions, because it's easy to assume that those who aren't going anywhere are fine. But the scenario is quite different: for students who remain year after year, goodbyes accumulate, and some start to protect themselves by holding back from new friendships because "they'll only leave anyway," creating a kind of emotional shield. Many of you reading this will know exactly what I mean. Stayers deserve specific attention too, such as helping them name and validate the loss rather than minimizing it, keeping them connected with friends who have left, and encouraging them to stay open to new friendships even when it feels risky.

Whether this year you are the one leaving, the one arriving, or the one staying to welcome the next newcomer, you are always part of a transition — an ending and a beginning at once. So as we are starting a new school year, here are a few questions to reflect on, either on your own or together with a classmate:

- What am I leaving behind as this year begins, even if I'm not going anywhere?
- What do I want to carry forward?
- Who is arriving in our community, and how can I make them feel welcomed?
- How do I want to say hello this year?



Reference:

Douglas W. Ota, Safe Passage: How Mobility Affects People and What International Schools Should Do About It (Summertime Publishing, 2014).

WHAT WERE YOU UP TO?

MINI MANTAS

Favorite events

Our Mini-X! I liked to drink the smoothies and the food. Fried chicken and sticky. - Pippa

Sports Day because we get to do new things. - Reiko

We played and ran on the plank - Joy







"Wrapped" stats

Number of water bottles lost...1?

How many times Kru Holly went to the recycle centre to get more boxes ...10!

How many glue sticks we used...100!

100% effort given at all times!

Whiteboard pens with no lids...1000!

Popsicle sticks used in projects...10,000!

Swimming Gala was so fun, running on the floaty we held hands and jumped and did a splits! - Ronnie

Swimming Gala because I enjoyed the race and I had lots of fun. - Zoe

The swim gala was funny. - Jessie

Kyle - I was shooting the ball and I nearly jumped in the goal.

Kawin - When it was raining in swimming time and it was cold and my hands were clapping because I was so cold.

Sage - When I did a puppet show and Rooney was at the end. She was shocked because it was so good!

Chaokhun - When Lucas and me made that popsicle stick house. I was proud and happy!

Any random, hilarious, or sweet moments from this year

Misha - Everyone in 'Juice for a Roof'. They were ordering sooo many lemonade, some even got 5 at a time!

Philippe - When Kru Lucy told us to hold her umbrella and everyone was laughing!

Lucia - When it was tidy up once Kru Nok said "Ice cream time", but it was a trick!

Mikael - In swimming gala I got almost to the end and I slipped from the edge and fell in!

Roque - Remember when I was running and fell in from the balance in the Swimming Gala!



FIRSTIE & SENIOR SUNRISE

At 5:30 am on only their second weekend in boarding, the grade 11s were jostled awake by their seniors and told to get to the boarding house field in 10 minutes. What proceeded was what we hope to be a new tradition in the boarding house: a sunrise event to welcome the grade 11s, commemorate the beginning of an end for the grade 12s, and welcome the new school year ahead. With groggy eyes and tired smiles, we watched in our PJs from bean bags as the sun rose and the sky grew lighter. Before everyone could drift back to sleep, Dani (Head of Tea Talk) started up a conversation with questions directed at both grade 12s and grade 11s. The grade 11s shared their excitement for the years ahead, and grade 12s shared advice and stories of the struggles they went through, but most importantly, the people that were there for them throughout those hard times, the memories they are grateful to have made, and the ones that they are excited to continue making in their last year here. As the group conversation dissipated, small ones emerged in groups on bean bags and cushions. Slowly everyone drifted back to their rooms, either to start the day or get some more sleep.

Reflecting on the morning, it was a moment of realness that is sometimes hard to find in this day and age. Nobody was performing. Nobody was living the moment through a screen. We were all in PJs. No makeup, no put-together outfits, no filters. Just raw conversations and gratitude for the moment. For the grade 11s, it gave a sense of welcome and community, a flame to carry on for the rest of the year. For the grade 12s, it was a moment for us to appreciate how far we've come and how grateful we are for the memories and friendships we've made. But also, with new changes and new people surrounding us, it gave a sense of hope for the community we had yet to envision and the one that is yet to come. The sun rising each day is symbolic. It's seen time and time again as a symbol of hope, of new beginnings, that nothing is forever and a new day will come. When we gather together to appreciate that symbol, to show gratitude for the new beginnings and the promise of the morning light shining time and time again, we feel an inexplicable feeling. A warmth or weight on the chest. And with that feeling, and in that moment, we know that no matter where we have come from, whatever has happened thus far, we are here now in this moment.

Air Day







CLOSING TRACK, OPENING

VERSE

SCAN ME!